

The Lost Prequel: A Story of Black and White Extended Edition + Author's Cut

Chapter 1: An Island was born

It's not a fairytale, but ...

Once upon a time, there was a highly intelligent alien race from millions of light-years away which had a civilized history of more than 5 million years. They developed the kind of technology so advanced that we humans simply can't imagine. Over their long long history, they had colonized millions of planets, waged tens of thousands of wars, and discovered countless technology breakthroughs. To us they were like gods. Each of them could create a solar system in 7 days, and destroy it in a blink of eyes. They had answers for all the mysteries of universe, except one.

"Is there another civilized alien race living out there in a planet, just like us?"

To find the answer, millions of space ships were sent out, combing their entire galaxy one planet at a time. Their space-time traveling technology allowed them to shorten the traveling time to a minimum. In one flash, their ships could jump from one end of the galaxy to the other end of it. In another flash, their ships could finish analyzing the whole star system and draw a conclusion. With this kind of technology, they were confident that it was a matter of "time" that they would find a planet thriving with civilized lives, just like theirs.

However, after five million years, they found nothing.

It was not because of the time, but the odds. The universe has an infinitely number of planets and stars. However, the ones that can support lives must fit many critical criteria, which make the chance astronomically small. On top of that, the chances of that planet developed intelligent lives capable of civilization are much smaller. Furthermore, those intelligent lives also have a tendency of self-destruction. They will appear in a planet for 100,000 years, but next time you visit them. They'll all extinct for various reasons. All those factors made the search very difficult.

During those 5 million years, they had inspected thousands of billions of star systems, but there still billions of billion star systems left. Worse of all, they also found out that there were infinite number of parallel universes exist. Each universe has a slightly different version of their civilization in them, but none of those civilizations found anything. Now they have to search all those parallel universes as well. The odds are against them.

The failure made them desperate. An important decision was made. No longer would they send space ships to search in a coordinated grid like fashion. Instead, they massively produced space probes that would jump through space and time and universes randomly, and filled the sky with billion billions of these probes. They believed that as long as they kept massively producing them, the universe will be

filled up by those probes, eventually when the number was great enough, one day a probe will find what they were looking for. It was the only way to balance the odds.

Each space probe was equipped with a basic Tasillium core, a material only they could compose. It was a complicated organic material made of manufactured atoms part like Titanium, and part like Silicon. The material was virtually indestructible, but at the same time it could think, and it could exert enormous power to do things that, to us human beings, nothing short of miracle. When the core passed the extremely hot surface like our Sun, it wouldn't sweat a bit. When fell into a black hole, it would just go through it and come out in another parallel universe. The aliens regarded them as primitive but functioning tools, like we think of toys or bikes, nothing special, but to humans, those space probes were incredibly advanced.

The instruction of each probe was fairly simple: find a planet that has naturally developed civilized lives, and report to the base. They didn't fit it with much technology, or made them too smart. As we all know, when you massively produce something, you want to keep the cost to a minimum. It was true even for such an advanced alien race like them.

Away they went out for the mission. Gradually numerous space probes spread to all the neighboring galaxies.

The new strategy worked. Roughly 65 million years ago, one of the probes finally reached our solar system. Within a second, it found earth and her complicated life forms. It found dinosaurs and the dinosaurs' complicated civilization. It was supposed to be a time of celebration. After all, a search over 6 million years had finally reached the fruit. The probe was so excited and proud and filled with all kind of alien emotions that we were not yet able to experience. It decided to wait a second to report. It wanted to take this single second to enjoy its discovery, to find out how beautiful the new planet was, to see all the lives that were living in this amazing new world, just by itself, alone.

All highly developed beings are selfish, even a space probe was the same. It was just this selfish decision, and that extra second, made a huge difference of the history of the earth.

Another space probe popped into exactly the same location as the excited probe. It just went through a super nova. Though there was little damage, it had gone through hell and was super-heated and going at a ultra-speed. All its memory was temporary lost, and it was supposed to stay somewhere to heal. It was hard to believe that after so many million years of searching, two probes showed up in the solar system at almost exactly the same time, and unfortunately at exactly the same space. What were the odds of it? The number was so mind-boggling small that it made the lottery look like a sure win. But hey, as someone said, what happened, happened.

The late comer caused catastrophe effects on the former one. The Tisillium is indestructible. So the only thing that can destroy Tisillium is Tisillium itself. When the second probe suddenly appeared inside the first probe's core, a chain-reaction of nuclear fission took place immediately. The power was so great that it darken the sun, pushed Jupiter in a new orbit and stopped planet Mars's iron core from spinning. Earth was in the other side of orbit, so the effect of the explosion was at a minimum. After a long while,

like the T-1000 in the movie Terminator 2, the remaining pieces of Tisillium started to cluster together, now no bigger than a truck, mostly was consisted of the late comer, who lost most of its memory even before the atomic fission. Could not figure out who it was and what it was supposed to do. A few atoms from the first probe reminded it that the target was the earth. So without much thinking (or not capable of doing so), the new stupid probe hit the earth like a bullet.

We all know that disaster took place 65 million years ago. It ended the domination of the dinosaurs and many other species. What we don't know is that the meteor was not six miles wide. In fact, it was merely the size of a SUV, looked like a yellow bright globe, which obviously lost its mind.

Sadly, this globe was much more deadly than a 6-mile iron meteor.

The impact had raised inferno through half of the earth. Thick dust covered the sky globally for a thousand years. Most water was frozen into ice under the post-nuclear winter like atmosphere. Earth was plummeted into a lifeless icy cold planet. While her sister, Mars, without her magnetic field, was gradually stripped off the atmosphere and all the water due to the solar wind.

Solar system had lost her jewels. Billions of years of developments were gone in a matter of few years. All species on earth died in that disaster, not 50 percent, as today's archaeologists say.

So you see, everybody died, even the earth once did. We all should not have existed at all. I don't know it should be counted as lucky or unlucky, because the story didn't end it there. The merged twin core of Tisillium played an important part of it.

The memory started to come back. The newly formed Tisillium core realized what a huge mistake it had made. Now he was in a dilemma. If he kept the planet as the way it was, and reported the incident to the base, saying, "Hi, guys, I got good news and bad news. Good news is that I found what you have been looking for in the last 6 million years. Bad news is that I killed them all." He would surely be terminated. If he revived the planet lives and reported to the base. Soon enough his masters would find out that all lives on earth was "remanufactured", and he would be dead too. He only had two choices. Either flew away and left the earth in death cold, pretending nothing had ever happened, or remanufactured the lives and hid somewhere so no other probes would find him.

Obviously even a space probe had a conscience, and strong responsibility. He started to rebuild life on earth. It was time to be God, and he was a lousy one. He hated the vicious dinosaurs, except the beautiful flying ones. He loved the fishes and the cute little mice in the ground. So when he remade lives, he purposely ignored the dinosaur remnants. All it took him was seven earth years. When he finished the work, he looked at a new earth with grass, flowers, fishes and little rats running around, and he was satisfied.

It was time for him to hide. The safest place, of course, was as far away from earth as possible. However, he found out that he couldn't leave earth behind. All those creatures were his making. Even though they were not naturally born, they were like his children and he couldn't abandon them. He was like the father of the earth. He couldn't run away from his family, so he decided to hide in earth instead. He

figured that if his masters found out what he did and terminated him, at least he had done enjoying his family time.

So he used strong electro-magnetic field to glue rocks to his body, until he became an island. Then he separated himself into 9 Tisillium cores, and scattered them to different spots in the island. It was a design to save power, otherwise a single core would have to use much stronger electro-magnetic field to pull the whole island together. The biggest core store most of the energy, and was placed inside a cave with a water fall.

Before imposing as an island, he flew to the Sun and fully charged there. As a fake island, he couldn't charge anymore, but it would be safe from the detection of other probes. He planned to recharge every million years. So for each million years, he would dump the rocks, fly to the Sun and recharge fully again.

In order to better avoid other probe's detection, he would drift from one area to another. A time-space shield would be placed on the edge of the island so even earth lives would have a hard time finding him.

After all was done. He was contented and happy to be another "lost" probe. The only thing he feared was that some other probe found him and reported the earth's coordinate back to the base. That would be the certain end of his life.

Little that he knew, his mother planets and all the super advanced civilizations were destroyed in an unprecedented scale of inter-galactic war. All probes were recalled and were rebuilt as weapons, except him. No probe or alien would come and kill him anyway.

63 million years have passed.

Chapter 2: The island and Egypt.

In the past 63 million years, the island successfully recharged 62 times. However, the last time he had an accident. One of the elements required for charging was depleted. He didn't know it, so the energy inside accumulated all the way to another chain-reaction explosion. No Tisillium core was hurt during the big bang, but he could not recharge anymore. Only his master had this kind of manufactured element. He couldn't just go back and ask them for it.

So he flew back and turned into an island again. Only this time he knew it would be his last. No matter how he preserved the power, he would die in a couple of million years anyway.

"It's my destiny," he thought, "to die in earth. So let it be."

2 more million years passed.

The probe is getting really old and much less powerful. He already surprised himself to live this long. He grew immensely fond of his own creation, earth lives. He listened to the birds singing, wolves howling and lions roaring. He watches the whales splashing, leopards running and, and, and ...

And human making tools!

The probe finally found the civilization his master sent him for, again (dinosaurs made tools too). Only this time, he wouldn't report it, and he would enjoy it as long as he could.

They reminded him of his mother planet. The long history of his civilization began with tool making mammals just like humans did. He started to put more and more attention to them. Unable to restrain to himself, he helped them a little bit here and a little bit there. The little humans didn't know what really happened, and treated the miracles as some imaginary supernatural beings demanding their worship. So they started to develop various types of religions. Believing things that actually non-existed. He didn't mind, as long as they didn't bother him.

It was also fun to see the miracles had turned into different ways of interpretation. There was once he stopped a flood that affects all continents. The Egyptian slaves said a guy name Noah had built an ark. In China it changed to someone name Yu who had defeated the water god. Well, no matter what, the flood was over and little human's population grew again.

They even looked like his maker, the barbarian aliens in the early days, all those memories really never died.

He had a good relationship with humans, which lasted many thousands of years, until 2700 BC.

The probe, aka the island, always liked to invite the elite of humans. He would choose a few candidates and transport them to the island. He would observe them, test their faith, teach them some skills and then send them back to their kingdoms. Most of them became effective and powerful rulers. One of his favorite candidates was an Egyptian called Imhotep.

Imhotep was a very smart and promising young man. He learned architecture all by himself. Since his arrival, he built a hidden stone cave where he could just turn and unplug a stone, then the water would rush down, and 10 minutes later the pit would be filled with water again. It was the very first automatic flush toilet in the history. The island loved his ingenuity.

However, sometimes being a genius is a bad bad thing.

It didn't take long for Imhotep to sense the existence of the island.

Everything happened in the island, happened for a reason. A bird would lead him to a creek with clean water. A hog would bring him to a field that's full of pine apples, which were his favorite food. He saw horses and rode on one of them. The horse then took him to a cave full of special scripts, from which he could learn a lot about ancient architecture.

He felt that there was something like an invisible hand. It pushed him, and made him do things.

A genius notices every little detail. They figured out things much faster than normal person. Unfortunately for the island, Imhotep was one of them.

One day when he walked over a rock, Imhotep noticed something: All the metal decorations on his clothes stopped clinking, and the clothes felt a little bit heavier.

Is it his imagination? He pretended to have lost the direction, and walk around there three more times. Each time he got the same reaction.

He remembered the spot.

2 months later, he found another spot that had the same peculiar behavior. He remembered that spot as well.

In one year, he searched the whole island and found totally 8 special spots. After he drew a map, he clearly saw a pattern: an octagon. After connecting all the dots together, he figured out a central location. It was the area that past the bamboos. That place was prohibited because they said there was a monster lived there. Now he viewed it differently, "It must be the heart of the island. One day when the island sleeps, I will go there and see it myself."

Being in the island long enough, he knew the island slept from time to time. When he slept, all those magical happenings would stop.

It was a very risky move, but he made it anyway.

In a hot summer day, he pretended to be sick and stayed in his room. After everyone was gone he sneaked out. (Good old high school days.) He ran directly to the Bamboos.

Eventually, he found the cave with water fall. The cave was dark and lifeless. It just looked like any other cave. However, Imhotep knew he found what he was looking for, so he dropped a rope and climbed down.

Before the story continues, I have to explain something about the special material – Tisillium.

Tisillium is the toughest material in the universe. Nothing in the world can damage it. However, everything has a weakness. The Tisillium's weakness is water, when it's inside other materials, like inside a rock.

When a Tisillium core decides to hide inside a rock, it will fold all its atoms to a billion times and become the lightest material in the world, much lighter than the gas, so it can penetrate anything through the gaps between their atoms. Water, being so soft, of course will not damage any Tisillium atoms. It will merely create billions of short-circuits which will make Tisillium atoms lose an enormous amount of power in a short time. In the beginning, the Tisillium core had the water-repelling force field surrounding the rock to protect it from water. And the power of the force field was never an issue.

It was not an issue until 65 million years later.

The force field was shut down to save power 1 million years ago. At that time, the island's main core, we called it the heart of the island, was hiding inside a perfect water proof granite rock. Force field seemed unnecessary. However, after a million years, now the rock had many cracks inside and out. It couldn't protect the core any more.

Now let's get back to the story.

Imhotep carefully explored the cave following the water flow. When stumbled onto a spot, he suddenly felt his clothes became very heavy. All the metal decorations were pointing toward the ground. As a curious young man, he wanted to know what was underneath. Being prepared, he took out a hammer and nails and started to open a hole on the ground. Immediately the ground started to shake...

The island was sleeping, or you can call it "in energy saving mode". He dreamt of leaving earth and went back to his mother planet, where he was welcome back and regarded as the hero who discovered the new civilization. In his dream, he made a decision that he would do anything to leave earth and go back, even if it was death waiting for him.

When suddenly a bad feeling penetrated his whole body and he was forced to wake up, death was indeed waiting for him.

There was nothing else more panicking to see his precious power being drawn away from him than anything else in the world. His main heart was surrounded by water all in a sudden. Each moment he felt weaker and wearier. To his surprise, the one who did this to him was the one he liked the most: the always happy and cute little Imhotep, the one who he thought would never hurt a fly. He wanted to squash him into pieces, which in fact he was still capable of, but then he will die too. So he formed the yellow lights into a shape of alien (like the Star War's 3D projection, only the color was yellow) and pleaded to the young prodigy, "Stop that, Imhotep, please. I will do whatever you want. Please save me!"

Originally, Imhotep had no idea of what actually happened. He was just trying to find some treasures on the ground. Out of nowhere a strange crocodile head alien suddenly appeared in front of him. He was

startled for a while, but then he knew it, "This thing must be the master of this island. I just did something to make him dying. I wonder what that would be." Seeing the water going down the hole on the ground, he immediately understood. So he said to the yellow 3D projection, "I can save you, whatever you are, but you need to pledge to be my slave, and do whatever I told you to do."

(In Egypt 2700 years ago, slavery was the dominating social orders. If it happens today, we usually just ask for three wishes, but back in that time, Imhotep would expect nothing less than complete control.)

The island had no choice. Either he would die or become a slave. It was a little funny to see the strongest and most powerful material in the universe knelt down before a little human being and obeyed his orders, but what had been done, was done. Imhotep was satisfied, and he patched the hole so the water would not go in any longer. In a short time the water surrounding the core drain down to somewhere else, and the island's heart was water-free again. It was survival with a hefty price.

After that near-death experience, the island learned a new lesson about human nature:

In the past, I have helped you humans so many times. I did nothing but good deeds for you. And now this is what I get for my kindness: almost got killed and forced to be a slave. From now on, I swear I will stay away from the human society, and I will not get involved in any of your business. I will let you fight each other, kill each other and rot in hell.

Though the pledge was made under a life-threatening situation, the island still treated it very seriously. Back in the alien home planet, if you have made a promise, no matter how small or how big it is, you will either accomplish it, or die doing it. The island broke a promise 65 million years ago: he failed to report earth's location back to the base. It was out of the survival purposes, but it deeply shamed him ever since. He knew he couldn't go through the ordeal of breaking another promise. So as long as Imhotep's demand didn't threaten his own existence, he would do it without a question.

The first command from Imhotep was the island should teach everything to him. It was proven to be very difficult, due to the limitation of the human brain, and the limited human knowledge at that time. Imhotep's was not able to understand most things that the island filled him up with, but he was good at architecture, so he learn quite a lot about building techniques.

The second command was to build things. Previously he had been working on a statue made of bricks, so he asked island to replace the statue with pure granite, which the island complied immediately. In a matter of seconds the old one was gone, and a new beautiful large smooth white statue was there. Instead of thanking the island for a job well done, Imhotep was mad because it only took the island seconds to build, while he spent almost his entire life on the ugly old one. He questioned the island why he didn't build the statue himself. The island replied, "It was supposed to be a test, and too bad you failed."

Imhotep was furious. He ordered the island to build a water fountain above his heart, the same spot that he had open a hole. With the experience of building his flush toilet, he made a large stone plug himself, and put the plug over the center of the fountain.

