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Titile: Lost in Time: Circles of Time/ Warriors of Swastika

Subject: Time travel- Fiction

German history- Fiction

To my wife and daughters. They are forever my life inspiration.

Part one: Circles of Time

Prologue

A tall slim man was standing close to the entrance of a cave. His white hair was falling down on his shoulders. His face showing beautiful aristocratic features with slightly sculptured cheekbones. His beaklike nose was giving him a wary look. In contrast, he looked like the kindest person thanks to small wrinkles all over his face. The most interesting were his eyes. They were bright blue, loving, the gleam of spirit shining out of them. At first sight, his eyes were expressing credence. Although his face was furrowed by time, on the other hand, his body was firm like the body of a sportsmen. You could feel a big strength from his muscular shoulders. They were tensing under his white robe that reached half way down to his calves. His sleeves were rolled up and you could see strong, veiny arms and massive hands. Hands, which could gently touch a baby, help a woman, help with the birth of an animal, to draw, to heal, but also to draw the bowstring and take a life.

Midsummer - the longest day in the year, the day which had been deeply rooted in many folk traditions. Today was the same day as the other years but yet different. He had been waiting one hundred thirty years for this moment. Last night he couldn't sleep, he was musing about his life, about his two lives he had lived. His previous life had reminded him of faraway mist. One hundred and thirty years! The time was circling around. Nevertheless, tomorrow one circle was going to close. Tomorrow!

Thoughtfully, he was looking at the landscape in front of him. The river was flowing through the valley peacefully. Its name was Steep River. The truth was, the calm stream river could fool the strangers, but during the long rainy days and mainly through spring meltdown of snow, the water was running fast down the hills. With tremendous banging it was taking everything what was in its way. Foamy muddy water ripped pieces of the ground from the banks of the river. Its roar was able to be heard one hundred meters far. The surrounding was wooded except one wide strip of black ground swept by wildfire a long time ago. This part looked like a dark black cemetery. It felt a bit scary. Hundreds of burnt trees were touching the sky, looking like a crosses on the giant cemetery. Crosses - the word had no meaning on this place, especially in this time.

On the other side of the valley there was a little cottage. There was smoke coming out of the chimney.

„Teacher.”

A deep man voice snatched him out of his thoughts.

Suddenly he turned and smiled instinctively. If he had met this creature in his previous life, he probably would've started shouting and tried to flee.

„Teacher,” the man spoke again, „the red crystal is coming to life.”

The tall man -The Teacher - came close to him. He gently put his hand on the crystal. He could feel the crystal slightly vibrating. From him you could feel the energy of sunlight that bind together inside of the crystal. Yes, he had been waiting for this day one hundred and thirty years. The circle was closing. Just one last step needed to be taken. He looked at his companion.

„Are you ready?” he asked quietly.

„Yes,” the man replied promptly.

He looked at the Teacher thoughtfully. They had talked about the events waiting for them many times. Sometimes he thought that everything had already happened. He saw it in his dreams. He couldn't make any mistakes. Thanks to the Teacher he realized that a lot of people's lives would depend on it. Not really his life but the lives of people from a different time. He sighed. Surely he could handle it. He had been a hunter since his childhood, he was able to use a bow as skilfully as if it was a part of his body. But one glance at the teacher took all his courage away. He noticed a tear in the corner of his eye, he had never seen this man crying. He had lived with his people for a very long time. One of his ancestors from many years ago found him injured in the woods. He brought him home, healed him and took care of him. When he became healthy, he became his teacher. Today, so many winters, after the bones of his grandfather and father had been devoured by the earth, this man was still here and probably always would be. He nearly seemed to be immortal. Is it possible for someone to live so long? The teacher stroked the crystal again. His hand was subtly trembling. He was waiting for this moment for so long, at the same time he was afraid of it as well. Initially, his feelings were dominated by anger. His desire to revenge the person who had sent him from the twentieth century to this time was very strong. The only thing that kept him alive was his hate on this person. When he realized he would never be able to escape this time, his soul was filled with despair. Since then a lot had happened. He understood he needed to start a new life. He had transformed the society according to his liking. He had changed, too. After many years the hate started to vanish slowly. He became a different person. Part of his mind was telling him that he didn't need to be afraid, all of these events had already happened long time ago. Otherwise, he

wouldn't have been here. But a nagging doubt remained - what if? Was it possible to affect the future, or had it already been determined? He was leading endless debates with himself and tried to eliminate the dark cloud of fear. Fear of the future which, in fact, was his past. He shook his head, as if he wanted to banish all the dark thoughts. It wasn't the right time for that now! The problem was, he did not know the exact circumstance of his arrival. He turned to his friend.

„It's time to go,” he whispered almost unheard.

The younger man nodded, turned without a word and walked out of the cave.

Chapter one

He had been waiting in the bushes for many hours, his senses were tense. He was born in the forest and grew up there, he knew every slightest sound. He had the patience of a hunter.

He had been there since the sunrise. The Teacher told him that the bright blue sky would turn into dark thunderstorm. It was starting now. He was shaking all over, without admitting of any doubts. The forest was giving him security. From the yesterday moment, when the crystal had woken up, it seemed like many winters had passed. He felt the responsibility on his shoulders.