“If you dare to insult me again, I will pull this plug and kill you. Is that clear?” he threatened the island.

“Yes, master.” The island replied, in a trembling shape.

Just like all the smart guys, Imhotep suspected that the island would find a way to kill him. He didn’t want to take any chances. So he gave a new order, “You need to promise me that you will also obey the orders from my children, and all my descendants, as long as they have my blood in it.”

The island was angry, “You want to enslave me forever? Why are you so greedy?”

“I am not greedy.” Imhotep said. He pointed at the other slaves around him, “They are in the same situation. Their sons and daughters are slaves since the day they were born. It is the way it has always been. You are the magical island at my service. How could I ever let you go?”

“But I created the world, I created you. I gave life to you, all of you. Why didn’t you show me your gratitude, or mercy?”

“Mercy? Ha ha!! You are so naïve! We humans have no such thing! We come, we fight, and we destroy. I let you live. That is the only mercy I can give you.”

“If that’s true, I promise that I will make all the progresses to end this soon.” The island said with a fiery tone.

Imhotep was a little scared, “Are you going to kill me?”

The island replied, “No, I cannot kill you. It’s against the rules. But one day, one day I will find a loop hole, and I will kill your family, every single one of your family!”

Imhotep felt a real chill all the way down to his spine.

Imhotep returned to Egypt as a high priest. He ordered the island to stay in Mediterranean Sea so nobody in Egypt could see it. Then he started to build pyramids with incredibly large stones. In the long history of Egypt, he was the first architect to do so. During his life he performed so many architectural miracles, that he was one of a few commoners who were accorded divine status after death.

Imhotep had a secret son. Snofru. Ever since he was a little boy, he would go to a specific spot in Tunisia, and got transported to one of the secret chambers of the island. There Snofru studied from the island and demanded him do things that no human beings were capable of. With island’s powerful magic, he became a pharaoh, and built many great pyramids. Under his rule, Egypt grew stronger and bigger. The new pyramids were always bigger than the previous ones. At the same time, the whole Egyptian people firmly believed that pharaohs were truly gods. No one dared to challenge their authority.

After a thousand years, the island finally found a loophole. He could not kill the pharaoh, but he could raise a team to do it. He started to choose individuals with utmost care. For each candidate he will watch his whole life closely before making a move on him. He called the leader of the team “Protector

of The Island". He would transfer some power to him, so he could perform miracles. It was the best way to earn his followers' respect.

There was a young one who was a good potential. He saved his life a few times since he was born. He even managed to send him to live with a loyal family of Egypt. The young man had a good heart, but he was too perfect, that the island was afraid he might be another Imhotep, until one day the young man killed a slave-master and tried to cover it up. He knew it was time, so he approached him and asked him to be the protector of the island. The young man agreed, but on one condition, that one day he could lead his people out of Egypt. It turned out that they both hated the pharaoh's control with a passion. So they made a pack right away.

Long story short, the young man served the island for forty years, formed a solid team and got a good candidate for the island to be the next protector, and the island kept his promise of bringing the man and his people out of Egypt. In the process, the pharaoh's family was killed one by one, and pharaoh himself was drowned in the Red Sea. The secret of island was once again lost. The island finally broke free. He left the Mediterranean Sea immediately.

Chapter 3: Protectors of The Island.

Wandering around the endless Pacific Ocean, the island enjoyed his freedom tremendously. After 1000 years of being a slave, now he knew how precious freedom actually was. In order to stop anyone from getting close to his heart again, he activated a partial energy shield on the water fountain. Whoever tried to get close to it would be blasted into pieces by extremely strong electro-magnetic radiation for sure. It would shorten his remaining life, but at that time he would rather live free than be a slave.

Things were easy after that. Every island's protector did his job. After trials and errors, they found out that the best way to have a good leader was training from the toddlers. The protector would adopt a baby, carefully bring him up the right way, and make sure he would be a healthy man both physically and mentally. When the time is right, he would give him some special glowing yellow water to drink.

It was the water inside the energy shield. Only the island had access to it. That kind of water was extremely rare, only a protector could earn the right to drink it.

Each of the protectors had drunk that water and become almightily powerful. They always had the same question in mind. *What would happen if I had drunk more? In one sip I became immortal, how about a gallon of those sacred water? What will I become?* Luckily no one dared to try, except one, and we will know him later.

The energy shield around the fountain worked very well. Since then no living things was able to get close to his heart. The only down side was that since nobody would enter the cave, the water pool and the stone plug was still there. It was like a sword of Damocles, which was always hanging above his head.

He had the power of removing the whole water fountain, but there were some water reservoirs in the mountain on top of it. Moving the fountain might cause the whole mountain collapse, and the rock would be dipped inside water again. He tried to turn back into solid Tisillium form, but last time Imhotep's sabotage had already caused half of his atoms malfunctioned, and those atoms were permanently attached to the rock. Therefore, his heart was literally trapped inside that broken rock.

He didn't want to risk his life to remove the water fountain. Since the energy shield was protecting him, the island reasoned, it was good enough. There was no perfect solution.

The energy shield was so strong, that even the water passed by the fountain was proven to be magical too. It could heal wounds, grow things, lengthen lives, and most importantly, with enough quantity, it could bring back the dead. However, the villagers soon found out that the person the water brought back was not the original one anymore. Sometimes he or she possessed a completely different personality. The island was bewildered by this bizarre phenomenon. With a little research, he found out that some intelligent creatures such as humans had a unique possession called souls.

A soul is a kind of fleeting energy that goes in a womb and comes out of a tomb. It grows with human body, and in the end either returns to the earth or flies away to the sky. Millions of souls going up and down every day, merge with other souls, recycle and go back into a baby again, like the water cycle system on the earth (ocean -> cloud -> rain -> ocean). This soul recycling process fascinated him. He

started to collect souls to do research on them. It turned out he was too enthusiastic about it. Soon his protector and other island dwellers started to complain hearing whispers in the jungle. The island didn't care. He continued to collect souls, put them in the jungle and set up a little energy fence so they couldn't escape.

Before long his soul research had a major breakthrough: he could assemble a human shape that mimicking a soul's original appearance. With the soul, the fake person was very real. You could see it, feel it, and hug it. It would act and talk exactly the same way as if it were the person alive.

He was so proud of this success that he wanted to make it a big show. One day, the villagers and the protector were astonished to see thousands of dead people standing in an open ground. It was a gift from the island to the villagers. He imagined that it would be a really touching scene: Daughters hugging her long gone fathers, sons talking to their lost mothers, husbands meeting wives, friends seeing friends... all the most emotional moments in dramas.

However, the villagers, including the protector, ran away screaming at their top of lungs and hid in the caves for months until they were able to step into open fields again. No one dared to return to the village. Rumors of zombie armies like the ones in "Lord of the Rings" made everyone nervous and jumpy.

The island felt very guilty for having scared them. To make them conquering their fears, he built a temple deep in the mountain. The temple was Cambodian style because that's the majority race of the villagers at that time. Inside, the island made his own Egyptian carvings and opened a secret passage way, just like the old days when he helped building the pyramid. With all the stone deities guarding the temple, the villagers finally felt safe within their new homes, and the island learned another lesson about human nature:

They say they would do anything to see their dead relatives, but when they actually see them, they are too scared to bear it. So take it slow, let them see one dead person at a time.

As the soul research gained more progress, the island started to ask the protector to collection souls for him outside of the island, which the protector faithfully carried out. The protector would monitor the candidates' lives, while at the same time collected the souls that they had (accidentally or purposely) killed. Doing it provide 2 benefits, one, the souls would be guaranteed fresh and untouched; two, those souls were powerful when used against a naughty candidate. The side effect was that, the noises of the jungle were getting unbearable. Sometimes it would drive a villager crazy.

With the new knowledge of human souls, the island finally fully understood humans. Since then the protector could just take a look at a candidate's soul and decide whether to cross his name out or not, no more guessing work involved. Evil men liked Imhotep would have never stood a chance. The island felt at peace which he hadn't felt for a long long time.

At the same time, there was a side effect. Since the island understood a lot more about human nature, he started to care about their souls. He would enjoy the company of a good gentle soul while hate the

bad ones. He would kill a villager without warning by various “accidents”, simply because his soul turned dark, while at the same time he would do a lot to protect a pure and nice one.

Another thousand years passed.

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Mary walked along the street. She saw a dirty old man lying on the ground with a terrible smell. She saw this kind of beggars every day in the city so she didn't mind much, until she caught a sight of the bottle.

The bottle was transparent, made by something she had never seen before, and it was half-filled with glowing yellow-tinted water.

She observed the bottle carefully. It was not made of glass, but by something strange. It had some Roman words on it: “O – C – E – A ...” That was all she could tell. She knew a lot of Hebrew, but very little Roman.

The old man suddenly woke up. Hid the bottle inside his filthy clothes and yell to Mary, “What are you looking at? Go away!”

Mary said, “Please calm down, I just want to help you...”

“You got nothing I want, go away!!!”

“How about this?” Mary left a piece of loaf and went away.

The next day, Mary saw the same dirty old man standing and staring at her in the middle of the street. She felt intimidated, but she was kind enough to say hello to him.

“Food.” The man said. Mary gave him another loaf. This time he finished it in a minute. Mary never saw any one eat a whole loaf so fast.

“More.” The man said. Mary hesitated. She was bringing food for her fiancé, and she already gave him her dinner.

“More.” The man said again. He stared at Mary as if he was challenging her.

It was a long pause.

Finally, Mary said, “Come with me.”

In her fiancé's house, Mary gave her future husband the food. Despite his strongest protest, she bathed the old man and put new clean clothes on him. Then she asked her fiancé money for some food. He was so mad that he almost hit her in the face, it was only because of a strange serenity of her made him stop the fist.

“Woman, are you crazy? You want me to give you money so you can take care of this filthy beggar? Who is he to you?”

"I don't know him at all." Mary replied.

"Then you are either stupid or crazy. You know that I can cancel the marriage for this, right?"

"I know." Mary said, "He is a complete stranger to me, but I feel that this is the absolutely the right thing to do. Nothing else makes me feel so right. So I will get him food one way or the other. Will you help me or not?"

...

The old man was invited to the dinner. Not much to eat, just some fishes and wine. A grudging fiancé watched him with openly contempt. The old man seemed not noticing any of the strange mood at the table. He finished his fish, and handed Mary his bottle, "Drink it."

It was a very dirty bottle with a disgusting smell, but Mary knew it was very precious to the old man. She asked, "Are you sure?"

"Nothing more in my long long life." He replied with an unreadable smile.

The next day, Mary found herself pregnant ...

...

About 50 years passed.

The island was not so happy to finally make a woman his new protector. The previous one disappeared 50 years ago while searching for a new baby to kidnap. That damn old fool was too soft to take away someone else's baby. The island should have known better. Now with the old one gone he got no candidates left. There were only a few rude rowdy Roman sailors and a lonely woman left in the island. He had no choice but to give the job to the woman. At least he knew she wouldn't hesitate when grabbing somebody else's baby. That woman had a wicked soul.

Then he saw the ship in the horizon, and the pregnant woman on it. Oh, she got such a beautiful pure mind! He knew it right away she was the one. Luck finally was on his side. It was fairly easy to get her to the island. The island moved close to the ship. The time-space shield raised a gigantic thunderstorm when contacting the ship, then vola, she was on a wood plank drifting toward the island. It couldn't be easier.

The island wanted to make her the new protector. Under her care, her babies would become the best candidates ever. The island was smiling when the current protector argued, "She cannot be a protector now! She is pregnant. A protector needs to run around in the island. A pregnant woman cannot do that. Not without risking her babies' lives. Let me take care of her now."

The island thought about it, and agreed, "Alright, you can be the protector until the day she gave birth to the babies."

It was a shame that a machine was still thinking like a machine, no matter how complicated he was. If he were a true alien, a true being with fresh and capable of real thinking, he would have killed the wicked woman right at the spot.

We all know what happened next. (If you don't, I feel sorry for you. You have missed the best revealing episode of "Lost".)

The island was in a fury when he saw Claudia was killed by his own protector. He couldn't believe that the woman had conned him shamelessly, right under his nose. He knew she was with a bad soul but he had never expected the soul could be so dark. He was extremely mad, but he couldn't do a thing. The two babies needed a woman to take care of them, and she was the only woman in the island at that time.

"One day you are going to pay for this. One of her sons will kill you, and there is nothing you can do to stop that." The island cursed her in the worse way.

"I know." The woman said, with a wicked smile, "Then I must make them feel love before that. When I was little, I always wanted to have a good mother. Now I can be one. Killing her is the best decision I ever made."

The island burst with a flash that brighten the night sky. Some noses of Roman sailors started bleeding.

...

Years passed.

The island liked the second child more than Jacob. Jacob was always obedient and quiet. He followed everything his mother told him to do, which made the island dislike him more. The other one was smart and independent. "With a mother like that," the island thought, "it's good that the boy was a little rebellious."

He named him Samuel, after one faithful protector of his. He had a high expectation of him.

Chapter 4: Jacob and Samuel.

At the age of 13, by the arrangement of the island (with a not-so-clever hog involved), Samuel discovered the other Roman sailors' village, and very soon he moved in with them. The island was very pleased to see that. The young prodigy finally broke free of his evil mother's influence. What else was better than that? He started to secretly teach Samuel how to building things, and how to use various Egyptian devices to perform some miracles. To Samuel, all the ideas came naturally, like he already knew a long time ago. Soon he became the leader of the village at a very young age. The sailors regarded him as a prophet sent from the Athena.

One day Samuel talked to the island, "I want to leave this damned place!"

The island completely agreed, "Good, part of a protector's job is to go around the world and search for talented babies. You will travel a lot after you become the protector."

"But I don't want to kidnap other people's baby. That is WRONG!"

"It is for a good cause, definitely worth the effort."

"What cause?"

"Uh..." the island was a bad liar, "If the light in the cave goes out ... uh... so the rest of the world."

"You are lying! You are such a bad liar." Samuel cried out, "Nothing will happen if the light goes out. It is just you dying."

"Uh..." the island found himself being caught red-handed, unable to speak, it was very hard for a machine to lie.

"I know you treated me well, but I am sorry that I won't be your protector."

"Didn't I help you enough?" The island said in a sad voice, "Didn't I teach you everything I could? I think of you like a son. Why can't you just offer a little protection in return?"

Samuel looked at the alien, who was in his real mother's shape. He(She?) looked quite upset. He felt sorry for him, but still he had to say it, "I am really sorry. You are the best God that I ever know. But I have already grown up. The power you gave me should be used for the better of the mankind. I should use my special abilities to help them before I die. Staying in the island and avoiding human contacts are not the ideas I like. So I have to go, please don't stop me."

They were both quiet for a long while. Samuel looked at his almighty master with a determination.

Finally the island said slowly, "I won't let you get off this island. I will keep reminding you your duty until you accept it one day."

The boy stared at the island, who faked as his dead mother, and said, "Alright then, if you choose to do it this way. One day, I will find a portal to leave this island. I know they are here somewhere. And if you try to stop me, I will kill you and drop you to the bottom of the ocean."

The island felt a chill so cold that he was trembling (figuratively speaking). It was like back to that day, when Imhotep demanded to be his master. He couldn't kill the boy because he loved him too much, but he knew the boy was too rebellious to become a protector, but he didn't want to give up just yet. Time, he thought, *only time could change his mind. Since time is all I have, I would keep waiting and waiting, until the day he returns and takes the job.*

Time passed slowly, swiftly and irreversibly.

The island tolerated "the mother" for another 17 years, right after she gave Jacob the title of protector. He helped "the mother" kill all the Romans and burned the village to the ground, in order to infuriate Samuel. He was not disappointed: Samuel took the knife and killed her, just as he planned. What he didn't expect was that the always quiet and tame Jacob, in a sudden fury, severely beat Samuel into a bloodbath and dropped him down in the cave.

When Samuel, who was carried by water, reached the fountain of sacred water, the island immediately turned down the energy shield level so Samuel wouldn't die right away. Then again, he faked as Samuel's real mother, a trick that he had been using many times before, which was the most effective.

With blood dripping from his mouth, Samuel saw his mother walking gracefully from the deep of the cave. She always looked extraordinary beautiful. He remembered that she was exactly the same way 17 years ago. Immediately he knew the island needed something important from him, otherwise he wouldn't have shown in his mother's form. Maybe the moment had finally come.

The moment of the ultimatum.

Not surprisingly, his fake mother looked at the badly wounded Samuel and said, "My child, this is the last chance that you can become a protector. All your friends and followers are dead. Your brother hates you. There is nothing else for you in this island anymore. Now drink the water and become my protector!"

With broken legs and bruises all over, Samuel almost drowned in the sacred water. He felt a strange powerful reaction boiling up inside his body. At that time he didn't know that he had involuntarily drunk too much of that water. His power was already way beyond any previous protectors. The island didn't mind because he expected Samuel would agree. Let him drink as much as he liked.

Knowing him for so long, Samuel knew the island always wanted him to be the next protector, and he already gave him so much power and taught him so much knowledge. They were like father and son. At that time all he needed to do was saying "Yes", and he would have everything.

However, he opened up his swollen eyes, and spoke like a hero, “I will never kidnap a baby like that evil woman. She was a protector when she killed my mother. I hate her and I hate this job. You will never get me into it.”

“Why are you so against me? I did nothing but teaching you and raising you like my son. Why even at this moment you still don’t want to protect me?” The island felt deeply hurt by his rebellion.

“Why should I protect you? You pathetic old fool.” Samuel felt that all his strength was back. The sacred water had completely healed him in just a short moment. He stood up and said, “All you have been doing is hiding and hiding. Did you ever do anything good to the human? I want to go out, and I want to use my power to help my people. Why can you just let me go?”

“Your race is always busy killing each other outside.” The island said it ironically, “there is nothing for you there. You will care for them, fight for them and eventually die for them. I won’t allow that from happening. I would rather kill you now.”

“Do it then, what are you waiting for?” Samuel stood like a giant. He knew that this time the island wouldn’t let him go. In fact he didn’t plan to escape.

The Samuel’s dead mother, faked by the island, came up to him. She slowly gently touched his firm cheek and spoke in a sad voice, “I am really very sorry for this. Your mother wants to tell you that she is incredibly proud of you.”

“I’ve never actually met you, but I know you are always around.” Samuel said, “I love you, mom!”

The yellow light suddenly turned up to a thousand magnitudes stronger.

Life is precious, but don’t forget the soul, it is even more valuable.

Samuel is dead, but the island cloned his body and put him gently on the creek, the place where he played most as a boy. He also made sure Jacob would find him. It was a disappointment to see Jacob placed his body together with the evil woman. Clearly Jacob never understood his brother, or his fake mother. He got a pure soul, but it would require a long time of training for him.

The matter was settled, but the island was still in trouble. He didn’t know how to deal with Samuel’s soul. Over the past 17 years, he gave him so much hope, taught him and trained him so well, that even his soul was highly unusual. In addition, he drank a lot of water in the fountain before he died. So his soul inherited a lot of powers from the island. He couldn’t constrain it in the jungle. It escaped the prison the first night it was thrown there. Since then it roamed around day and night as a column of black smoke. If it got hold of a soul, it could fake his human’s appearance and voice. It could also read souls by flashing the person. Everything that the island taught him, the soul still had it. The big trouble was, what should he do with this monster?

He could terminate it in a second, but it would mean he had to kill him again. It was extremely difficult for the first time already. However, if he let it leave the island, it would avenge his murder by telling

outsiders all the secrets of the island. He wouldn't be able to hide any more. Very soon the whole world would come visiting him. He might be sunk by the sheer weight of the visitors.

Finally the island decided that: *Let it stay in the island. The time-space shield on the edge will stop it from going out. It will be very angry about being held in this place, but whatever it plays out, it was fine with me. I just need to make sure it won't kill Jacob and his candidates.*

.....

Jacob had a very tough job to do.

It was a bad start in the beginning. His mother was supposed to teach him everything about being a protector, but she was killed in a hurry. The island didn't like him, so he got little help from him. Therefore, he didn't know that, in order to find a replacement, the best way was to kidnap a baby.

Now whenever he tried to get some potential people to the island, his brother's soul would kill them all before they become candidates. A slave ship called "Black Rock" was coming to the island. It contained some good people, a good chance to find a candidate. He even persuaded the island to provide a little extra support. Following the plan, the island raised an incredible thunderstorm, pulled the ship near, lifted the whole ship and placed it in the middle of the island. It was a shame that the stone statue was destroyed during the process, but it was a job well done nonetheless. However, by the time Jacob got there, Samuel already killed almost all of the crew, except one. It was the one who had a serious damaged soul. He felt like Samuel was mocking him, "OK, I just leave you this one, and let's see how you deal with it." That miserable man couldn't be a candidate, not in a million years. But he used him anyway. It turned out that he was a good slave. He always did what Jacob told him to do, though Jacob knew that he was still thinking about Samuel's deal all the time, so this slave, Alpert, could not be fully trusted, but at least he was useful.

By the way, the price that Alpert had asked for his service, it was too cheap. Immortality is an easy thing in this island. He could give it to any of his slaves who wanted it for free, because actually it was more like a curse. Nobody liked to be someone's slave forever. That's why protectors were always running around looking for the next baby candidates, so that they could hand over the job and be free. The island promised each protector, if they found a good replacement. He would transport them back to Tunisia, and they would start their new life as mortals. Each time a protector left the island, the island would personally appeared in his alien shape and shook his hand and congratulated him for his freedom, and the talk usually carried on like this:

The island: "Do you want me to visit you after you are out?"

The protector: "No. I am afraid that the next time I see you it will be extremely unpleasant."

The island: "OK, I am just kidding. Goodbye, my faithful one."

The protector: "See you in the next life, master."

.....

After thousands of deaths, Jacob finally got the hang of the job. He had 3 rules: Number one, nobody leaves the island, except the one he permits. So no matter how scared you are, you stay. Number two, no contact with the outside world. Everyone lives in the most primitive way possible, wearing the simple clothes and no shoes. This way everybody is poor and suffering, and they will remain simple and controllable. Rule number three, whoever has a bad soul has to leave the village and live alone. We won't kill you, but let's see how long you can live out there with the monster.

Under his command a small village was established. The followers all listened to Alpert, and Alpert listened to him. Alpert taught each of the villagers Latin so they could all communicate. Occasionally the black smoke would come, but they were all prepared. The ash offered by the island blocked the black smoke from getting in. Jacob had no idea what that ash was, neither did he bother to raise the question. Alpert and his followers were silent too. Besides that, the underground of the temple was a place that the black smoke frequently visited, but he never entered the temple in the upper part. Nobody knew why, except Jacob and the temple abbot, Dogen.

A long time ago, before Samuel's death, the island made the young prodigy promised that, as long as the temple was still functioning (with the abbot in it), he wouldn't disturb them. It was a promise that Samuel was still keeping. Obviously Samuel and the island had a very complicated relationship which Jacob couldn't understand.

That's right. Under the temple there were places where they once bonded as the master and the prodigy, or even as the parent and the child. A lot of sentimental value was there. The temple was one of the very few things Samuel still treasured.

The ruling of Jacob had been relatively easier since they got the black ashes. The only problem is, unlike his precedents, Jacob always failed to find a replacement. He was on the job for the longest time, broken all the records.

He was very upset by it. Being a slave for a life time was already unbearable. Imagine that being a slave for many lifetimes. It drove him to the edge of the madness. The only thing that could calm him down was weaving, which his "mother" taught him when he was little. He found peace when he heard the sound of the loom. It made him feel like his "mother" was still there.

Samuel sometimes appeared in human shape, as himself. His visits always scared the villagers to death, but over the years they learned two things: one, that he will not kill you if he let you see him as a human, at least not right away; two, if you have a good soul, he will be less likely to kill you. Most of the time, Samuel appeared just to tell the villagers to bury a body, or go somewhere to clean up a really bloody mess. The villagers were deeply bothered by that. After all, none of them really wanted to clean up the extremely gory mess that Samuel had left.

.....

It was one lovely morning in 19th century. Jacob caught a fish and ate it just like any other days.

He actually never needed to eat. He was doing it so he could still appear as a human.

Outside of the white sand beach, far in the horizon, a trading ship with 3 large masts appeared.

Samuel (Aka the MIB, smokey, the monster) appeared as himself. He looked at the ship and frowned.

Samuel: "Morning."

Jacob: "Morning."

"Mind if I join you?"

"Please. Want some fish?"

Man, we both don't need to eat. This is really hypocrite. Samuel thought as he replied in the same hypocrite fashion, "Thank you. I just ate."

Lying bastard! Jacob thought, what did you eat, uh? White smoke?

Samuel sat nearby.

Jacob said, "I take it you are here because of the ship."

Now you are on the business, Samuel thought. "I am. How did they find the island?"

Jacob replied, "You'll have to ask them when they get here."

That was utterly irresponsible! Samuel was angry, "I don't have to ask. You brought them here (to get killed). Still trying to prove me wrong (that you will never find a replacement), aren't you?"

Jacob: "You are wrong. (I will find a replacement.)"

Samuel: "Am I? They come; they fight; they destroy. They corrupt. (Then I have to kill them all again.) It always ends the same. (No one is left to be the protector.)"

Jacob: "It only ends once (when I successfully find a replacement). Anything that happens before that is just progress. (I don't care how many people will die in the progress.)"

Samuel stared at his former brother with disbelief. What kind of cold bloody animal had he become? He remembered him as a boy. At that time he was so innocent and never hurt a fly. Now where was the brother he knew?

Slowly, he said, "Do you have any idea how badly I wanna kill you?"

Get a number and wait in line, Jacob smirked, "Yes."

Samuel: "One of these days, sooner or later... I am going to find a loophole, my friend. (You are not my brother anymore.)"

You are bluffing. Jacob thought. "Well, when you do, I will be right here."

Alright, all warnings were out. It's time to devise a plan. Samuel said to his enemy, in the same hypocrite tone of his, "Always nice talking to you, Jacob."

You just waged a war and talk to me like this? That is an insult! Jacob faked the smile and replied, "Nice talking to you, too."

In just a few words, a war was declared.

.....

Samuel started to get busy.

First thing, everyone in the new ship was slaughtered.

Second thing, finished the wheel of time. With the knowledge that the island taught him, he easily align a small Tisillium core's space-time jumper with the wheel, so that when the wheel turning forward or backward. The time period on the island will turn back and forth. Because it was a small core, and the wheel was very primitively designed. So it couldn't jump through the timeline too far, roughly when turning 1 spoke, the island will jump 10 years. It was just a fail-safe device. Samuel thought, "If there is anything goes wrong, at least I can jump back 10 years and started all over."

The 8-spoke wheel looked like some symbol he learned before. In a moment, he remembered, so he named it "the Dharma wheel" and wrote it on the wall in Egyptian hieroglyphs.

The island watched him secretly. He was proud of him for building such a powerful device in such a simple way. Though many years ago he decided to be neutral between Jacob and Samuel, but in his heart, he always wished Samuel to be the winner.

It was a little unfair that Samuel could harness the true power of the island, while Jacob was only able to direct his followers to do trivial things. Well, as someone once said, nothing is fair in love and war, right?

After finishing the wheel, Samuel felt like something was missing here. What if someone else found this cave and turned the wheel? He had to develop some kind of security system. Looking at the Tisilium core, he got an idea. The core was originally used to transport pharaohs from Tunisia to the island. Why not just keep this function, and reverse it? This way, if his enemy came and tried to turn the wheel, he would be teleported to Tunisia before he could touch it, while at the same time Samuel can turn the wheel anyway he wanted, because being a smokey, he couldn't be teleported. Good idea! He started the modification right away.

In reality, things usually are not going your way. Sometimes good ideas end up in bad practices.

Samuel found out that truth while inventing this wheel. The small Tisilium core was in a power saving mode. So the teleporting function would not be activated until someone turned the wheel. It was a little dilemma. The teleporting system was supposed to stop someone from using the wheel, but it would

only work when someone already using the wheel. Samuel' knowledge of Tisilium core was limited. He didn't know how to turn the power saving mode off.

The hell with it! It's good enough for me. Samuel thought, if someone dared to use it, he would be kicked out and never come back. On the other hand, I could always come here and fix the time wheel.

It was a not perfect but passable solution.

Alright! The third thing to do, was to find some army forces. *Jacob was immortal, but his servants are killable. With a team of trained soldiers, Jacob's little league of villagers will be crushed for sure. Let's see how you find a replacement alone.* Samuel decided, *from now on, I will bring people to this island too.*

The years between 1900 and 1945 were peaceful. There were no more visitors to come and get murdered. The black smoky monster stayed deep in the jungle and doing who-knew-what. Jacob built a lighthouse and was busy with it. Those two adversaries didn't see each other for a long time, but deep down they both knew that it was the eerie silence before the storm. There was no doubt that war is coming.

Chapter 5: War and Jughead

At the same time, outside of the island, wars were raging. World War I and II combined had caused over 100 million casualties. They were the most deadly conflicts in the human history. The island experienced the whole atrocity from the beginning to the end. The brutality of the battles, the massacre of other races, and the total destructions from city to city were all extremely unbearable. He urged Jacob to do something about it. Jacob replied apathetically, "It's not safe for me and my men to go out there now. There is nothing we can do. We will stay and wait until it's over." He asked Samuel for solutions. Samuel said, "Let me out of this island. I will kill all the military forces, and the world will be peaceful again." Of course the island couldn't allow him to do that. So all he could do was watching.

Watching innocent children got slaughtered, watching the cities being raped, and watching numerous people killing each other in cold blood like savages...

Over the 65 million years he had lived on earth. Never once he had felt so emotionally depressed. Millions upon millions of his favorite creation died violently in front of his own eyes. It was worse than killing him. It made his heart cold. All the Tisillium cores in the island became frozen gradually. Even the water fountain over his heart was turned into ice completely.

Very soon, the whole island could feel the unexplainable cold too. The sky was always cloudy and snowing. Creeks turned into icy roads; pools turned into ice rinks. Plants died in massive quantities. Animal bodies were everywhere. Every creature in the island suffered from the frigid weather, except some polar bears, which swam ashore and made themselves right at home.

The island was sick, seriously.

He couldn't tell the time any more. All he felt was an uncontrollable arctic chilling; a penetrating cold that was formed by millions of dying souls. He tried his best not to feel, but there was no way avoiding it. The powerful sorrow emotions coming from millions of souls had gathered around, and filled every corner of the island. They were asking the same question over and over again:

"Why didn't you help us? Why didn't you stop the war? WHY? WHY? WHY?"

"I should have, but I didn't. I am VERY VERY sorry!" the island could only give out a little feeble reply. Even though he was not actually causing the war, but he deeply regretted that he didn't do anything. 4700 years ago he made a rule that he would not involve in human business in any way, but this time he felt that he should have broken this rule.

Aug 6, 1945. The island woke up in an extreme terror. He found his flows of energy were completely in chaos. He couldn't move and couldn't speak. All his normal functions were shutting down. What was the matter? He tried to search around but nothing came back. It seemed his remote sensor system was malfunctioning too.

Slowly he remembered the nightmare he just had. A blinding flash that covered the sky; a gigantic mushroom cloud, and 100,000 souls screamed at the same time...

He was in shock. In the last 100,000 years he had been regarding human race as nothing but little cute creatures which resembled his alien masters. Yes, he saw them fighting each other constantly, but it never bothered him like that. Those 2 global wars completely changed his perception of war. Never in his imaginations that those lovely two leg animals were capable of carrying out so many unthinkable atrocities. Now they became so powerful and merciless, that they finally committed this ultimate crime!

He couldn't believe, and refuse to believe that, while he was sleeping, a populated city was completely wiped out in a blink of eyes. He kept telling himself that it was nothing but a nightmare, though his sensor system finally came back online and told him the otherwise. Then he kept telling himself that it was only an accident. A horrible error someone had made, but it was unintentional. It was a very small chance a disaster in that scale could be triggered by mistake, but since he didn't know what exactly happened, it was still a possibility.

.....

Three days later the nightmare came again. Only this time he was not sleeping.

There was no way for him to sleep after what happened anyway. The tragedy damaged him immensely. He was not even able to do any routine circuit check for three days. He was just staying there. The island's camouflage system and time-space shield were all down. Anybody can see the island from 20 miles away.

An aircraft from a carrier reported the abnormality right away, "Colonel, I swear the island was not there 3 days ago... The island is huge, and it was covered in thick snow. I know it's ridiculous, but it's true. I swear to god..."

To the islanders, it was good to finally see the sun. One after another, they all came out of their caves and started to enjoy the warmth of the sunshine. It was an extremely long and difficult winter for them. Food and fur became scarce. Most of them had lost the faith. They talked about leaving the island every day. Jacob and Richard had a hard time keeping them in check. Now the sun finally came out, they were happy, but at the same time knew they needed to search for food immediately, before the sun was gone again. It was time to hunt some polar bears.

To their surprise, they saw a full fleet of Navy battleships just two miles away. The ships were so close that they could see the sailors, wearing short shirts, took out their binoculars and stared back at the island.

A boat of sailors paddled toward the beach. When they finally reached the icy shore, a young man jumped out and asked Richard Alpert, "What the hell is this place? Why it was all covered by snow and why are you all looked like cavemen? Ah....chew....."He sneezed loudly. He wore too little for the temperature.

Richard wanted to say you asked too many questions, but held it back, instead he extended his hand to him, "Richard Alpert, I am in charge here."

The young man looked at him with suspicion and say, "Charles Widmore. Nice to meet you. Now please explain. My officers are waiting."

Richard had a difficult look, "It's a long story and very hard to explain..."

Charles held up his gun and pointed it at Richard, "Then I suggest you to say it in an easy and quick way."

Richard smiled and said, "The fastest way is to pull the trigger."

"What?" Charles thought he met a crazy hillbilly.

"Pull the trigger and you will understand." Richard said. He raised his knife to Charles.

Charles was angry, "Alright, you asked for it, Sir."

He aimed at his leg and pulled the trigger, the gun was stuck. No firing.