The flash lightning cracked the sky in two and thunder rumbled at the same time. The heavy rain started. The next light hit an old oak around 100 steps away from him. The tree split into two, one part fell down on the ground while the other was caught by fire. The teacher mentioned this – oak on fire. It wouldn't last too long now. The true hell was unleashing. The flashes were crossing the sky from every side. It seemed like the flashes were hitting in some sort of a circle which were getting smaller. The sound of thunder continued like a demon roar. The man thought he would become deaf or it would drive him insane. He would've loved to run away. He knew that he couldn't. So much was at stake. The lightning united into one bright circle, around twenty feet in diameter. It was shining for a moment and then it quenched. At that point all the sounds fell silent. The storm ended and the bright sky shined again. A burnt out circle was the only remain of the storm. If it didn't appear, he would've thought it was all only a dream. There was a body lying in the middle of the circle. It was the body of a man. He tried to stand up hazily. At last, he made it and he was looking around, puzzled a bit.

Yes, this was the man he was waiting for. His uncertainty disappeared. He pulled out an arrow from his quiver and nocked. He tightened the string slightly and waited. He almost smiled.

Sharp pain in my lungs. I took a deep breath and started to cough. I lifted my head, it felt very heavy. There was a burnt-out circle around me. I was looking around confused and I didn't understand what was happening. My mind was empty, I couldn't remember anything. I sat down slowly. The scene seemed strange to me but not that strange. The mountains seemed to be familiar but the only difference was they were more overgrown. By that time I was recovered. I was all dirty from ashes and besides some clothes I had nothing. Just then I felt lonely. On my own, in a strange country, without a map, a compass, but mainly without friends. Alone! That awareness hurt me. Meanwhile, two different feelings I had never known, re-joined – fear and hunger. I felt the adrenaline rising in my body. Suddenly everything seemed much clearer. Even my hearing was better. In a distance I heard the sound of cracking branches. I looked in that direction and I spotted a gigantic oak broken into two parts by lightning. One part of a tree was lying down on the ground. The rain hadn't washed out the small hopping flames. My nose was full of burnt dust, but when the wind blew in my direction I could smell a different odor. It was a smell of burning meat, fat sweat and something else.

The smell of blood! The hair on my neck rose and I got goosebumps all over my body. Exhausted, I turned against the wind. I heard a little buzz.

-Get down!- ordered a calm voice in my head. Unsuitably calm.

I got down onto the ground. Something whizzed above my head. That something stuck into a tree about four meters away. An arrow! Death! The arrow was slightly vibrating. The second one landed extremely close to my hand. I ripped the arrow out of the ground and ran in the other direction. One more pinging sound and all was quiet. Too quiet.

I stopped. I didn't know which way to run. Even though I followed my subconscious instead of being rational, I couldn't run while so upset, so I could risk running into the hands of death. Even though death was probably what was waiting for me here. Stepping into these extreme circumstances woke my ancient instincts. Instincts repressed by an entire millennium of civilization, since my upbringing but still present like essence of abide. Suddenly I realized. Either I was going to flee and kill my attacker or I was going to be killed. Flee, but where? Was my enemy alone or had a companion? If he had, I might be running to perdition. But if I stayed here, nothing would've changed! I needed a weapon! I looked at the arrow which I was holding tightly in my hand all the time. The arrow was long around one meter and nicely formed. You

could see a bit of blood on the top of a metal prong. Blood of an animal? Human? At this moment it didn't matter. If I didn't throw myself to the ground in time, it could be my blood. The shape of the arrow was as thick as my little finger. There were black feathers at the end of it. The arrow – perfect killing weapon covered with black ashes. Great, but without the bow it was useless. I made a decision. With one movement I broke it into thirds. A slight crack sounded. In the silence I got startled, it sounded like a hit of thunderstorm.

„You stupid man, you should've known it, he is going to find me now!“ Swept through my head.

There was no time for self-pity and swearing. Quickly I put the rest of the arrow with a metal prong behind my belt and warily I moved away. I didn't run. I tried to move fast and silently. With the arrow I felt secure. It was the weapon just for close battles, but, at least, it's better than nothing.

I felt it again. The smell! He was walking behind me. He was going after my footprints. The rain caused the land to become wet so he could see my footprints. Even the blind person could see them, not to mention a skilled hunter and killer. I had no doubts, I would have to deal with someone like that. I didn't plan to give up.

I came to the stream. I travelled against the flow of it. But immediately I changed my mind. If I walked against the stream, water would get muddy and my pursuer would know exactly why. Carefully, not making any noise, I travelled with the flow of the stream. I hoped that I got rid of him. I couldn't count on it. After twenty minutes, I hit a tree lying across the river. Remains of a thunderstorm. I crept under the tree. I walked another ten steps, then carefully, not moving with stones, I went back. I caught onto a branch that was as thick as my arm and jumped up onto the trunk. I walked on the trunk until I reached the crown of the tree. It was an old willow with a sturdy crown and with a big cavity at the bottom part of the trunk. It seemed to be a reason of the fall. The amount of fallen branches reminded me of a destroyed dinosaur skeleton. Then like on purpose, I spotted a real skeleton of an animal under the branches. The remains of some wild animal scattered around by wild beasts. Some of them were eaten spotless and on some of them had left bits of decayed skin tissue. Stripped femur bone reminded me off a shamble at my grandfather's house. Suddenly I realized – femur bone is quite a good strike weapon! I came a bit closer. I could smell sour and rotten stink. Oddly enough, it wasn't doing anything to me. After reviewing my situation, I took out the prong from my belt and carefully I cut the rest of the tendons which were holding the bone. It was slightly greasy and damp from the decayed tissue. I took out a handkerchief and wiped it clean. All of a sudden, I found it ridiculous: here, in the middle of the wilderness, was a handkerchief so improper like a naked