"Now you point to the ground and shoot." Richard put back the knife and said.

The gun fired. The loud sound caused a ringing effect in everybody's ears.

Charles looked at his gun in astonishment. He began to understand. It was really the fastest way.

The sailors onboard heard the gun fire. They got busy right away. In one minute, all the heavy guns were turned and pointed at the beach.

Richard said, "Now, if I say that you can fire all those guns at me, and I will not get hurt, will you believe me?"

Charles looked at him like seeing an alien. Richard was very calm, acting like all those hundreds of large caliber guns and cannons were just toys. *Am I dreaming or what?* He had a hard time believing it.

His military walkie-talkie rang. His superior officer asked in the phone, "Hey, son. What is going on there? Who opened the fire?"

Charles looked at Richard again, and saw him saying a word in silence, "LIE." For an unknown reason, he followed it right away, "Uh, nothing, sir. It was a misfire."

"OK, then. Did you find out what is happening there? Why the mountains are white?"

Charles looked at Richard again, he got the same silent word, "Lie."

"Uh, nothing, sir. It's nothing. Uh, it's a setup for a big budget TV series called 'Lost', Uh, which is sponsored by ABC. They made this big snowy island scene. Sir." Charles heart almost jumped out of his ribcage. He didn't even know why he said such a big lie to the officer. Somehow it just felt like the right thing to do.

“Wow, that’s a really big budget TV Show! ABC really has loads of money! OK, now you tell me, son. How do they cover the whole mountain with snow?”

“Those are not snow, Sir. Uh... those are cotton. They bought tons and tons of cotton and cover the whole mountain. They look like snow from a distance, Sir.”

“God damn it! We got to give a medal to the one who came out with this idea! It looks just like snow from here. I am going to watch this show for sure. What was the name again?”

“Uh...” Charles forgot. Richard reminded him, “Lost, right, right! The name is ‘Lost’.”

“What a strange name for a TV show! Anyway it was easy to remember. Come back, son. We still have a war to fight. The Japs won’t wait for us.” The radio went silent.

Charles put down the walkie-talkie and realized what he just had done. He lied so many times to cover up for this island. He might be court-martialed for that. Why did he do that for? He was confused.

Richard looked at him with a smile. He said, “Now I think you could be a candidate.”

“Uh? Candidate for what?”

“You will see. You will come back to this island. I am sure of that.” Richard said.

Charles turned his head to the rest of his team, and said, “Anyone who say anything about it, I will personally make you suffer.”

“I can’t believe you just did that, Lieutenant!” a young girl in military uniform protested.

She looked more like a boy, but her voice was no doubt a female’s. She was only a private but she scolded Charles openly, “I know are sneaky, but I have never thought you could lie to your superior and want us all to be your accomplice...”

“Stop that, Ellie. It’s just ... uh, I just feel like it was the right thing to do.” Charles said in such a weak way he couldn’t believe it himself.

“That’s bullshit!” Ellie held the rifle up and pointed it to Charles, “Give me your walkie-talkie or I will shoot you.”

“Ellie...” Charles felt like he was a little boy in front of her.

Suddenly the ground started to shake. Thundering noises rose to a frightening level. All mountains started avalanching. An icy snow wall more than 20 floors high charged toward them at a scary speed. All the remaining trees fell down in front of the roaring snow wall like little toys hit a bulldozer. At that moment, it truly looked like the end of the world.

Ellie screamed. Charles jumped to her, held her with both of his arms and tried to cover her with a bear hug.

The enormous thundering snow wall rushed near and disappeared. It was all in a sudden deadly quiet.

.....

The island was extremely angry! There were no word could describe his anger when he saw the second atomic bomb went off in Nagasaki, right under his watch. All the agonies of the 80,000 souls made him boiling hot. It was no more doubts that some merciless human beings purposely committed this crime. He was sick but the anger was so overwhelmed that he suddenly was fully awake and fully powered, like an atomic bomb was also exploded inside him. The whole island was shaking under his rage.

His sensors were all back online. In just a short moment, he found something that was even more hideous. *How dare you keep committing crimes like this!* He cursed. *Someone has to stop you!*

All the Tisillium cores were activated. He moved the island immediately, getting rid of all unnecessary burdens and being close to Japan. Looking around, he found what he was looking for. Then, PUFF, he disappeared.

He reappeared in front of Samuel, in the shape of the alien, with the crocodile head and only four toes.

Samuel was genuinely surprised by an alien popping out from nowhere. He felt the energy flow around and knew who that was, "Hello, old fool. Why do you look like this?"

"Cut the bullshit!" the island fumed, "I want you to do one thing for me."

"I am flattered!" Samuel said, "Since when did you ask me for help?"

"Again, cut the bullshit! Or I will squash you like a bug." The island warned him like a raging bull.

"Oh, sorry! What is it?" Samuel had never seen him being so angry. Only then he realized the island was deadly serious.

"Fly and stop a plane for me." The island demanded, "Bring the plane here."

"But how? I cannot leave the island, remember?" Samuel almost laughed.

"I lower the shield and give you some power, then you can."

"Which plane should I stop? Do you have a picture?"

"You will know, now go!" the island kicked Samuel in the butt so hard, that he launched up like a rocket.

That was a truly powerful kick! Samuel suddenly found himself buzzing with power. A yellow light surrounded him. Whatever that is, the air opened by the light. So he didn't feel any air blowing to his face. That must be a better way of flying, because traveling by this insane speed, he was afraid he will burn like a meteor.

In one minute, he saw the plane. It was a big B29 Superfortress. Samuel smiled and yelled, "Finally, you old fool!" He turned himself into smoke and charged forward.

Onboard of the B29, the captain was sweating uncontrollably. He knew his mission, but he couldn't stop the nervousness. *Have those Washington guys gone crazy? They already bombed Nagasaki today. Now they want me to drop this bomb in Tokyo. Tens of Millions more will die, and I will be forever responsible for it.* He wiped his forehead and tried his best to appear calm.

Radar reported a small blur approaching. He looked at the radar and the blur already very close. What the hell...

Before he can finish this thinking, an overly loud thud appalled everyone onboard. The next thing they knew, they were all sucked out of the plane and started a 20,000 feet of free falling.

.....

"Is this what you want?" Samuel held the atomic bomb up, and asked the island. The bomb was brand new with words "JugHead" on it. It was heavy but Samuel held it easily with one hand.

"I specifically asked you to bring the plane back. Now where is the plane?"

"I knew what you wanted, old alien." Samuel spoke with a smile, "You just want to stop the bomb, right? Now I did it, where is my reward?"

"Where is the crew? Why do you have to kill them all?" the island was still angry.

"Sometimes I really don't understand you. You let 100 million die, and now you care so much about that 8 men ..."

"Stop! No more talking!" the island suddenly felt a pinching pain, 100 million! It was so emotionally devastating that he had to stop for a while, and then he gathered himself and said, "Samuel. You did very well. Now tell me what you want. After this you can ask me for anything."

Samuel had a little suspicion, "Even if I ask you to let me go?"

"I will let you go, if you promise me you won't tell the secrets of the island, and you won't massacre the people outside." The island said.

"That's interesting..." Samuel looked deep at his alien master who taught him everything he knew and gave him all the power, at the same time he was also the one who killed him and imprisoned him. Is he my family or my foe? He wondered. For some strange reason, he didn't want to go just yet.

Finally he said, "You know actually just moments ago I could have just flown away with your power. I didn't need to come back. And you will never see me again."

"Yes, I know," the island said, "but I also know that you are too proud to just run away like that. You want to earn the right so you can leave as a decent man. Am I right?"

"Ha, ha, ha ..." Samuel laughed aloud, "You really know me."

“So now I am telling you that you have earned the right to leave this island already. All you need to do is to promise me not to tell the secret and not to kill the people out there. Then I will let you go.”

“That’s a nice trick!” Samuel said, “You know I am going to kill you. You are so afraid, so you asked me to do something, in order to kick me out. This way I will never be a threat to you, right?”

The island shook his head. He knew what Samuel was going to say.

“This con is very clever! You want to make me think I made the choice, but in fact you are the one who push me this way. Brilliant! It’s just too bad that I am smarter than you, old fool! I will not go. I will stay here, I’ll find a way to kill Jacob, and then I’ll find a way to kill you. Only then I will be really free.”

“If you kill me, you will become a mortal, do you know that?” the island said.

“Oh, I get it. You are really scared! Now you try to use another way to make me not wanting to kill you. Ha... Ha... Nobody can take my power away, not even you, alien!” Samuel laughed aloud, turned into smoke and flew away. The bomb dropped down to the ground and made a loud KONG sound. Fortunately, it didn’t go off.

The island let out a long sigh. He might have saved ten million people today, but he knew it was far not enough. Now what should he do with this bomb?

He inspected its internal parts. Found out that this thing is too primitive to be a threat to him. It won’t do any damage to any of the Tisilium cores. On the other hand, it can generate some power for him. So he moved a tiny piece of Tisillium into the bomb, and started to absorb the energy from it. In about one minute the Tisillium came out twice as big, and radiating yellow lights.

“Well, it’s good for another hundred years.” The island said. He carefully put the Tisillium back to the rock. The Tisillium merged with the rocks and disappeared.

For 2 million years, he couldn’t recharge on the Sun because he used up a required special element. Now the whole island’s Tisillium’s average power level were dangerously low. He was thinking, “Maybe I could get more of those hydrogen bombs to charge me, but now who will get them for me? Jacob will be useless. Samuel seemed very unlikely to do that again. I have to find someone else.”

On another thought, he was too old to keep living. He felt very tired and ached, a lot of things were already malfunctioning, and he did not want to keep suffering like this for another millennium.

Maybe I just let Samuel kill me. When the time comes, I let him lift up the stone plug, and I will have a quick death. The only problem is that I am too proud to ask his forgiveness, and beg him to kill me.

A light went up in the island’s mind. The idea was formed: maybe I just do it like he said. I’ll secretly push him to find a way to kill me, and make him think he is the one who’s making all the decisions, while in fact it is me who wants to get killed. Well, if I can pull this ultimate long con on him, I will be glad to die.

After making up his mind, he looked at the big bomb on the ground, which was already sucked out of most the energy and became a dud. "Just let Jacob handle it. It's harmless anyway." POP! He disappeared.

.....

On the beach, everyone looked around with bewildered eyes. They were not sure they were standing in the same island anymore. The ice, the snow, and the tidal wave of avalanche all disappeared. The temperature suddenly jumped up at least 100 Fahrenheit. It was too cold before, now it was too hot. The island had only rocks and soil left. The dead trees and dead animals were all gone. It was like in a split second the island had taken off her winter clothes and now was hot and naked.

All the battleships were gone. Far away they can see a sky burning red, with a humongous mushroom cloud in the middle of the horizon.

A loud bang shook the ground. Everyone looked up at the sky. They saw a rocket with yellow light flew up to the horizon at an incredible speed. It disappeared in a short moment.

Ellie suddenly cried out, "Let me go, you idiot!"

Charles Widmore took his eyes off the horizon, then he realized that he was still hugging Ellie a little bit too tight. He let go and jumped back, "I am sorry, Ellie. I didn't mean to..." Mean to what? He couldn't complete the sentence.

Ellie smiled. She looked very lovely, like an angel. Charles opened his mouth in amazement.

"If you do that again, next time I am gonna kill you." She said, still smiling.

Charles stopped his breathing. My lord! She looked so beautiful when she said that. He didn't know what to do, and what to think, all he could do was staring at her.

Ellie nodded her head to the soldier next to Charles, "Cunningham, check Charles. He is in shock. Take care of him." Then she announced to the rest of the soldiers, "Everyone, I will be in charge until Lt. Widmore recovers."

She turned over to Richard and asked, "Let me ask you again. What exactly is this place?"

Richard replied, "You already know. This is an island that magical things happen at a regular basis. If you stay, I can promise you that all of you will stop aging for a few years. Your illness will be cured; your wound will heal. If you were disabled, you will walk again."

"Do you think I was born yesterday?" Ellie doubted.

"Then think about what just happened."

Ellie thought about it. She pointed the rifle at Richard's head and pulled the trigger.

The rifle stuck.

Ellie said, "OK. I believe you."

"Hi, everyone." Suddenly a familiar sound rose up. She turned around and saw Jacob.

"Welcome to the island." Jacob said it with a big smile.

Chapter 6: Jacob and US Navy SEALs

A top secret file titled "The Lost Island" was handed to the President of United States. Truman opened it and read a few lines. He frowned and asked his Secretary of the State, "Is this a joke, James?"

James F. Byrnes said, "No, Sir. It's deadly serious. We have more than a thousand witnesses, including some Japanese POW. They all say the same thing: a mysterious island disappeared under the surrounding of our fleet, and somehow showed up in Japan Sea. It sent out a rocket and captured our first Hydrogen bomb. Then we lost the island again."

"Those are the most ridiculous things I have ever heard in my entire life! How could they even possibly happen? Look at this, 'A rocket flew quietly at estimated 5 times the speed of sound had impacted the plane without explosion...' And here, 'The bomb was floating in the mid-air with black smoke surrounding it.' These things can only happen in a science fiction, not in the real life!"

"I understand how they sound like. Mr. President." James said, "I wished they were all fake, but unfortunately evidences and witnesses point the other way, sir. And now we still have a Hydrogen bomb missing."

"Ah, talking about the Hydrogen Bomb, you know what," Truman said it with a temper, "because of the Navy's incompetence to protect the plane. Now we have to destroy all the documents and evidence of that bomb, so that if this bomb was exploded somewhere in Soviet Union, we can denied it. It pushed back our schedule of making those bad boys for at least ten years. That's just perfect!"

"I am sorry, Mr. President." The Secretary of States said in a non-apologetic way, "But besides the Hydrogen Bomb, we have a much more important issue to handle."

"And what kind of things could be more important than that bomb?"

"We have to find the island, Sir."

.....

September 23, 1954.

It was a beautiful blue sky day. Jacob caught a fish and ate it just like any other days.

He rested in a cave in the middle of a cliff. Staring at the ceiling, which was a big mess of names and crossing lines, he wondered this time which name he should erase.

Charles Widmore was a good candidate. He always had a plan, never gave up, and had earned the respect of all of his colleagues, but he was way too weak in front of Ellie. Sometimes he appeared to be such a clumsy guy with her presence, it was embarrassing. How could he be the leader of his men like that? He had to toughen him up.

At the same time, Ellie was also a remarkable woman. She's very smart and perceptive. She noticed a lot of things before any other one did. She liked Charles but never showed any affection toward him. That was a good sign. It meant that she had a very strong mind. However, the army spirit was still in her blood. She sometimes would not show any mercy toward anyone who was in her way. That made him very uncomfortable. He didn't want a killer to be the leader.

"So is that the only choice I have now?" he wondered, "A wimp or a killer? I got to use the lighthouse to find more candidates."

Meanwhile, those two could make a perfect couple. He thought about it and smile, "I will let them be the co-leaders for now. In the future when new candidates come, I will"

"Morning." Samuel showed up at the entrance of the cave and said.

His sudden appearance shocked Jacob a little bit. He was confused about what was about to happen, "Morning."

"Mind if I join you?" Samuel asked.

Jacob: "Please. Want some fish?"

Samuel said like a rehearsal: "Thank you. I just ate."

They both paused for a while, and then Samuel noticed the balance scale, "It is an interesting instrument."

"Yes, it actually represents the balance of the power."

"What kind of power?"

"Day and night, black and white, good and evil."

"I take it you mean you and me."

"Yes." Jacob said.

"Sometimes it's hard to tell the black from white, or maybe the white is actually black."

"Maybe we shouldn't waste more time on the topic. My friend, what can I help you today?" Jacob asked politely.

Samuel smiled a little, "A ship has arrived. I think you should take a look."

That really surprised Jacob. He jumped up and rushed outside.

It was just off the shore. About only 1 mile away, a U.S. army battleship was anchored there like a cheetah stalking its prey.

Jacob became furious, "How did they find the island?"

Samuel replied, "You'll have to ask them when they get here."

Jacob stared at him, "I don't have to ask. You brought them here. Still trying to kill me, aren't you?"

"I am."

"Are you out of your mind? They come; they fight and they destroy. It always ends badly."

Samuel, "It only ends once (when you die). Anything that happens before that is just progress."

The anger was out of the range of Jacob could control, "Do you have any idea how badly I wanna kill you too?"

Get a number and wait in line, Samuel smirked, "Of course."

Jacob: "One of these days, sooner or later ... I am going to find a long con, my friend."

Bluffing all you want, Samuel thought, "Well, when you do, find me in the jungle."

Jacob disappeared.

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The 18 members of elite U.S. Seals were all well trained. They sneaked onshore without anyone noticing, used radiation detectors to find the lost Hydrogen bomb. After securing it in a bamboo framework, they laid down a circle of small mines around it. Having confirmed the bomb was secured, they started to find the island dwellers.

They were too easy to find. The camps were just out in the open. The Navy Seals used long-range binoculars to survey their targets, and found out that they didn't even have guns. All they got were only some knives and blades. They looked sharp but would be useless in front of automatic rifles. The islanders did have some military training, but their booby traps, scout parties, and obstacles seemed all but toys to those highly experienced special force soldiers.

Therefore, when the SEALs suddenly appeared and surrounded the islanders, they still had no idea what was happening. Well, at least they seemed to understand guns and bullets. Nobody had made a move. The SEALs were relaxed a little, because they didn't really want to kill.

A muscular middle-age man appeared to be the leader of the SEALs. He spoke as loud as a lion, "Who is in charge here?"

Richard Alpert stepped out, "I am."

"That's good. Wait here." The army leader said it while he opened an envelope, which had a top-secret seal on it. He took some flash cards out. The kind of cards that looked like the ones a high school student would use to prepare for his S.A.T.

Richard was confused. The army leader seemed surprised too. He then read the first card, "Did you move the island?"

"No." Richard said. It was a ridiculous question.

"Ok, if the answer is 'no', proceed to card #4." the soldier followed the instruction on the card faithfully, "You have waste your time, he is not the one in charge. You need to ask someone else." His face turned red and yell at Richard, "Who the fuuck is in charge here? Answer me!"

"What is this? Is this some kind of sick joke?" Richard said with a bit of challenging.

"No, mother-fuucker. This is fuucking serious." The officer replied, "The general would not just have given me a top-secret envelope just to fuucking mock you." He pause a while, then said, "I spoke too much already. Now answer me, who is fuucking in charge here?"

"With all due respect, I am the one, officer." Richard insisted.

"Don't fuucking waste my time, or I will put a bullet in your skull right now, right away!"

"You can try to kill me, but you won't succeed." Richard smiled, "You have no idea what this place is."

The army leader got angry, "Hey, pal. I don't care who the fuuck you think you are. If you don't give me something, I will really fuucking kill you. I never hesitated."

"Then go ahead, what are you waiting for?"

The leader held up the gun, but he hesitated for the first time in his life, there was something strange happening here. Why this handsome young man looked so calm, like he was actually bullet-proof?

He pointed the gun to a boy next to Richard, and pulled the trigger.

PANG!! The gun fired and killed the boy instantly.

"Michael, Michael!!" Richard eyes wide opened. He bowed down and held Michael in his arms, "No, no, no, Michael. You shouldn't die!" He had a very hard time believing it was true. Nothing should have happened to this young innocent boy. That's the way it had been as long as he was on the island. Why now, all in a sudden, when they needed it the most, the blessing of Jacob was inconveniently lost?

"You made me fuucking kill the boy! You son of bitch!" the leader hit Richard so hard in the face, that Richard had a big bruise eye right away. "The next one is you. You understand? Mother-fuucker! All I want is a stupid simple answer. NOW ANSWER THE FREAKING QUESTION!!!"

Seeing the boy got killed and Richard got knocked down, the island dwellers had a small commotion. Ellie looked at Charles. Charles eyes turned left and right, telling her not to make a move. Ellie loosened the grip on her knife.

“Uh...” Richard was still dizzy from the hard blow, but now realized that he was mortal again, the fear of dying was suddenly overwhelming. He didn’t know how to handle it, “Uh... His name is Jacob... But ... But ... But I don’t know how to find him.”

“Now you are talking. I don’t care fuucking how! Now go and fuucking find him, god damn it!” the army leader cursed, “Or I will kill a hostage every hour, you fuucking got it?”

A calm voice suddenly emerged from behind, “My friend, there is no need to resort to violence so easily.”

Both of them turned their head quickly, and they saw Jacob. Richard obviously felt a lot of relief.

“Now who the hell are you?”

“My name is Jacob. It’s nice meeting you.” Jacob extended his hand.

The officer jumped back, pointed his gun to Richard and said, “Hey, fuucker. Don’t even think about playing fuucking tricks on me. I am a fuucking professional.”

“Yes, I know. No tricks.”

“Now answer me: Are you the freaking one who moved the island?”

“No, but I can answer the questions for him.”

It was astonishment to Richard. He never knew there had been another person above Jacob. He thought all the miracles happened before were all performed by Jacob. Only then he realized it was not true. Jacob didn’t tell him a lot of things.

The army leader looked at the cards, and finally said, “OK, I guess I have to take it as a ‘YES’. Now the next question is uh... uh... it’s a strange question, ‘will you destroy the Earth?’.”

“Of course not. That’s out of the question.” Jacob shook his head.

“Are you sure?” the leader had doubts, “To me, you don’t seem to really fuucking represent him.”

“If he wanted to destroy earth, he should have done it a very long time ago.”

The answer satisfied the army man, and he continued, “Now the next question is ... uh ... is ...” He looked utterly confused.

“What is it?”

The army leader checked the card for a second time, slowly, unwillingly, he asked, “Do you need more Hydrogen Bombs?”

“What?!” Jacob couldn’t believe his ears.

“If the answer is “What?!”, go back to card #4.” He said. Then he were in a rage again, “You son of bitch, you are not fuucking in charge either.”

Jacob showed a bitter smile. Now he started to get the hang of it. “There is someone else you can ask. He was the one who brought you here. He had all the answers you want.”

The army leader obviously lost all his patience, “That’s totally fuucking bullshit! We came here by the fuucking orders of US Navy, not by any one on this fuucking island. You are gonna fuucking pay for wasting so much of my fuucking time!” He raised the gun toward Jacob and pulled the trigger.

PANG!! The gun fired with a big bang, but the bullet stopped in the mid-air. Everyone was dazzled at the sight of a frozen bullet, which was still rotating at a high speed.

“You think you mortals can really kill me?” Jacob smile with a contempt, “Now you will all pay for it.”

The bullet flew backwards and killed the army leader. All soldiers jumped to the action, but they found their guns were all jammed. Charles, Ellie and the team of former Navy soldiers jumped on them with sharp knives and blades. The Seals’ rifles were completely useless against those well-trained blades. In 20 seconds, the battle was over. 18 bodies lied on the ground spilling massive amount of blood.

Jacob looked at the slaughtering without any pity, “Richard.”

“Yes, master.” Richard said it in a pious way.

“I wanted you to remember that: Bad guys never stood a chance in this island.” Jacob said, “You got that?”

“Yes, master.” Richard said humbly, then he asked, “But why the little boy ...” He didn’t dare to continue.

“Oh, the island is sleeping. That’s why.” Jacob said, “The monster knew it was asleep. That’s why he brought them here today.”

Ellie overheard the conversation, so she asked, “Why the monster wants to bring them here?”

“Isn’t that obvious to you? He wants to kill you all. That’s why.” Jacob said with a smile.

“When the island is going to wake up?”

“It will take months, sometimes years. I simply don’t know. Last time it took a year for him to wake up.” Jacob said, “But don’t worry. I will protect you during this period, like I always did. You will be safe.”

Ellie doubted, “So what you are saying is that we are not really protected during the sleeping. If something bad happens and you are not there, we can die just like the boy, right?”

That’s why Jacob didn’t like her. She was too smart and asked way too many questions, but in front of the whole group, he had to answer, “I couldn’t come here in time. I was distracted by the monster. I am partly responsible for the boy’s death, and I am sincerely sorry for that.”

Charles looked at Ellie with worry. He knew she had said enough, "OK, now everything is settled. We shall start to bury the bodies. Ellie, come here and help me take off their clothes."

Ellie stared straight at Jacob's eyes, then she gleamed at Charles with much softer eyes, then said, "Yes, Sir. I am coming."

Richard was still worry, "Master. Now they are all dead, but there is still a battleship out there."

"Nothing you need to worry about." Jacob said, "I'll handle it myself. You know, a monster like that seemed invincible, but a little accident with the ordinance will send them all away." He smiled.

"Yes ... Sir." A frightening chill went down Richard's spine. Only at that time, he realized that the gentle polite master he had been serving for all those years were not that gentle at all. There was another side of him he didn't even want to find out.

Chapter 7: Finding the Island

1960, Los Angeles.

A taxi navigated made a wide turn and stopped in front of a church. Dr. Chang stepped out of the taxi, looked around and asked the driver, "Is this it?"

"Si, señor. La iglesia." The driver replied, "Lo siento, tengo que ir." He drove away.

"How about the fare ..." Dr. Chang's words were interrupted by a lovely young lady, who showed her hand and said, "I am so glad to finally meet you, Dr. Chang. We are all waiting for you."

Pierre Chang shook her hand, gazed at her for a while, then remembered who she was, "Are you the daughter of Dr. Maxwell? It is an honor to meet you. You father is a great man."

The lady smiled and said, "Thank you! The name is Amy. I am still a student here, but you, Dr. Chang, you are the principle of University of Michigan. It IS our honor to have you here." Then she extended her hand toward the door, "Please, this way."

Dr. Chang glimpsed at the building, confused. No matter how you looked at it, it was a church, but why they pulled all the strings to get me here? He protested, "Sorry, but I am in no mood of praying."

Amy glanced around, making sure nobody was nearby, and then she approached Dr. Chang closely, and whispered in his ear, "We found a way to find the island!"

Dr. Chang was momentarily in shock. His eyes were as big as light bulbs. "I thought that was just a myth." He said.

Her smiling eyes said the otherwise.

Dr. Chang rushed into the church.

.....

1961, Richard Alpert stormed out of the house, cursing some Latin.

Jacob appeared and asked why.

"That child is a danger to you, Sir. He picked the King Tut's knife." Richard said, "I don't understand why you still want him."

"He's special." Jacob said.

"Special how?" Richard asked, "I couldn't feel anything from him, he's plain as water. Besides, he has a strong violent tendency deep inside. He will become a killer, not a leader."

"I am sure of it. He is very special." Jacob said.

“In what way? Please, tell me, Sir. I am dying to know.”

“Because I already knew he will be the one who’s going to kill me. So 5 years ago, I drove a car, ran over his pregnant mother, and yet he still survive.” Jacob said, “Now I understand. He’s not my killer. He is more like a bait.”

“A bait for what?”

“I don’t know it yet.” Jacob said it with an undetectable smile.

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1968. Somewhere in the middle of the Pacific, 200 feet under water.

Olivia Goodspeed was waked up by a swarm of sound and flashes from the alarms. Still half-sleeping, she bumped her head on a steel ballast door. It hurt a lot. As she staggering toward the radio room, she almost fell in the big pool in the center. This DAMNED place! She cursed, at the same time wondering why she signed up at the first place. She would rather be in a shopping mall.

Amy and Paul were already there. The handsome Paul smiled at her and asked, “What took you so long?”

She replied him with a bitter smile. She always felt tired in this underwater facility, but Amy and Paul seemed like they both had limitless energy. For the past 5 years living in this hell’s deep, they both slept only 5 hours a day, and they talked to each other endlessly like the parrots back in her home. She didn’t know how they managed to find so many topics to talk about. She just felt sleepy all the time. Obviously it was a bad thing. She gained at least ten pounds already.

Olivia asked, “What happened?” It seemed that uttering these two words already consumed all her energy.

“Sh...” Paul stopped her with an index finger, then he switched off all the alarms. An eerie silence filled the small steel room. Olivia wanted to ask but she knew it would be useless. Both of Amy and Paul focused all their attention on the instruments, which showed only weird numbers and graphs.

5 minutes passed, it was like a decade long to Olivia.

Suddenly Amy cheered and almost screamed, “Paul, we did it. We hit the jackpot!”

Paul was as high as her, “Really. Oh my god! What are the odds?”

They both jumped up and hugged each other. Paul kissed Amy in her mouth. Amy seemed surprised but was happy nonetheless.

Olivia hated to see that. For the last 5 years, they treated her like a ghost, and now this. Am I really invisible?

“Can somebody please tell me what happens?” she asked aloud, interrupting their little celebration.

Paul dragged her to one of the bubble-shape windows and pointed outside, "Look there!"

She looked hard, but saw nothing special. The Light was dark 200 feet down here. She couldn't see far. Some fishes were swimming around. A turtle was staring back at her.

"You mean that's the jackpot?" she pointed at the turtle.

"Are you kidding me?" Paul felt a little bit insulted, "Look up."

"I am just a translator, Lieutenant." She said, "Or ex-Lieutenant, whatever. I am not a scientist like Amy, so you really need to tell me what I am supposed to look for."

"OK, I am sorry." Paul said, "You are right. My apologies. You should look up and check the water, and the lights that pass through it. You will see an edge."

This time Olivia gazed really hard toward the surface. In one moment she saw it too.

The water had different level of lights. Though all of them have the same look, half of the water seemed a little bit darker. There was an enormous edge that was moving above them. Wherever the edge covered, the light would darken just a little bit. It seemed like an incredibly large plastic cover floating above, but she just couldn't see the plastic.

"What is that?" Olivia asked.

"That, my dear, it's what we have been searching in the last 5 years." Amy smiled.

"Could you explain that in English or any languages that I know?" Olivia asked.

Just before Amy started, Paul interrupted her, "Sorry, Olivia. It's classified. So Amy can't explain anything to you."

"Great! It's just perfect! Even a private funded operation has 'classified information'. Are you kidding me?" Olivia grunted.

"Please go back to your quarter and wait." Paul said, "We will have a lot to do in the coming days."

"Now you want to kick me out!!" Olivia almost erupted.

"I am terribly sorry, but yes, I have to do that. It's my duty." Paul replied.

"Duty my ass, you just want to make out with Amy. I knew it." Olivia murmured. Amy was embarrassed. Paul just politely showed Olivia the direction of the door, forcing her out.

After patiently waited for Olivia to leave, Paul shut the ballast door closed, turned a few nodes and put the microphone to his mouth, "Base 23, Base 23. This is Looking Glass 42. This is Looking Glass 42."

A clicking voice answered, "Looking Glass 42, this is the base. What's going on?"

“We found the object, repeat, we found the object.”

“Are you sure? Looking Glass 42. Can you confirm that with the scientist?”

Amy took the microphone and said, “Base 23, this is Amy Maxwell. I’m the scientist with Looking Glass 42.”

“Oh, the famous Maxwell!” the voice in the radio were surprised, “I read all your books about the Electro-Magnetic theories in high school.”

“Thanks, but that’s my grand grandfather’s. Anyway, I am now looking at the object in this very moment. Radar shows nothing, but it was right above us, I am sure.”

“Oh, that’s really great!” the voice said with excitement, “Please don’t lose it this time.”

“We won’t.” Paul said, “The EM readings were all over the top. There is no way we will lose it this time.”

“Good! Keep up the good work.” The voice said, “One more thing, please do not engage. I repeat, do not engage. Keep your distance. By the way, tell the translator to prepare for any contact from them.”

“Roger that.” Paul said, “She is ready. Now please record the coordination.”

“Go ahead.”

“4-8-15-16-23-42, I repeat, 4-8-15-16-23-42.”

“Roger that. 4-8-15...”

Suddenly they felt a drastic movement of the whole hanger. It felt like a big underwater tidal wave just crashed upon the hanger and almost turned it upside down. Both of them flew up to the ceiling and dropped down to the ground. Amy was alright because she fell on top of Paul. Paul, being the unlucky one, had broken a few rib bones.

Amy struggled and climbed up with bruises all over her face. She checked the equipment and screamed, “No!!!”

Paul still couldn’t stand up, he asked from the ground, “Wot harppon?” It caused him a lot of pain just to say these 2 words.

“The island is ... is ... is gone!” Amy almost cried.

“Not again!” Paul sighed.

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1970. Early spring. Los Angeles. The taxi driver was happy to deliver another passenger to the church. It seemed to be a very profitable route.

Jacob stepped into the church and walked directly to the large basement. Seeing the big clock swing moving around, he almost laughed, "Is this the way you have been using to find us?"

Amy replied, "Yes."

Jacob said, "How?"

"It harnesses the unique pocket of energy to find the other pockets of energy on the earth." Amy said it with pride, "I designed it."

"Then you will never find it." Jacob said with a smile, "Sorry to disappoint you, but your theory is completely wrong."

"I am sorry to hear that, but ..." Amy paused a little, "but who the hell are you?"

"I represent the island."

"Really? I seriously doubt that." Amy said, "The last guy who came here claimed the same thing, but when I requested him a little bit more, he just left without saying goodbye."

"That's why I am here. Richard told me that you were a bitch."

"Thanks!" Amy didn't mind, "I must have been too hard on him." Deep down she felt an excitement building up. In her intuition she felt that the man was the one who could really bring them to the island! She tried hard not to show any signs. *The success is within grasp this time. Don't lose it!*

"Now let's back to the business." Jacob looked at the huge metal swing again, "You have to stop looking for us."

"No, can't do." Amy shook her head, "Our organization has been searching it for ten years already. No one will give up now."

"But you will never find it." Jacob said, "Not with this big toy." He pointed at the big swing.

"It works." Amy was not discouraged, "I was there and I saw the island myself."

"If you put more of your underwater stations in the ocean, you will see it more often too. It's just a matter of odds and numbers." Jacob said, "But you will never be able to get on the island."

"Last time we were able to track your island for over a month." Amy said.

"Right, then tell me what happened." Jacob said it with a big smile.

"It disappeared again." Amy finally showed a little discouraged.

"Exactly." Jacob smirked, "You cannot get on the island unless the island wants you to be there. Or ..."

"Or what?" Amy was interested.