man in church. Just then an image of my wife appeared in my head. The wife of a businessman. On every occasion she was perfectly dressed in the latest fashion. Her makeup and hair perfectly done without exception, she would only come in contact with the upper class. She would've probably got a heart attack if she saw me right now, so dirty, wide maniacal eyes, rummaging through decayed carcass. From the moment I found myself in this horrible place, almost one hour passed. The sun in the sky proceeded only slightly. Nevertheless, my mood did improve a little. It seemed as if I had no chance at all, but through it all, I was still escaping, I procured my weapons and the main thing was, I was still alive! And that was the great success! My brain had already gotten used to the increased adrenalin rush. I had never felt so alive as I did right now. I was still examining every sound I heard. Even the smells, even though, I didn't realize it until now. A slight murmur from the leaves at my right side. Wind? Small animal? It wasn't the time nor the place to underestimate anything.

The anger disfigured his face. How could he miss it? This odd person was standing there like a tree and was almost asking to be killed. When he spotted him for the first time, he quite stiffened. He hid with his brother under the bushy tree when the storm arrived. He had never experienced something as extraordinary in his life. The lightning was hitting everywhere. His brother couldn't stand it and ran away. He crouched from fear, put his head between his legs, asking all the well-known forest demons for forgiveness.

What could it be if not raging forest ghosts? Then the flaming circle! It made him blind completely. When the storm finished, he saw a creature getting up from sort of a burnt out place. Blond hair, unusual height and the clothes he was wearing amazed him for a moment. When he started to wander around, the man realized it was a person not a demon. Maybe from a different part of the northern tribe. The merchants floating down the river were talking about them. If he brought this trophy home that would be great! Everybody would talk about him by the fire and at the feast he would be dancing his own dance... He forgot about his brother.

Because of the state of mind he was in, he missed for the second time, too. This hadn't happened to him since he was a young boy. An odd men ran away among the trees. There was nothing else he could do, only follow him. When he got to the place where the men disappeared, he smiled. The prey was leaving significant footprints behind him. In a muddy ground the footprints were clear to see as if an aurochs left them behind. Beside the river he stopped. The water was clear. Without any doubt he started walking with a flow of the river. He was scanning closely both banks of the river. There were no footprints. It didn't matter, at some point he had to come out of the river. He walked under a tribe tree which was lying down over the river.

Suddenly he stopped. A wet scrape on the bark of the tree caught his attention. He grabbed the closest branch and jumped on a trunk. A damp smudge was directed towards the crown of the tree. He walked on a trunk and then he spotted footprints on the ground again. He followed them. He registered a carcass of a wild animal but he didn't pay any attention to it.

I had to get a few things straight. I had no clue where I was. Somebody was trying to kill me. Probably I wasn't able to hide in front of him. Was he by himself or were there more of them? If there were more of them, there wouldn't have been such pauses between the hits of arrows. I was not able to move further without being seen, for him I was only a disorientated animal. Very easy target. But I was not a hunting animal, and I wouldn't sell my life that easy! I had to use my weakness. If I wasn't able to camouflage footprints, I had to bring him to a place where I could defend myself. I started to run forward.

Not far, I spotted a sturdy linden tree. It was an impressive piece, the circumference of the trunk was three meters, maybe more. There was devilwood growing from the root of the tree. That's it. This was the place I would bet everything on one card. I ran closely by the trunk of the linden tree. While running, I ripped one of my buttons off and chucked it away. After running twenty meters past the linden tree, I arched back towards it. Carefully, so I didn't make any noise, I pulled out the femur bone from underneath my jacket. Quietly I wrapped the bottom of the bone with the handkerchief. I couldn't risk my hand slipping off of it. I was prepared.

I closely observed the surroundings from behind a thick devilwood tree. Of course, the most common direction I looked, was where my tracks led. My only chance was to surprise him. Bow and arrow in the hands of the experienced shooter were horrible and deadly weapon, but in a close combat not very effective. This was, at least, I had a chance to defend myself and paralyze him.

What am I thinking? I suddenly realized. This wasn't a child's game. I had to bet everything on one card. It's not enough to defend myself, not enough to paralyze him. I had to kill him! To kill or to be killed! - says ancient law. It was clear as a sun. A linden tree murmured reassuringly. I totally relaxed myself and I became a part of the nature. Even the birds started to sing. What a beautiful day!

He moved slowly and vigilantly. The real predator. He crouched slightly and examined my tracks. He moved towards me. He was watching his surroundings constantly. I didn't notice when he appeared. As I was checking all around, I spotted him. Sometimes he stopped. He listened and even he sniffed. When he came a bit closer, I got a better look at him. He crouched,

his height was about one hundred fifty-one centimetres. He was wearing some kind of a fur vest. The fur continued to his mid-thigh in a shape of a kilt. No wonder that I could smell his sweat. In that fur, he certainly sweated like a pig. He wore a belt around his waist with a dagger with a long blade. He had bare legs.