“Or I invite you there.” Jacob said with a smile.

“Are you making a pass on me?” Amy frowned, “You are not my type, you know. And I already had a fiancé.”

“No. I am not.” Jacob said, “You are the last woman I will ... uh, invite there.”

“Then what are you doing here? You are not going all the way here just to chat with me, right?”

“For a scientist, you are very smart.”

“All scientists are smart. They are just smart in a different way.”

“OK, Enough of chit-chat.” Jacob didn’t want to extend the conversation too long, “We are really concerned about your radio broadcasting.”

Bingo! Amy’s eyes opened wide. She knew at that moment her hunch was right after all, “We know you don’t like the numbers. That’s exactly why we are broadcasting it globally.”

“You need to stop doing that immediately. Or you will suffer serious consequences.”

“Like what?”

“End of the world.”

“Ha!”

“Believe me. It’s true. For a reason I don’t know yet. Broadcasting those numbers will get us all killed.” Jacob said it very seriously.

“Sorry, it’s not good enough.” Amy bluffed, “If the world ends, then let it end. We will all die one day anyway.”

“How can you say things like this?” Jacob said, “Aren’t you scientists all responsible for the well being of human race? If you keep doing that, a monster will be released. He will kill everyone on earth, except the ones in the island. I will be fine, but you guys will be all dead.”

“Again, do you think I will believe that fairytale?” Amy said with a scorn, “Even if it were true, if you had the power to control that monster, you don’t need to come here and bargain with me. There is a reason that you cannot release it. So what you said is completely bullshit.”

“OK, if you don’t believe me, turn around.” Jacob said with a smile. It was time to use the last resort.

“If you think you can kill me in the back, you are definitely wrong ...” Amy turned around and froze. She saw her dead father.

“Amy, please, listen to me. It’s extremely important.” Her dead father said to her in a very sincere manner, “This man is telling the truth.”

“Dad?!” Amy was lost in a mist of emotions. She didn’t know what to do or what to think.

“Yes, dear. I missed you so much. Your mom said hello too.” Her father said, “But now you need to focus for me, dear. Stop the broadcasting. I don’t want to see you die.”

“Dad!!” Amy tears were out. She jumped into his arms and hugged him tight. She murmured to him, “I missed you so much... I am sorry I was not around... I am... I am too busy...”

“That’s fine, dear. You will see me again in the future, so don’t worry about that. Remember, I and your mother are all counting on you. Stop the broadcast. OK? Dear?”

“Yes ... I will ... daddy ... anything you say.” Amy was still crying.

“Good, that’s my girl.” Her father patted her in the back gently, like he always did.

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5 minutes later, Amy wiped off her tears and swore.

“You bastard! How dare you use my father like that!” she was fuming against Jacob, “I will personally make you pay.”

“Interesting! It usually works very well.” Jacob said, “Like I said, you are too smart for a scientist.”

“It’s you who’s stupid.” Amy said it with a wielding fist, “Scientists think based on facts. My father is dead. That’s a fact, an undeniable fact.” Her tears were out again.

“OK, my apologies. It seems today I finally meet a formidable adversary. Congrats!” Jacob smiled.

“Then let’s back to the business.” Amy calmed down and said it with a stone cold attitude, “We want to get on the island to do some research.”

“No way. It will expose the location of the island. Those governments will wage wars to own this island, and the island doesn’t belong to any one or any country.”

“Then we won’t get governments involve. We are entirely funded by corporations which ran by scientists. They will all keep the secret. In fact, those governments still don’t know why we are broadcasting the numbers globally.”

“That’s a relief.” Jacob said, “You surely are much smarter than I had thought.”

“Thank you! I got that a lot.” Amy said, “Paik Enterprise in South Korea will provide us with all the equipment, and Hanso Foundation will provide all the money. All personnel will be scientists and workers only. No government and no military.”

“That sounds good too.”

“We are not going to take the island. All we want is to research the unique properties of the island. If we know the answer to some ‘magic’ of the island, it will greatly help our mankind, don’t you think?”

“To be honest with you, sometimes I want to know the answers myself.” Jacob agreed, then he said, “But you need to stop the broadcasting immediately. Not later, but now.”

Amy made a call. After the call she told Jacob, “It’s stopped now. You can check with your men.”

Jacob said, “No need to. I already knew.”

“So do we have a deal now?”

“Tell you what.” Jacob stopped smiling and said with a strange expression, “You are the first human who can make a deal with me in the last 1000 years. I hope you can keep your end of the bargain. Otherwise, you will be really sorry.”

“Don’t worry about that.” Amy tried her best to hide her excitement, “We got the best man for the job.”

“I wonder who.”

“Dr. DeGroot and Pierre Chang, the former principles of University of Michigan.”

“I hope they can really do the job. It will be very tough. Anyway, it’s your problem.” Jacob left. The basement was once again quiet. Only the big clock swing was moving around and making swooping sound.

Amy stayed still in the basement alone, but her whole body was trembling with uncontrollable excitement. After 5 minutes, she jumped up and yelled at the top of her lung, “YYYYEEEEEEEEEEEEAAAAAAHHHHHH.....”

It was really a long day for her.

Chapter 8: Tales from the Others (Part One).

I was born on April 1st, 1947. I considered myself very lucky, for I never experienced any war or great depression. I never need any money, nor did I have to worry about which school to go, what grade I would make, or which girl to bring to the prom. There was simply none of those.

I had no father or mother, but I got a big big family. Basically everyone in the village was a relative to me. I always went out with 3 brothers: Tom, Ryan and Adam, and a sister: Amelia. We were playmates since we learned how to walk, or maybe even before that. I got so many uncle and aunts that I was never able to remember them all. However, there were two names every little kid in the village must know: Uncle Richard and Uncle Dogen.

Uncle Richard was a kind man. He would smile at you when he passed. He might lift you up for a hug or give you some candies, but Uncle Dogen was much more serious. He never hugged any one. He always looked at you like you are one of the bad guys. And anything you did wrong, he was always the first one there to punish you. So our group of little kids always loved Uncle Richard and feared Uncle Dogen.

Every morning we would wake up before the sunrise, we cleaned ourselves in the freezing spring water, and picked up branches to prepare breakfast. Our aunts would boil a large pot of stew with carrot, broccoli and some meat in it. It was so delicious that I still remembered how it tastes like. However, we had to get the meat quickly because by the time everyone in the village had his share of the stew, there would be nothing good left. It was the downside of having a big family: sometimes you had to be hungry because we never have enough to feed everyone.

The same thing applies to clothes too. The girls always get the new clean clothes first. We boys always got the used and worn out ones. It was unfair but it was one of the grownup's rules. We had no saying in it. For the same reason, shoes were luxuries to us as well. I remembered I got my first pair of shoes when I was 15 year old. I was so happy that I walked everywhere with them on. Unfortunately they only last three weeks.

You must be thinking I must be unhappy while being hungry and lack of clothing. No, I am telling you, it was completely different than you think. I was mostly happy in my childhood. My adult life was much worse; being in the civilized world was the saddest years I had ever endured.

I remembered that, my brother Tom brought me everywhere around the village. There was a grey line circling the village and all the uncles and aunts warned us never to cross it. Well, we crossed it many times anyway. Outside of the village there were just so many fascinating things: we could climb up to the trees and pick any fruit we wanted; we could chase hogs until they were completely out of sight; and we could dive from a cliff and swam in the ocean. That island was like a paradise to me. I had so much fun catching butterflies and ladybugs, that sometimes I completely forgot myself in the jungle. At night the trees became horrifying. They could speak! I heard them talking all night long, mostly they repeated themselves over and over, like "give me back my children" or "Run, Richard, Run!", things like that.

Those trees were scary, but they never talked back to you, so after a while I got used to it and it didn't bother me anymore, but then there came the monster, the scariest one in the whole island, which

would flew around and tried to eat you. When it couldn't find you, it would turn into human shape and call your name. It was very very creepy.

So because of all those things above, as a child I was very good at hiding and running. You wouldn't hear me running when I did it over the trees like a monkey, and you wouldn't find me even I was hiding right in front of you. At that time it was all a cat-and-mouse game I was playing with the monster, I never realized my real danger. It was just so fun to me. Strange thing was, I was sure for a few times that the smokey had found me, but he just flew away. I guessed to him it was also a game.

As I grew bigger, I learned that the monster had claimed many lives from our village. There were once the uncles allowed me to see the mutilated bodies done by him. It was a very bad experience, much worse than any of the Halloween movies. The gruesome images haunted me and I stopped crossing the grey line. My brother Tom and Ryan were very disappointed with me and called me a "little chicken". They still sneaked out of the village all the time. I was worried about them but luckily they were never get caught by the monster.

When I stayed in the village, there were nothing to do but to join the classes, we only have one teacher, Richard, and he taught only one course, Latin. It was boring but at least that was something to do. As a young child I caught up really quickly, unlike the other group who were way slower.

I think you know the members in that group, too. Charles Widmore, ring a bell? And Eloise Hawking, we called her Ellie, remembered her? And 10 other guys. They were so slow in Latin that all our kids laughed at them. They would have excuses like they only learned it for a few years. Well, we kids only existed in the world for a few years too, but we were way ahead of them. We could think it and talk it smoothly, while they had to stop many times in a conversation, just to find the right word.

Being slowing learning as they were, there was one thing everyone in the village all envied them about. They were given a gift of not getting old for 10 years, just because they agreed to stay in the island. So every time I asked Aunt Ellie how old she was. She said it in a very happy face, "I am 17. Little chicken."

"But you said you were 17 last year."

"Yes, isn't that wonderful?" She would reply in a big smile.

Usually she was a mean girl. I think asking her age was the only way to make her smile. Or maybe she would smile when she was with Uncle Charles. 'Cause I saw her with him many times in the jungle alone, or they thought they were alone. They were laughing and smiling and did all kind of silly things.

However sometimes I saw Uncle Chalres trying to take off Ellie's clothes, but she would put up a really good fight, and she would yell, "I don't want to have sex with you. I still want to be 17." Well, that was the first time I heard of the "S" word. It was quite an illustrated education.

Usually after Uncle Charles did that to her, they would be strangers for a few weeks. They would argue for little things like two children. But everyone in the village knew that in the end they would be together again like peas and beans. And we were right all the time. Eventually Uncle Charles would beg

her to forgive him in the public. She would require him to promise this and promise that. He would nod fervently like a puppy. It was really humiliating experience to us the boys. For me, it would be really hard to do the same thing for a girl, no matter how much I loved her.

After Uncle Charles and his group finally knew how to speak Latin in complete sentences, they started to teach us kids English. It was very easy to learn that Language because it was close to Latin, and we kids have nothing but time. Personally I didn't like the way Ellie taught us. She always gave us a lot of homework and pushed us doing a lot of speaking practices. Uncle Charles' method was better to us. He would give us some treats for doing well in English. He would bring us outside of the village and taught us the names of every plant or every animal. We would run around, catch some insects and bring them back to him. He would tell us the name of that insect in English, and we would all repeat after him. It was an easy and happy way to learn it. We kids all liked Uncle Charles lessons.

I still remember there was one time that we all heard the sound of the monster from far away, so we asked Uncle Charles what was its name. Uncle Charles seemed distracted. When we asked him again, he said, "Oh, that's nothing." So for a few years, we all call the monster "Nothing". Little girls would scream when they heard Aunt Ellie saying "it's nothing". It puzzled them for a long time.

The year was 1954. I was 7 years old. I remember it was in that year Uncle Ken taught us Morse code. Uncle Charles was busy doing something with Aunt Ellie. We didn't see them much. Some grown-up said they were setting up camps outside of the village. I had no idea why.

That same year 2 big things happened.

First thing was the group of the military men. They came from nowhere and surrounded our village. They looked really mean. I mean really really mean. One of my brothers, Michael, was shot to death. They were bad bad guys. I was so glad that finally a hero came out and stopped them. It was the first time I saw Jacob, before that I only learned about him in fairytale stories. People said he could move the island, and they said he could make you live forever. I didn't believe any of those, but it was at that moment when he stopped the bullet in the mid-air, I instantly became a believer.

The second thing was that we found a big big nuclear bomb in the middle of nowhere. An uncle tried to have it opened, but it burned that poor man's hand. His disfigured hand scared the shit out of me. After that without anyone told us kids to stay away from the bomb we all obeyed it voluntarily.

A few weeks later I caught Aunt Ellie walking into the village. She didn't seem happy but, being so curious about the bomb, I asked her the question anyway, "Hi, Aunt Ellie. How's the nuclear bomb now?"

She said, "Get away from me, you little chicken."

"Please don't call me that."

"I don't care. Now get lost."

It seemed she was really sad about something. To cheer her up, I asked the question again, "Aunt Ellie, how old are you?"

She suddenly erupted, "I am 18 now. You happy?!" Then she ran to her tent.

"But you are always 17..." I was stunned at the moment, how come she became 18 all in a sudden?

Then I saw Uncle Charles walked in. He was in a good mood. So I asked him, "Uncle Charles, do you know why Aunt Ellie was so upset?"

Uncle Charles said, "Haha, I really don't know how to answer this question, but I assure you that she is all fine."

"How come she was 18 now? Isn't she always 17?"

"No, we all need to grow up. We cannot always stay the same age. Look at you, you are much taller than last year. How old are you now?"

"I am 7."

"Oh, that's right. You were born 2 years after we were here. Wow, that means we had spent 9 years here already. It was a really long time." He was thinking about something, "Now tell me little chicken, are you happy here?"

"Yes, but please don't call me that."

"That's your nickname. Accept it." He said, "I am happy here too, as long as Ellie is with me. Boy, I am telling you, she is really a tough lady to handle. I never spent so much time to get a girl before."

"She's really mean to you." I said, "She made you beg so many times."

"Yeah, I know." He nodded, "But I am telling you, it's all worth it in the end. She was so ... uh... hot!" He shook his body, like he was going through a seizure.

I was too young to understand his meaning. So I laughed at his weirdness. He laughed with me too.

After laughing for a while, PANG, a metal pan flew to Uncle Charles head, knocking him down cold. I jumped back by the surprise, and saw Aunt Ellie stood about 20 feet away. She was breathing heavily like an angry tigress.

"We buried it." She said.

"What?" I didn't understand.

"We buried the freaking nuclear bomb." She repeated, "You have your answer. Now get out of my sight before I do the same thing to you."

I ran like a wind. Like I told you before, I was very good at running and hiding.

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What else? There is a lot of “else”, let me take a leak first and I will tell you the rest after the break.

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Okay, I am back. Are you still interested? Alright, let’s continue.

Where was I? Charles and Ellie? Oh, that’s right.

I stayed inside the village for another few years, until I was 13 years old. I couldn’t tolerate being called “little chicken” anymore. So I went out with Tom, Ryan and Adam again. That time we went to a pond with a waterfall first. They said there were dead bodies under the water, that’s why there were big fishes in it. To prove I was not afraid of anything, I dived right in, only to see 2 skeletons down there. No wonder those big fishes were going after me! I caught a big one and struggled to show it to them. They all cheered and said it was time for me to go there. I had no idea what “there” meant.

Tom led me to a cave then ran away. I carried the big fish and went down the cave. Inside it was filthy and stinky, but I was so proud to finally prove to those boys that I was not a “little chicken” that I didn’t realize there was grave danger around.

It happened really quickly. The fish on my shoulder was suddenly snatched away. I turned around and saw a huge polar bear. I mean a real grown-up 500-pound 10-foot-tall polar bear. He ate my fish in just one minute, then he got close to me. I was too scared to scream or move. Just when I thought he was going to eat me, he put me in his back and ran out of the cave.

I am telling you. Everything I am saying, it’s all true. Under all my boys staring, the polar bear carried me down the hill. There he jumped over a cliff and dived in the ocean with me in his back. Man, oh, man. I am telling you. It was a very thrilling ride, much better than the ones in Six Flags’.

The polar bear swam gracefully like an Olympic champion. I was on his back holding him tight. A little while later, I was not afraid any more, then I started to swim with him. Do you know what’s the funny part? When I turned, he turned with me. It was like we two were swimming partners. I felt so exhilarated that I didn’t know when to stop, so we just kept going and going. Before long we were so far from the shore that even the island disappeared. In that dangerous situation, I should be scared to death, but I felt very safe with the bear. For some reason, I felt like the big beast I just met was my guardian angel. No matter what happened, he would protect me. Of course it was all childish thinking.

Just as we were swimming, the sky got really dark, and the ocean started to boil up. I remembered wave after wave of water pounding us. I hugged the bear close. We fought the fierce storm together. The wave became bigger and bigger, like mountains after mountains coming at us. Eventually I couldn’t take the pounding anymore, and I lost my conscience. At that last moment, I thought I was going to die in the ocean, and I never got to grow old.

Of course you know that I didn’t die that day. Otherwise how the hell am I telling you this story now?

When I woke up, I was on the beach with the polar bear lying right next to me. He woke up almost at the same time. It seemed that he lost all the appetite to eat me. He just walked away slowly and left me there without saying goodbye. Well, of course he couldn't say goodbye 'cause he was a freaking polar bear, but my feeling was hurt by his unannounced leaving anyway.

I went back to my village. My uncles jumped on me and accused me of leaving the village for a whole week. None of my brothers said anything for me. My explanation of polar bear only caused me more trouble. They finally physically punished me and grounded me for a whole year. Yeah, it's not America. Spanking bad boys is legal there.

The only good thing about the whole event was that they didn't call me "little chicken" any more, but with a thundering new nickname "polar rider". I was happy with that.

One day I finally got an explanation from Uncle Charles. He said that before I was born the island was very cold and everyone could enter. The polar bears swam to the island and they were very happy. After that some strange things happened, which he didn't know much himself, that all the creatures were trapped inside. Since that day the bears were trying any way they could think of to leave the island without any success. Therefore that day the polar bear must have thought that I might have a way to lead him out of the island. Well, I was sad to hear that. More sadly, it was the first time I learned that I was also a prisoner of the island, just like that poor bear.

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After the polar bear incident I didn't went out much, until one day when I was 14 years old.

Uncle Richard gathered all of the villagers together and announced: "There is some serious crisis in the outside world. Jacob and I will get out of the island to solve it. We don't know how long we will be gone. So here I officially assign Charles Widmore and Eloise Hawking as the leaders of us. You will listen to them before we come back. Do you guys have any problem with that?"

"No." I yelled with others. I love both of them, especially Uncle Charles.

"That's good." Richard said, "Don't do any things stupid. You know from outside we cannot protect you from being killed by Ellie."

We laughed together.

Aunt Ellie yelled back, "Yeah, I dare you to test my temper. Remember how Charles got 3 months in a comma?"

We all stopped laughing.

Uncle Richard said, "Okay, enough of jokes. There was one more thing. We will bring a young man with us this time. We all know him being the bravest one. Hell, his nickname was 'Polar Rider'. That's how brave he is."

Everyone's eyes suddenly focus on me. I was surprised. It was never in my wildest dream that I could get out of the island and help them to "solve a world crisis". Was he serious?

Richard continued, "Let's give him a round of applause." He held my hand and said, "Congratulations! Son. You are the chosen one."

The sound of applause rose up. I didn't know how to react, except smiling like an idiot. People came by and congratulated me. I couldn't tell which one was real, or maybe they were all faking it.

I went to Richard's tent at the same night. I told him that he might find a better one other than me.

"No, you are the best. There is no doubt." Richard confirmed.

"But, but Ryan was a lot braver than I." I stuttered, "And Tom... he was the most ... loyal to you guys. He did everything without a question."

"Well, we are not really looking for those qualities." Richard said.

"Then what quality are you looking for? Why me?" I asked, then I knew the answer, "No, you are not serious, right?"

"Yes, we are very serious. That's why we will bring you." Richard proved my theory, "You are the sneakiest kid we knew. You can escape almost anything. So just in case we failed this mission, we will have a messenger to deliver the bad news back to the island."

"No way! You two are the most powerful men in the world. How is possible that you two can fail?"

"Kid. You don't really know the world outside." Richard said in a sad voice, "The human being is capable of destroying themselves with the whole world going down with it. We are not strong enough. Plus Jacob will always give anyone a choice no matter what. Sometimes people make stupid decisions."

I was frightened, "Really? Then what can I do if you guys fail?"

"You can use whatever the way possible to get back here. We have some friends outside who can point you to the right direction. Once you are back, tell the bad news to Charles or Ellie. They will know what to do."

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Well, long story short, we took a submarine and went out to the normal world. I was in Cuba for a whole month, during which time I was never called upon to perform my duty. Thank God for that. So I got out of the hotel and walk around in the busy street of Havana. Lady, I am telling you. It was really an eye opener. They had so many different styles of clothes and shoes. They had so much food to eat, and so many kinds of entertainment. I was completely indulged in the modern world of Cuba during that month. Comparing the life back in the island, it was a difference of day and night. My life in the island was so dull and meaningless. And Cuban's life was so rich and bustling.

That's why I couldn't help but felt lost when one day Uncle Richard returned and told me it was all over.

"How about the world crisis?" I asked.

"Jacob stopped it." He said. "It was not an easy process though."

"So now we got to go back to the island, right?"

"We will establish some secret bases all around the world to prevent this kind of crisis from happening again. So you will stay here as our eyes and ears. We will provide you everything to set up headquarters here."

Tell you the truth, at that time I was so happy that I hugged Uncle Richard really hard, and I almost kissed him. It was the best arrangement for me. I didn't really want to go back.

Now when I think about it, they must have known this would happen. They brought me out not only because I could run fast, but also I was expendable. Maybe Jacob already crossed my name.

Since then I stayed in Cuba for 10 years, I did my share of collecting information for the island. Everything they asked about Cuba or Cuban government, I would find my way to get them. A lot of times I do it in not so legal ways. Being a white kid in Cuba had many disadvantages. Spying was extremely difficult. Eventually they put a bounty on my head and I barely escaped to America, where I started my new life.

In the U.S., I hide my real identity. Jacob and Richard never came to visit me. I guessed either they just forgot about me, or they thought I was executed by the Cuban secret police. I studied hard in the college and got the license. My new life turned out to be fine.

The only thing I couldn't get out of my mind, was the way Charles begging Ellie. It was downright humiliating. I was always dreadful of having to do that. That's why I was never in a relationship for such a long long time. I thought I would be lonely for the rest of my life, but you, daring, you came along and changed all that.

Yes, daring. Without you, my life will be always meaningless. That's why when I learned that you have cancer, I had no choice but to bring you here...

"Stop, Stop right there." Rose said, "What do you mean 'bring me here'?"

"Oh, I know the psychic for a long time. She's one of my sisters." Bernard said, "She indirectly told me that I could come back here by taking the Oceanic 815."

"Oh..." Rose mouth formed a round shape, "That's why you persuade me to go to Australia in the first place! You set me up! You knew the plane was going to crash!"

"Sorry, daring. I was afraid you wouldn't understand, so I didn't tell you the truth before." Bernard said very sincerely, "It was the only way I know to cure your cancer."

“But don’t you think that’s too dangerous?” Rose remembered the events, “You were in the tail section, and you almost got killed by the others.”

“Well, not exactly.”

“What do you mean ‘not exactly’?”

“The island wanted me back too. So that’s why even the tail section broke off. It could still land us safely in the water. I was blessed by the island from the beginning. That’s why every adult in the tail section died except me, remember?”

“Oh, yeah. Now you tell me this. You really ARE the only one left from the tail section.” Rose said, “Well, Bernard, you really turned out to be hell of a sneaky guy!”

“I did all those things just for you, Rose.” Bernard’s eyes were glittering, “Now we are finally together. I won’t leave you, and I hope you won’t leave me either.”

“Of course I won’t leave you, silly man.” Rose laughed a little, then she got concerns, “Wait a minute. Aren’t we still in a war with the others, I mean you brothers and sisters?”

“Yes, that’s why I am telling you the story tonight.” Bernard said, “I hope we can find a way to not get involved.”

“Hm... You got a point. I don’t want any of those dramas myself.” Rose said, “And besides, what other option do I have? Turn you in as one of the others? They will torture you.” She smiled.

Bernard smiled too, “No, you can’t turn me in, because I was too important to you.”

Rose had a grin, “So I guess we got to live the ‘happy-ever-after’ life in this island after all, right?”

Bernard said playfully, “Yup. You can bet your ass in it.”

The End.

Chapter 9: Running the Dharma Initiative

Dr. Chang had a very tough job to do.

It was already a bad start in the beginning. At the very first night they arrived at the island, he lost 4 important scientists, including the founding mother of the DI, Karen DeGroot, to a noisy monster which looked like a column of black smoke. The fifth victim screamed like a soprano. It hurt everyone's ears, but the monster retreated. Since then they were busy setting up sonic fences.

A few days later, in the funeral for the scientists, the founding father of the DI, Gerald DeGroot became crazy and trying to dissolve the whole DI. He didn't succeed, but more than 2 thirds of DI staffs left the island. After a while Gerald DeGroot himself disappeared and they didn't have enough people to find him. His leaving had seriously damaged the morality of the 41 people who remained there.

One month later the sonic fences were done, they started to find some new recruits and setup tents. At that time they got the good news of Dr. DeGroot. He was still alive, and he brought them a truce with the hostiles, but he wouldn't come back, so the whole management job fell upon Dr. Chang.

Just when Dr. Chang thought things could be easier from then on. The accident rate of building houses suddenly went up to an unbelievable level. One day Dr. Chang saw a strange one himself: a worker was using a hammer to put nails in a wall. When he wielded the hammer, the heavy iron head flew away, hit another worker's head, killed him at the spot, and that worker was working with a power saw, that power saw dropped down to the basement and killed another one. The unlucky worker in the basement happened to be installing electric circuits. When he died, he short-circuited the power to a water pipe and killed another 3 who were holding the pipes. Dr. Chang refused to believe that was an accident. The further investigation showed that all those five dead workers were involved in a series of gang robberies. They got the money and tried to get away from the U.S. by join the Dharma Initiative, because the DI was as secretive as them, and no visa required. It seemed that some unknown force had punished them all in one blow. Since then DI started to do very extensive background researches on anyone who would come to the island. Good guys only, naughty ones no. You had to be a boy scout and a virgin in order to get in. It appeared that the accident rate went down considerably after that.

Still, bad things kept happening. It was like they were all cursed. A brand new gas stove would explode the moment the gas was on. A shallow pool would drown a triathlon athlete. And some experienced outdoor explorers became crazy and told people they heard whispers in the jungle. All those things made Dr. Chang feel exhausted and useless. The progress of building houses had slowed down to a crawl.

Fortunately the ex-military soldier, Paul, helped a lot. He taught his team how to scout the island in secret, avoid the confrontation with the hostiles, and use firearm effectively, but not to kill. With his training, DI guys successfully surveyed half of the island.

Paul had his wedding the day Amy arrived at the island. His newly wedded wife always went to see him. They were inseparable. Amy ended up spending so much time with Paul, that Dr. Chang decided to put Stuart as his second in command, instead of her. It seemed that Amy didn't mind at all. She would stay

in the Flame Station, and talk about Paul all day long. She said he was not a perfect man. When he was a teenager, he did kill someone and was in jail for some time.

Dr. Chang always wondered why no “accidents” had ever happened to Paul. One day he noticed Paul’s Ankh necklace and suddenly understood. Very soon everyone in the camp converted to an ancient Egyptian religion which worshiped deities with crocodile heads and four toes. A small Egyptian style temple was the second building that was finished (the first one was the Flame), and as everyone expected, no single “accident” happened during the temple construction.

Just when Dr. Chang thought things could be easier after a few months in the island, then along came a man called Richard, who knew English but spoke only Latin. He seemed to be the leader of the hostiles. There was never any good news from him. Either he would tell the translator where to pick up some unfortunate dead DI guys, or he would criticize some DI staffs had crossed the line. Actually nobody really knew where the exact boundary was, but if they didn’t comply with what he said, he simply intimidated them in Latin, “You are living in the island because we allow you to do so. If you keep invading our area, then the truce will be over. Are you really sure about that?” Dr. Chang cursed him many times secretly, but he had to do what he was told to do. It was always a bad experience.

Like it was not tough enough to settle all those matters, they got new problems from the supply. The plane which was supposed to arrive that day never showed up. The outside base said, “They were already on their way ten hours ago.” What was really going on? It was the third time a plane disappeared when trying to deliver food, water and all the other necessities. Dr. Chang wondered where those airplanes had gone. They couldn’t just be vaporized in the thin air. Now the whole DI had to face the problem of food shortage again.

In just six months, a lot of Dr. Chang’s hair turned grey. Wrinkles crept upon his face. He was tired of fixing all those endless problems. He felt that he couldn’t manage the whole Dharma Initiative any more. He used to supervise a university and made it top of the ivory league, but now he thought about calling it quit all the time.

His close friend and sponsor from outside, Alvar Hanso, kept encouraging him to go on. He said, “Dr. Chang, from the very beginning, we all knew this would not be an easy job. Yes, it turns out to be more difficult than we have thought, but for the benefit of mankind, we have to continue the research. We will find out things that will change the world. Our technology will make a giant leap forward. So please bear with all the burdens of this job, I will give you all the support you need. Never mind those airplanes, those are just unavoidable losses...” His words always made Dr. Chang feel much better.

Since Dr. Chang met him in a charity convention, Mr. Hanso had been his friend for about ten years. He knew very little about his past, but admired his generosity. It looked like somehow he owned a kingdom and had unlimited money to spend. So far the Dharma Initiative already cost him more than 50 million dollars (in 1970s), but he didn’t even care to mention the budget once.

By the time those houses were completed, Paul and his men already discovered three “pockets of energies”. Dr. Chang chose a strong reacting one, and started to plan the building of underground lab of the Orchid station.

After learning it, Amy protested right away, “Richard is not an idiot. The moment you started digging, they will find out and stop you.”

“Yes, I am aware of that.” Dr. Chang replied, “That’s why we are building a Green House on top of it first, then we will dig the ground secretly.”

“Are you sure about that?” Amy said, “Don’t you think the island will know?”

Oh, no, not again! Dr. Chang frowned. Ever since Amy was with Paul, she became soft and religious. Maybe a woman in love was all like that, but this is seriously scientific research business, not a holy ground visiting.

He finally said, “I think you had heard too many rumors.”

Amy looked out of the window and said, “How could you not feel that? There is a higher being on the island. Maybe the island itself is the being. You just listen and look, and you will know.”

Oh, please, no more of the mysterious creature crap! I am glad that I have put Stuart in charge. This woman seems hopelessly lost her mind in love. Dr. Chang thought.

“I don’t feel anything. The strange things happen in this island for a reason, and we are here to find out why, not to establish a religion. Amy, you are the one who negotiated the deal so we can all come here, you should have known better.”

“Yeah, but don’t you think that this island is such a wonderful place, that we shouldn’t dig holes in it? Do you know that yesterday I saw my parents again, right outside of the bamboos? This time we talked a lot. I haven’t been so happy and crying like that for a very long time. Dr. Chang, don’t you want to meet someone again, someone close to you, but passed away? Dr. Chang, Dr. Chang?”

Amy realized that he was gone already.

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1973, 20,000 feet above pacific ocean, a Boeing air cargo plane was flying in a bad weather.

“We are very close.” The pilot said, “According to the coordination, we are almost there.”

“How do you read the position?” the co-pilot asked, “The compass is circling like crazy.”

“That’s exactly the coordination we need.” The pilot said, “It’s time to dive.”

“Are you crazy?” the co-pilot said, “In such a bad weather and visibility? You will get us all killed.”

“Trust me on this.” The pilot said, “I have done it a thousand times.”

The plane flew down and started to stall. It was completely out of control and making crazy turns like a leaf in the autumn wind.

“I told you not to ... Aaaaaahhhh...” The co-pilot was holding anything he could and screamed.

“Woooooowwww.....” the pilot was acting like a child riding a rollercoaster, “This is really fun. I LOVE this job!”

Suddenly the sky is clear and the wind is no more.

The plane gradually regained control and flew straight. It was like nothing ever happened.

The pilot punched the still in-shock copilot on his shoulder, “See? What did I tell you? It’s a lot of fun!”

“Are you kidding me?!” the copilot got out of his astonishment, and became angry, “You almost got us all killed! This plane could have been torn up apart back there! We are very lucky that it is still flying in one piece.”

“Ha ha... That’s something I didn’t tell you yet. Actually, we are perfectly safe. This plane was heavily reinforced by titanium alloy for this kind of crazy actions. Nothing can break it... Wait...” He suddenly saw something, “It’s there.” Both of them could see the island was directly ahead. “It always shows up from nowhere. Isn’t that interesting?”

The copilot stared at the mysterious island, “So the myth is true.”

“I don’t care it’s myth or not. As long as I keep dropping the cargo, I will get the money. That’s most important.” The pilot said it with a big laugh, “Besides, you cannot have this much fun in piloting for Oceanic Airlines.”

“That’s true.” The copilot agreed.

The rest of the operation was very smooth. They dropped the cargo above the island. The parachute opened fully and the cargo landed at the right spot. A job was well done.

“Hey, buddy, It’s time to go home and fuuck your wife.” The pilot said.

“I hope you don’t mean that’s you.” The copilot grumbled in a low voice.

The weather got bad again. The plane circled upside down in an unnatural way. The copilot held his seat tight and tried his best not to scream, while the pilot yelling, “Yi...Haaaaa...”

As they expected, the sky became blue, and the plane was leveled again.

Looking back, the copilot was amazed, “It’s strange. I don’t see the island or the storm behind us. What did that all come from?”

“My friend, there is one thing I learned over the years working for Dharma Initiatives,” the pilot said as the veteran, “don’t ask and don’t tell, cause you won’t get an answer anyway.”

“Perhaps they don’t have the answer either.” The copilot said, “Anyway, the job is well paid and very exciting. I kind of like it.”

“Welcome to my world!” the pilot laughed out loud, “Like I said, now it’s time to go home, and ...”

“Fuuck my wife.” The copilot said.

“Haha!! That’s very right! You got it.” The pilot laughed even louder.

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“Tower, tower, this is Air Cargo 48 from Paik Enterprise. We are approaching and requesting for landing.”

“What? What air cargo 48? What are you talking about? Who the hell are you?”

“I repeat. This is Air Cargo 48 from Paik Enterprise. We are low on fuel and we are requesting for landing.”

“You think I am a fool? We don’t have any airplane registered as Air Cargo 48. That’s the numbering 20 years ago. Now it’s all 3 digits. Again, answer us, who the hell are you?”

The copilot looked at the pilot with doubtful eyes. The pilot shrugged with confusion too.

Finally the copilot asked, “I’m sorry, but what’s the date today?”

“Well, in case of your idiots forgot. It’s November 21, 2004.”

“Terrific!” They both moaned.

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Chapter 10: Dr. DeGroot (Part 1)

Let's turn the time back to 20 years ago, when Dr. DeGroot first appeared at the conference of Hanso Foundation Award for Science. Unfortunately it was also his last.

In some scientists view, the Hanso Foundation Award was nothing but a meeting of crazy geniuses and conspiracy theorists. They heard many wild things leaked from attendants, things like the secret of the UFO, the "real" truth of the lost continent – Atlantis, the super-modern prehistoric civilization, etc. You get the idea.

At the same time, for others this award was the best showcase of cutting-edge science. It was a place that they could witness the true modern marvels well ahead of the time. They saw inventions that could completely change the way we lived, and they heard about discoveries that made you jaw dropped. If you were one of the lucky guys who were invited into the meeting, after hearing the whole session, you would become "crazy" like them. It was just that powerful.

In the science society, the discussion about the awarded discoveries being real or fake never ended. Some of the things turned into reality after more than 10 years, like the making of silicon chips and fiber optic technologies. Some was never marketed and mass produced, like turning salt water into fuel or personal flying machines. They were just existed but ignored.

Nonetheless, many of those discoveries were so advanced, so ahead of time, that if people outside knew about them, it would have caused a lot of panic, or it would be destroyed before the technology became matured. Therefore, officially no one was allowed to talk about the award at all. Every attendant had to sign a non-disclosure agreement before he/she could attend the conference. They were even warned that if anyone ever violated the agreement, Hanso Foundation would implement any possible way to keep the matter silent. That meant they could literally kill you if you leaked anything out to the public. It was not a pleasant thing to keep in mind, but since the scientists and explorers all craved for the huge funding of the award, which was ten times more than the Nobel's, they all signed their names in the non-disclosure eventually.

The year was 1955. Not surprisingly, it was another eye opener. Since Dr. Watson and Dr. Crick discovered the structure of DNA molecule 2 years ago, a lot of important discoveries were found. It was the perfect place to announce them.

The first one who spoke was Lara Yang. As a young genius in bio-chemical research, she pushed the envelope of DNA manipulation to a new height:

"Thank you everyone for listening patiently to my theories for the last 20 minutes. I am sure that it was quite boring if you knew nothing about Bio-Chemistry." She said.

Some laughter came out of the crowd. Everyone smiled. She was talking none-stop about some DNA fragmenting and mixing techniques. No one really understood what she really did.

"So here I want to tell you my work in plain English. Thanks to this award, and the generous funding from Hanso Foundation, I will be able to combine DNA fragments from different species, like fishes and

birds, and I will create birds that can swim and breathe under water. Give me another few years. I am confident that I will be able to use this technology to improve human bodies. Imagine that one day we will have children that can breathe under the water, and fly with wings. The potential is limitless..." Lara happily announced with excitement.

Some murmuring came out from the audience. They had heard enough of wild things from the meeting so no one had any problem accepting her effort of combining fishes with birds, but put the animal parts into their children? It was a little bit too far.

The next one analyzed his super high resolution pictures of the moon. He pointed to an enlarged white spot and told everyone that it was a gigantic tunnel on the surface of the moon. He believed that there was an alien civilization living inside it. Most interestingly, he warned us about the imminent invasion of aliens from the moon. Some people couldn't help but giggling all through his speech, but he got the award nonetheless.

It took the host about 5 minutes to peel that astronomer away from the podium, who was still insisting on staying away from the moon. Some rocket scientists yelled back at him: "Never tell us what we cannot do!"

Finally all was quiet. The host knew his time was running out, "Everyone, please give Dr. DeGroot a round of applause for his amazing discoveries of a rock from Tunisia."

The whole conference room was again filled with half-hearted applause and some cheers. The young Gerald Degroot, who grew heavy beard and long hair, came up to the stand.

Compared with others, his lecture was very plain. He only talked about a rock he found in Tunisia.

"... My friend, my discovery is quite disturbing. I have been thinking about it over and over again, and can only draw one conclusion, which I will share with you all today for the first time.

First, this rock was formed during the Cretaceous-Tertiary Extinction. It has all the signs of going through the K-T extinction event: high iridium concentration, shocked quartz granules and Chromium isotopic anomalies. We even found a tail of a small dinosaur in it, so without a doubt it was formed at least 65 million years ago.

However, to my astonishment, the remnant of the dinosaur and plants still contains carbon-14, which should have depleted 65 million years ago. It put the age of this rock to be about 5000 years old. Can you believe that, how come a rock that was supposed to be 65 million years old, formed only 5000 years ago?"

There were some discussions among the audience. They were all top-notch scientists, who perfectly understood his confusion.

"Since the puzzle unsolvable in the lab, I went to Tunisia and visited the family who discovered the rock. What they said shocked me even more."

Dr. DeGroot took a little pause. *I hope they were prepared for this.* He thought. *They are probably the only ones in the world who will accept his conclusion.*

“They said one day the sky turn purple. A very bright light almost blinded them, and then the rock appeared from nowhere and destroyed their kitchen. I know it sounds like a movie. I was suspicious at first, but the other 50 families in the village all confirmed the same thing, purple sky and bright lights. The rock couldn’t come from any mountains nearby, because it should belong to islands on the other side of the globe. My visit of Tunisia didn’t solve the puzzle at all, on the contrary, it greatly increases the questions I had about this rock.”

Dr. DeGroot paused again, measuring the risk of telling the truth. Should he tell everyone the truth and risk being humiliated? Or should he just stop there?

No, the whole truth. He decided. *I don’t want to hold anything back. I’d rather be the joke of the year than holding any information back.*

“So one night, while I was watching the popular television show ‘Lost’, it suddenly dawned on me what exactly happened. Obviously the rock had gone through a time-space traveling. It was formed in the K-T extinction time but somehow it jumped to a village in Tunisia 10 years ago. It is the only rational explanation I can find so far. It perfectly explains all the anomalies of the rock. Most notably, the day that the rock jumped into our world was exactly the day that the atomic bomb, ‘Fat Man’ was dropped in Nagasaki. The time was so perfectly matched that I believed these two events were connected...”

“Hahaaa...” a young scientist couldn’t help his laugh anymore. The whole scene became very embarrassing immediately. Most of them could hold their smile but a few burst in laughter with him. Everyone was thinking the same thing: *We all know crazy, but this is beyond crazy. Time-space traveling with atomic bomb exploding! What kind of weed did this man smoke?*

Gerald DeGroot knew it would happen. He was much more relaxed since the words were out. *Let them talk. As long as I know in my heart that I am telling the truth, I’m happy.*

“Ladies and gentlemen, I know this is very hard for you to accept. I had a very difficult time believing it myself. So today I am here just to announce my findings, I don’t expect anyone here to believe me. A thousand thanks to the president of Hanso Foundations who chose to give me the award. I will use the fund the best I can to uncover more about this mysterious rock. Thank you!!”

A warming applause gradually arose as usual. Everyone in the meeting had heard enough of strange things today to criticize a fellow scientist just like themselves. Deep down in their mind, they had to wonder how such ridiculous theories could pass the meticulous examination of Hanso Foundations.

As one of the scientists explained his feeling, “Well, you hear all kind of unbelievable things in the meeting. It was truly a freak show. Isn’t it?” Yes, even though every attendant was a believer in Science, they still wouldn’t believe other’s stories, even though it was already proven by Hanso Foundations, the biggest name in scientific research in Asia. It was ironically the human nature that people only chose to

believe what they know, and always suspected things they were not familiar with. Even the scientists were no exempts.

After the Award, there was the party, which of course held by Hanso Foundations in a five-star hotel's grand ballroom. It was luxury squared two. The scientists finally had a chance to get out of their boring lab gowns and dine like a king.

Dr. DeGroot was supposed to be the star of the boutique, since he just won the award, but he just ate in a corner and tried his best to avoid any attention.

Dr. Pierre Chang spotted him and said hello, "Well, my friend. What a pleasant surprise to see you again! It's be a long while since I talked to you last time in the university. We were talking something about ... uh... about ..."

"Brain-washing." Gerald shook his hand and said.

"Right, the brain-washing." Dr. Chang remembered, "At that time you told me my method was too extreme. Look at you now! You really surprised me today. I thought you were the one who was conservative."

"I am being conservative." Gerald replied politely, "There are some far more scary speculations I had drawn from that rock."

"Really? Like what?"

"Like what cause the dinosaur to extinct. Like what kind of technology could make this space-time jump possible. Like the reason it appeared after the atomic bomb was dropped. Those are really troubling questions from the things I learned from the rock."

"Come on. It's just a stone. Maybe someone threw it to play a plank."

"Not a half ton one. As a geologist, I can tell you that every rock has a long story to tell. I was very lucky to find this particular one, which revealed us such a big secret."

"Secret of what, that Alien had killed the dinosaur? Or the rocks can jump in the worm-hole by itself?" It was clear that Dr. Chang was mocking.

Gerald took a deep breath and said, "My dear friend, I think it's better not go that far. We are here just to enjoy the party. I know both you and I don't want to make a scene."

Dr. Chang finally realized he was a little bit over the edge. He apologized immediately, "I am really sorry my friend. I don't know what just got into my mind."

"Maybe you did the brainwashing too much."Gerald said with a little wink.

"Haha, maybe." Pierre admitted.

Gerald smile, "You didn't change a bit. Just like back in the universe, you don't know anything about being diplomatic."

"Yeah, if I were working as a diplomat, I would have gotten us all into war." Dr. Chang laughed.

"Ha! Probably, but that's why we are friends, you are the one who's not afraid to act."

"And you are the one who's always telling the truth, no matter how hard it is." Dr. Chang looked at his old friend as he recalled, "I still remember the day you said that you loved my girlfriend."

"I still remember how you destroyed my nose." Dr. DeGroot pointed to his nose, "See. It's still flat."

"You should have thanked me for not killing you right at the spot." Dr. Chang pretended to hit him, "How is Karen now?"

Gerald barely avoided his punch, and replied happily, "She is still with me. Can you believe it? Even after I grew such a big black beard, she said she liked it."

"See. That's why I hate you so much. You made me lost such a nice girl."

"Hey, that's your own fault... Wait, wait..." Gerald changed the topic rapidly when he saw Dr. Chang raised his fist, "Did you see the first speaker in the meeting? Lara Chang? She's a beauty, isn't she?"

Dr. Chang put down his hand, "Yeah, she certainly is. She is so young, yet she already made such huge progress in her field..."

"Well, we happen to know her. Karen and her work in the same research building. Maybe I can introduce you to her."

"But... but that girl is way out of my league."

"Come on! You both are young scientists working in biology field."

"Yeah, but..."

"That's it. You and she are the perfect couple, period. I will introduce you to her, you want it or not."

"Yeah, of course."

"Right! That's the fearless man I know."

...

It was on Dr. Chang's way to meet his future wife when a girl about 14 years old stopped them in the midway.

"Dr. DeGroot, can you give me a minute." She asked.

Gerald looked toward Dr. Chang with a question mark. Dr. Chang just shrugged, "Please, take your time. I can wait." At the same time he kept peeking at Lara's direction.

Gerald shook his head and smiled. He turned to the teenager and asked, "Sorry, do I know you?"

"No, you don't." the little girl replied without any shyness and extended her hand, "My name is Amy Maxwell."

"Amy Maxwell?" Dr. DeGroot suddenly realized, "Your great great grandfather is ..."

"That I know, thanks." The little Amy interrupted him, "My family always had a reputation of being the electronic geeks."

"That's not what I meant..."

"Dr. DeGroot. It's ok." Amy interrupted him again, "Do you mind if I call you Gerald?"

"Of course not." Dr. DeGroot never mind the names, and then he realized something, "How do you know me?"

"I saw you in the meeting." Amy said with a little girl's naughty smile.

"Well, that's impossible. Only the best scientists can attend the meeting, and obviously you are not one, yet."

"But my papa is." Amy kept smiling.

"What did you mean by that, little girl?" Dr. DeGroot suddenly found out this little girl was not as simple as she looked, "How did you see me without being there?"

Amy showed him a pen, "This is my invention. It has a camera and a microphone inside."

"Oh, my goodness! You are truly one of the Maxwells." Dr. DeGroot's eyes were wide-open. No one in the world had seen such a small camera yet, not even the top government secret agents. It's a marvelous invention that was way ahead of the time, and it was made by this little 14-year-old!

"I watched the whole meeting through my headset." Amy showed him something looked like Captain Z-Ro would have used to see the history. "The picture was not clear, but I can hear everything you said."

Dr. DeGroot put the headset on. His jaw almost dropped. He could see and hear from that pen's perspective. It was the first time he had ever experience something like that.

"So now I let you know my secret." Amy said with a little shy, "Could you tell me yours?"

"My secret? What kind of secret are you talking about?"

"The secret of the rock."

Dr. DeGroot took off the headset, thought for a while, and said, "I don't have any. I told everything I knew in the meeting. You heard my speech already, right?"

"But you let out an important detail." Amy said, "I really want to know."

Dr. DeGroot almost laughed. *What a curious little girl! What could she possibly want? A souvenir?* On the other hand, he just witnessed an amazing advanced gadget made by her. Something told him that she must onto something.

Amy glanced around her, making sure no one was watch this way, then she asked, "How about the energy trace in that rock?"

Dr. DeGroot felt like his head was hit by a raging bull. A small detail he chose not to mention. Hundreds of scientists hadn't noticed, and now being questioned by this little girl! What an ironic world!

He wanted to say something, but then stopped. His mouth opened, but failed to say anything.

If the scientists who saw him making bold announcement earlier knew he was dumbfounded by a 14-year-old, they might have to laugh even louder. Oh, humiliations!

"Ha! I got you!" the girl was jumping a little. "Do you know how I know about it?"

Dr. DeGroot shook his head like a student in front of a teacher.

"My father got a request from his European lab. They said the sample you gave them shouldn't exist at all, and my father was puzzled by that too. That's why he attended the freak show, just to see you."

"Thank you..." Dr. DeGroot couldn't tell that was a compliment or not, and he didn't know what to say in front of this ultra-smart girl.

"And that's why he was so distracted that I could switch his pen without him noticed." Amy smiled like a champion. "He found it out after the meeting, but it was too late already."

Amy suddenly became serious like a little adult, "Dr. DeGroot."

"Yes, Amy." Dr. DeGroot had a little chill seeing her serious face.

"Why you didn't mention anything about the energy trace in the meeting? My father and I were both very disappointed." She asked with an intense stare at his eyes, "Why you hold back that information?"

"Because it's ..." Gerald found himself acting like a little kid who got caught. He almost lost his ability to speak, "It is ... uh ..."

"It's what?"

"Uh... It's inconclusive." It was almost the best Gerald could do at that moment.

“Are you kidding me?” Amy forgot she was a kid herself, “That’s the most amazing thing in the rock. Comparing to the energy trace, all other things were just not worth mentioning at all.”

Dr. DeGroot finally gained back his coolness. He felt like he was just ambushed by a ninja, “But we still don’t know what that is. The energy trace was disappearing too quickly. Now it was too weak to do further examination.”

“But we all knew it existed there. The microscopic crystal formation still can prove us that extremely strong EM force had changed the rock’s shape.”

“Too bad that there are other theories existed to explain the crystal formations.”

“It was not the same situation. The other explanation doesn’t apply to this rock.”

“But still, it’s a possibility.”

“Are you still kidding me?” Amy felt anger, like her intelligence was challenged, “How could that rock pass through the earth’s core and return to the surface and found by you? This scenario is simply impossible.”

Gerald sigh, “The other explanation is even more ridiculous. How could an alien spaceship put a strong force on a rock and then threw it through a time-space tunnel? I couldn’t tell anyone this as long as the other theory is still valid. I am already the laughing stock among the scientists. I don’t want to attract more attention by telling another even wilder theory, especially when the phenomenon can be explained by normal science, and I cannot prove my theory anymore.”

Amy listened to him with all her attention. She nodded and agreed, “Hmm... you are right, Gerald. I understand now. My father told me that you were a good man. I believe it now. You are not lying or withholding things. You just had no way to tell the whole truth.”

“It was the most difficult thing in the world. It took a lot of courage. I am ashamed that today I could only tell half of the truth.”

“It’s much better than none.” Amy returned to her cute sunny smile, “Thank you, Gerald. You taught me a lot tonight.”

“No, thank you! You are the only one who pointed out the weakness in my speech. I felt much better after talking to you. I hope in the future I can work with someone who has such a bright