Suddenly I felt it. It was coming in waves. It wasn't a fear, it was anger. Gradually my anger increased because this asshole, scumbag and son of a bitch followed my tracks, tried to catch me like a helpless sheep. He looked in my direction. I tried not to move. My breath calmed down a bit even so I trembled all over my body. He couldn't see me. The stupid sheep. He bent his head again. I backed down behind the trunk.

Fifty steps left.

Twenty steps left. I clenched the bone with both my hands tightly.

Ten steps remained.

If I was in extreme tension until now, I suddenly overcame the limit. My body tensed. Every muscle stretched to burst, prepared to set off. He was next to the tree already. I couldn't see him, but I could feel him with every bit of my body. Each of my skin cells sensed him.

He stopped. He bent down to the tracks.

-Now!- my subconscious sent a signal.

I jumped from behind a tree, my hands above my head. It was like a dream. The man crouched to the ground. He was holding my button in his hand. There was surprise and understanding in his brown eyes. I swung the bone, with the head of the femur joint bashing against the fucking pigs head. He reacted in a second. He raised both hands. I hit him sharply.

"Die you motherfucker!" I yelled from the top of my lungs.

The bone landed on by his forearm, surprisingly it didn't rip off his arm. I could hear a crack as the forearm loosed. The man screamed and let out a stream of incomprehensible words similar to a rattle in a hoarse voice. Immediately, with his good arm he reached for his dagger from underneath his belt, his left arm was hanging limply by his side. I felt a kind of a pervasive satisfaction, knowing it was causing him such tremendous pain.

He attacked me. I repelled his attack with another up swung. In his eyes I could see fear and hate. We started circling around each other. We tried to get into a better position, possibly to use a mistake of the other rival. The man was sweating a lot, from the pain probably. It seemed that he was getting weaker. I knew, what's coming next, I could read his thoughts in his eyes. He had no choice, his strength weakened. He couldn't run away like a cornered rat. He was going to attack! He must! I was looking into his eyes the whole time.

"Come on you rat." I teased him.

He waited for the moment and he set off against me. He pretended a straight attack against me with a dagger from the top, but suddenly he jumped to the left side quickly and he stabbed me from underneath. He was shouting brutally all the time. His unexpected speed and deception surprised me. I wasn't able to do anything, I weakly defended myself of a dagger pointing out of my stomach. I moved backwards, then I tripped over a root of a tree and suddenly I was lying on the ground. My rival didn't hesitate, immediately he tried to jump on top of me. Instantly I rolled over onto the right side. He hit an empty space. He hurt his injured arm and yelled in pain and disappointment. In a second, I stood up. One jump. I lashed with a wide spread. He tried to stand up. His ugly broken hand slowed him down. The head of the joint fell on his jaws. His head flew backwards sharply and from his mouth burst loads of blood and teeth. His chin remained a bloody mush. It hit him to the ground. Another bang hit him on his shoulder. The third one made a hole in his head just above his ear. The bone in my hand cracked.

Dead! I came closer to him.

"You see, even sheep know how to bite!" I shouted. "And you shit, you thought that..."

Suddenly, I got kick like a horse, it threw me about two meters. The world started spinning around me. I didn't understand what was happening. I lifted my head up. Another payoff was a bang into my chin. Thick darkness surrounded me. Ghost, a true copy of this nasty man, was standing before me. My eyes started to close down. I was helpless and unable to move.

-There were two, there were two of them...! - it sounded in my head as a ringing bell.

This was the end, it's all over. I lost. That nasty son of a bitch knelt on my chest. He pulled a dagger from behind of his waist. He made a few hoarse sounds and he put a dagger close to my neck. With only one cut and my soul would disappear from the carotid artery. Then the man twitched and his hand along with the dagger dropped. I didn't understand. Then a point of an arrow appeared in his neck. Disbelievably he raised his hands and put them on his neck. The next one shot him into his back. It stabbed him and went through the right lung of his body. A hoarse sound and bloody foam came out of his mouth. The blood was dribbling down his chin and dropping down onto me. It lasted just for a few seconds and he dropped next to me.

I was lying on the ground unable to move. The world around me got darker, actually it narrowed down to one spotlight somewhere in the distance. My brain wasn't able to take so much adrenaline and it switched off. I fell into unconsciousness.

Chapter two

„Peter, do you have to go to this stupid tour again?“ Hissed my wife. ”You know very well, that we are invited to Anette for dinner tonight. You are going to be tired again and you will end up sitting there like a sack.”

I smiled at her condescendingly. My wife, beautiful, tall blond woman with green eyes. Solid body, kept with regular visits of the fitness centre. Full breasts, the size of three, slightly improved by silicone. Plastic surgery is what she received from me as a present for her thirtieth birthday. She was a few years older than me, but her appearance was very important to her. My wife was beautiful but empty. When we were getting married her beauty attracted me a lot. It was a great trophy. I had always been a bit of a hunter. She loved my money. I was her trophy as well. Her life was about visiting the hairdresser, cosmetic salon, fitness centre and going for massages. Her only hobby was shopping. She was great at it too. Sometimes I wondered what is actually holding us together. It definitely was not love even though our sex life was great. Although it was very empty, like a competition of trying to achieve an orgasm.

“Do not worry, darling, tonight I will be as fresh as a daisy. Do you want to come with me? (Of Course she didn't want to come.) It's beautiful outside. Did you know that today is summer solstice? “

“You can keep your ironic speeches for yourself!” she snapped abruptly.

“For once we could do something together!” I raised my voice. “Something that interest me as well. Not just your parties!”

“We have talked about this a hundred times. I'm sorry but I'm starting to get a headache.” She marched out of the room.

It truly was a beautiful day, the sun was shining brightly. There was a light breeze, but the radio reported some thunderstorms. Hopefully I could avoid them. Going for walks in nature were great for clearing my head. Away from people. No cars, and no noise. Perfect relaxation. All week I had been running around getting job orders, money, new clients, and new material. The worst thing about it all was the rushing around. Lack of time. Maybe that was one of the reasons, why we were drifting apart in our marriage. It was sucking the life out of me. Together with my wife. But Sundays were mine, just me and nature. Here I re-energised for the next week.

I hopped into the jeep and set out to go to my favourite places. I left the city behind me in a matter of few minutes. I went through a few villages and in the near distance I spotted a familiar turn to a forest road.

I kept going for about seven kilometres and I stopped. I changed into some lighter clothing and with a steady pace I headed up a hill. On the horizon I could see a small cloud. An innocent, lonely cloud. A moment later, more clouds appeared and they were headed towards me. Hopefully I wouldn't get wet.

I had about an hour to get to the jeep. When I was walking the last time, I spotted a hole in a rock above the river. It was overgrown with a thick bush, invisible at the first sight. A sudden gust of wind revealed a hole in front of me. At that time, I wasn't able to see it closer. Now I could.

I briskly walked up to a steep hillside. My tired legs already started to protest. A little bit more. I finally climbed up to the hole. It was as tall as me. I looked inside, there was a large cave. The ceiling was formed by a massive vault. It was beautiful, I had never seen anything like this. I wasn't an expert, but I had a feeling that caves are formed in karst areas. This wasn't one of the areas at all. The regular shapes could be the result of change what people made. But the stone, yet it wasn't a limestone. It looked like a granite. Excited, I went in. The room seemed empty at the first sight. On the opposite side of the wall, something was gleaming slightly. A wall that was straight like a plank, covered with hundreds and thousands of tiny blue crystals. Some of them flashed dimly, others were dark. Few of them shined brightly like little bulbs. At the bottom, there were two rows of red crystals, all were dark and lifeless.

I came closer and bent down to them. They attracted me magically. Suddenly I could feel slight vibrations. It seemed like the whole cave came alive. Like I was in a body of some huge animal. I reached out a hand. The vibrations were getting stronger. A crystal of a triangle shape made me feel dizzy. I was almost touching it. The crystal came to life. It started to pulsate gently and glow. At that moment, I wished the only one thing, to finally touch it. The air was filled with static cracking. Between my finger and the crystal jumped a crackling blue spark. The touch connected us and I became part of the cave. Of the whole universe. The energy flowed into me in incredible quantities. I felt great peace. Then everything disappeared.

The first thing I saw was a face of a woman. She was standing in the veil of mist. But gradually, my view cleared. The woman looked kind and she was looking at me worriedly. She was just about to change the cover on my head, when the strong pain woke me up. She was about thirty, pleasant face, her loose hair was falling down onto her shoulders. Her hands were

moving slowly, but surely. She didn't want to cause me any more pain. Gently she cleaned my open wound. I fell into unconsciousness again.

Again, I have been situated to a terrible valley. I was running and everything around me was spinning. Hundreds of arrows were flying around my head. I was falling again and again. Behind me, I heard a heavy breathing of my followers. I felt that nasty smell. In front of me, a man grew up from under the ground. He shouted at me with a hoarse sound. There was an arrow sticking out of his chest and bloody spume was coming out of his mouth. I fell again and remained lying lifelessly. I heard them approaching, their breaths were loud like whistling of huge teapots. Surely I would go insane from waiting. Please come already!

I woke up with a twitch, my whole body covered in sweat. The same woman again. She wiped my forehead gently.

"Thank you." I managed to get out of myself.

She said something, but I didn't understand it. It sounded like a mumbling.

"I don't understand," I told her puzzled.

She repeated the words. I shook my head. She smiled slightly and she gently touched my face. I did calm down. She shouted for someone from outside. The door on the opposite side of the room opened screeching and a man entered the room.

Ghost!!!

It would haunt me for the rest of my life. I was staring at him hypnotized. Suddenly, a man smiled, he looked a bit different. I noticed that instead of bushy fur he was wearing a sort of jacket and trousers drawn from a deer skin.

"Tork, a son of Tartar," a woman approached him rebukingly, "can't you see he doesn't understand you?"

"Sorry I forgot." He looked a bit embarrassed. "How is he?"

"It's better, the fever has been already washed out of his body. The wound on his head is worse, but it seems he is over the worse. His left hand is swollen terribly, I think it's cleaved. Help me to get it tight."

"I was afraid that he wouldn't survive." - And that I have failed-, he thought.

In fact, he almost did. When he headed off to Peter, who in the meantime ran away from a burnt out circle, after his transfer, his path crossed fresh bear tracks. He had to walk around to not attract attention of a predator. In another circumstance he would've tried to catch him but

in that moment he had other duties. He had to protect the stranger from a different time from Agrosans' attacks. He couldn't afford any delay. Finally, he came just in time.

„He needs a rest. He was two days hallucinating in fever. He is weak. I was worried about his wound a lot, I was afraid that it will smash the sanity out of his head.”

“Look at him, that is the exact look he has on his face,” laughed Tork in good faith.

“You are making a scuff of it all,” she snapped at him.

“But Else, my dove. It would be better if you take care of our protégé, because...”

He didn't finish talking to her and Else threw him outside.

She turned around to the bed. The pair of a blue eyes were looking at her in confusion.

“Oh you men,” she sighed and started to cook. A Soup of a young rookie, that's exactly what the patient needed now.

I was slowly recovering, even though the first few days went by very quickly. I was very weak and extremely thin. Chicken soups were replaced by more varied meals. I was becoming stronger day by day. After three days, I was finally able to stand on my own two feet. With the help of the others I was able to make a few steps. It was still too early. I laid back down in the bed very disappointed. In the meantime, I was observing my rescuers. I got a bizarre impression of them. Their behaviour and the whole environment became very suspicious. Almost not normal. Their strange language, their household equipment, and lack of basic needs. There was no running water, no electric appliances, absolutely nothing. Who in the hell are these people? Some kind of idealistic naturalists returning back to nature? Or just some crazies? What is this place anyway?

I found out the woman's name was Else. She was a very nice and caring housekeeper. It seemed to me that she liked to nag sometimes. The man, Tork, was a very happy man, who laughed a lot. Obviously I didn't know why but at least it calmed my bad moods. He was probably in his early thirties as well. He was about hundred and fifty centimetres tall. He had plenty of scars all over his body. This did not add up with his good humoured attitude. There was a teeth scar on his left cheek that was especially scary. As he explained to me much later, he got it while he was hunting for a bear. According to him he had to be as big as a house. But on that day I already knew, he liked to exaggerate. They lived with their two daughters. The younger daughter could be about ten years old, the older about thirteen. They were beautiful like their mother.

Slowly, step by step I was learning their language. I had to say, they were trying hard. In my presence, they spoke to me more slowly than normal and while speaking they were explaining

by gestures the importance of the expressions. Commonly they were using only few words. Some of them seemed quite familiar to me. My long forgotten memories became alive. My grandmother, originally from Sudeten German had been married to a Czech man Peter Brezovsky. This marriage helped her to avoid degrading expulsion of Sudeten Germans in Germany after the Second World War. The truth was, her sweet-sounding German was different from the hoarse sounding of this language, but many words were similar. And oddly enough, if the expressions were getting more difficult, they sounded much more like the German language. I had never learned German, I just could remember a few words from my childhood.

I often tried to ask Tork where I was and who they were. Everything here was unknown. And what about the man in the fur, who had tried to kill me? The language barrier was between us all the time. Sometimes it seemed to me that he did not want to answer some questions deliberately.

Later he explained to me that they had one more daughter, but she didn't live with them. According to Tork's behaviour I realized that he loved his family to bits, however it slightly bothered him that he had no son. He suggested, nothing was lost yet. Else with an embarrassed smile slapped his shoulder.

„Peter you are heavy like a boar,” sighed Tork. “I had enough to do to be able to carry you around. I was breathing heavily, even a deaf person could hear me.”

"Who were those people?"

"Agrosans. We were on their territory," explained Tork

“Why did they want to kill me?” I asked shakily.

"Agrosans are a ferocious tribe. They often are killing each other. Moreover, they don't accept any law.

Furthermore, they are indulged in killing. Cannibalism is not rare among them.

“Laws,” I continued, “which Laws?”

Tork smiled mysteriously.

”Laws that our Teacher brought us. They brought order into our lives, even in the times of our ancestors. We used to be quite similar to them. Nowadays we are not contacting them anymore. We only meet once a year during the Feast. But even that we only meet with some of them.”

“What kind of feast is it?” I wanted to know.

"We celebrate it for one full moon night after the summer solstice as a memorial to the Teacher's arrival. The feast begins at noon and lasts until dawn. It begins with transferring

youngsters over the threshold to adulthood. Then the Acts written by magical marks are read. The Feast continues by dance till the morning associated with drinking a forbidden drink."

I looked at him wonderingly.

„What kind of drink is it? “

Tork smiled mysteriously again. It is true that I still didn't understand much from their language, but even so, I had the impression that he was hiding something from me, or he didn't want to tell me the whole truth. I had to be vigilant. Maybe I could find out something on my own. At last he spoke: "The forbidden drink makes your senses crazy, sometimes the world spins around. Before the arrival of the Teacher, some of us were killed under the influence of this drink. The Agrosans drink it until now," he paused.

"You said that I was on their territory. What did you do there?" I wanted to know.

Tork got pale. It seemed that he couldn't find the right words. He was staring at his hands helplessly.

"You have heard enough for today." He finished talking.

I went back home and in my head I had more questions than before. Where was I? What did all this mean? Who were these Agrosans? I needed to get back to my jeep. Go home. It had been at least two weeks since I got lost. There had to be people looking for me by now. I had so many responsibilities in the company that I work for. What about my wife? I doubted she was missing me very much. Suddenly I felt the pressing desire for her. More for her perfect body.

Our lovemaking was rather without love but it was always perfect. Explosive and wild. Two weeks had passed by and I was starting to really miss sex. I thought I missed my cigarettes more though. My favourite brand of cigarettes was West. If I was not in such a strange situation I would be screaming from being so anxious. Who cares about some primitive Agrosans, Tork, and Else? They were a group of fools that had chosen to live their life in seclusion.

Maybe some crazy cult. It's their life, not mine. Several times I had tried to suggest Tork to take me to the place where he had found me. Every time he snatched me that I wasn't fully recovered yet. Also, I did not strike up a similar conversation to the last one. Several times I heard mentions of the Teacher's words and laws in his talks with Elsa. I had noticed that they used the word Teacher with big respect. When I asked a question concerning him, he looked at me surprised.

"The right time didn't come yet. You still have to figure out many things. You are from the Teacher's family that's it, no more questions."

From the Teacher's family? What could it mean? Thousands of questions swirled through my head. That night I could not sleep, I thought about my life and my wife. Tork's kids appeared in my mind. Why had we never had any kids?

A Job, career, money. With Emma we actually didn't live together. We just occurred side by side. Like two corpses, two strangers in one house. We had never loved each other. How did we end up so apart? I never realized it. And yet, I missed my life. Life under stress, full of tension based on running around getting job orders, money and people. But no such tension as I was experiencing now. After all, it's ridiculous. I was sleeping on bear fur in one room with two insane people. All my questions which I asked about where was I, they replied evasively or none at all. It filled me up with fear and discomfort. When would this horrible nightmare end?

In a few days I strengthened so much that I could spend more time outside. I was getting used to my surroundings. It brought me more anxiety. I couldn't find no trace of all the normal things such as cars, roads and other people. I had no idea where I was. His wooden house reminded me of half of the last century. I was very surprised that he didn't have electricity, and overall, it all looked like a museum here. House with two rooms, the roof of wooden slabs. Little stove built in the line of some bricks, painted with clay. Roughly trimmed wooden furniture. Beds covered with bear fur. I could say a tourist attraction.

The house was surrounded by grubbed up forest within a radius of about fifteen meters. There were a young spruce trees with thorns planted outside. On the thorns were slices of meat. They were being dried in the sun for storage during winter. Behind the house there was a small garden. It was hard to name it a garden. There were two rows of a kind of onions, parsley and some other sorts of vegetables. There also were a few pretty flowers. They were, as I noticed, the pride of the housewife. The house was located on a gentle slope in about a third quarter of the hill. There was a lovely view of the countryside below. In the distance you could see the silver ribbon of a river. Above towered a rock that looked like a boar tusk.

Tork was returning late in the evening, often he was gone for several days. He had a lot of work. He had to get plenty of meat. He became my companion and friend. He led me around and explained many things to me. Days went by, I attended short walks around the neighbourhood. Slowly I picked up even more words. Words that he showed and explained to me. There was really beautiful countryside here.

Tork was sitting close to the fire and was eating rabbit leg thoughtfully. In the corner of his eye he was measuring a man beside him.

"I am worried about him, Teacher" He spoke between two bites. "I think I can't hold him any longer."

"How is he?"

"He recovered quite quickly. It is seen that he was in good shape. The biggest problem is that he wants to return."

With the other side of his hand he wiped his mouth and rubbed his chin thoughtfully. Then he continued.

"To return to the place where I found him."

"Do you think he is ready?" The teacher looked straight in his eyes, so it seemed, he could see to the bottom of his soul.

"I don't know," admitted Tork uncertainly. "It's the territory of Agrosans. He doesn't know how to use bow or dagger. He is cunning. He got the Agrosan great, but I'm afraid that's not enough. He seems to me quite soft. When I recently slaughtered roe, which I caught into a trap, he was all pale."

"I'm not talking about this," the Teacher interrupted him unexpectedly vigorously.

"I'm talking about the preparation to accept the reality as it is. He is not tied to this place. He is confined to this time." He gasped heavily. In his subconscious flashed an ancient memory of his own arrival.

"Not anyone can be prepared enough for that. I want him to receive the knowledge in small doses. I want him to maintain his sanity."

"If he didn't lose his sanity when he got the bang to his head, he will survive this," answered Tork cheerfully.

The teacher looked at him in disbelief and immediately he started laughing loudly.

"You really are a very laid back person. Your wife was right, when death falls upon you, you will laugh right in its eyes."

They were sitting thoughtfully for a little while. The fire crackled in the fireplace. It was dying. Slowly there is darkness creeping into the cave. Without hesitation, Tork got up and proceeded to the pile of birch dry logs. He took a couple of them and placed them neatly into the fire. A few moments later the fire flared up again. He then sat down into his initial place.

"Tork, your father would be incredibly proud of you. You have grown up to be such an admirable man. In the evening of the solstice, when I saw you walking out of the cave, not for one moment I doubted about the fact of you being able to protect Peter. I am just confused about one thing. Where did that second Argosan come from? I was so sure there was only going to be

one. Does this mean that time doesn't have just one direction? That the future is not given, as I expected?"

"We have had these talks many times. Ever since you have exposed the secret of the cave, I also have been wondering a few times about the same questions. Honestly I do not know. How did you know about Peter's arrival in such detail?"

"From Peter himself. We have met before. It was not a pleasant meeting on his part. I forbid you to talk to him about it. For him, it is just the future."

For a moment they were talking about ordinary things. The ceremony was getting closer. On the right edge of the cave laid large containers made out of clay, each of them mostly filled with the forbidden drink. It was actually the liquid formed by leaching of certain plants with hallucinogenic effects in weak alcohol. It would still need to provide enough dried and smoked meat. Every man taking part in the festivities brought their share of work. Women made sure that there would be enough of wild fruit. The celebration would take place in three weeks. Everyone was looking forward to it. It was one of the few occasions when residents from afar gathered. A large part of the population lived in solitude. For them it was, unlike for people living in small colonies, one of the few opportunities to meet up. Otherwise they rather lived in solitary, family life. Young people who had reached a certain age, boys fourteen and girls thirteen years old, should be transferring over the threshold to adulthood ritually. In their way of life that was the only place where they could get to know each other. This meant that they could leave the parents' house and start their own family.

Suddenly the Teacher returned to the previous topic.

"Tork you are my friend, as your father and his father before him were. And my most gifted pupil as well. I am your teacher, but also a obligor to your family. Your ancestor found me injured in the woods long ago, he brought me home and took care of me. He taught me to survive in these conditions. Later on, I became his teacher and the teacher of all of you. I transformed these people. From murderous bloodthirsty warriors in a continuing inter-tribal war, trapped in an endless carousel of ancestral blood revenge I created a company that recognizes moral and other religious values. Many long days we were discussing to figured out how to do it. Your ancestor and I went through all the laws number of times. I think we made a big step. Unfortunately, it cost a lot of blood."

"I never dared to ask you," Tork began uncertainly. "I have wondered for some time, how is it possible that you are still alive. Are you immortal?"

The older man burst into laugh.

“No way, people live much longer in my times than here, your grandfather died of typhoid infection. As you remember from the days when I taught you, in the future some diseases will not be dangerous for people.”

“Immunization, vaccination,” automatically added Tork.

“You really were a fantastic student. In addition, the life in this cave has slowed down my ageing,” replied the Teacher.

“But do not think that there is a big advantage in my slow ageing. My soul is burdened with an overload of memories. I have experienced a lot. I have done a lot of good, but also a lot of things that will forever lie heavy on my heart.”

“The fire is dying, please put in more logs.”

While Tork was placing more logs into the fire, the Teacher was watching shadows bouncing along the ceiling of the cave. His thoughts went back to Peter. Maybe they should throw him into water, he had to find his own way out. He was stronger than he seemed. He could handle it. It would take some time, but he would be able to handle it. He was relieved when he made this decision.

The die is cast!

I was washing up by the stream. It was a nice morning. The sun rose two hours ago and there was still dew on the grass in front of house. The water was cold but very refreshing.

“Good morning.” someone spoke behind me.

I turned around and saw Tork standing there with his typical smile on his face.

“Good morning to you,” I replied.

Despite Tork had arrived late last night, he got up with sunrise as always, looking as fresh as a fiddle. He had been doing wood work all morning. A massive double-edged axe flew in his hands like a child's toy.

“Today is a very important day for you.” Tork paused. “I was talking to the Teacher. Its time to bring you back to the place where we first met.”

“The teacher? Could there be a chance I might know him?”

“You will when the time is right. First you have to visit that place.” He understood my enthusiasm. “And there is still a lot to understand,” he added after a moment.

All of a sudden, I was in a better mood. Finally, I would be out of here. I don't care about some bizarre Teacher, this wooden house and these crazy fools. I definitely would visit Tork sometime as I was very grateful that he saved my life. Or maybe not! Who knows how the court would consider the killing of the two Agrosans. Although it was in self-defence, but one never

knows. I better get out of here and never come back. But that was not all. These tools, the special language, way of life. It's as if cut out of a book of the distant past. Maybe the cave. I didn't remember too much. Could I travel into a different time? I did read about people who disappeared mysteriously. Oh my God! No! There had to be another explanation. This was impossible.

"So let's go," with a forced smile I suggested.

"You're as sharp as spring water" Tork stopped me. "First we have to prepare for the journey. It is one-day journey away from here and do not forget, it is the territory of wild Agrosans. They have lost two of their men, so if they get their hands on us, they are not going to play around," he added darkly.

Sure! Another kind of a satanic cult or something like that again. A group of idiotic fanatics. When I get out of this god forbidden place, I will state them to the police anonymously. They will be surprised. Agrosans allegedly! Fools!

"Sorry, you're probably right." I agreed slightly. I used a tone of voice in which a person talks to a child or mentally ill individual. I had to withstand it. Just for one more day!

We walked towards the house. Else was just finishing cooking the soup. I had to admit that she cooked quite well in these primitive conditions. The soup reminded me of stew, pieces of meat floated in it, and even some vegetables. It seemed the soup was concentrated with something. I saw there was a couple of mushrooms and some berries.

"Else you cook excellently," I praised her.

She flushed gently. Obviously delighted she turned to us.

"It's a shame that I can't hear it that often. Admittedly not a lot of people think the same," she declared accusingly.

"Is that supposed to be a hint at me?" asked Tork with a full mouth of soup. "There is no need to overdo the praising."

"Well you are definitely not overdoing it."

They were teasing each other for a bit longer. Then she sat down at the table with a smile. It was a signal for the two daughters to come and sit down at the table. They were sitting very quietly and started eating. At that moment you could only hear the crackling of wooden spoons against the bottom of the bowls.

We were eating without a sound, everyone deep in their own thoughts. Else stood quietly, and soon brought a plate full of roasted meat. Tork grabbed a fork and started to cut the meat and divide it among all of us. The silence was starting to feel very unnatural. As if Tork read my mind, he turned to me and murmured: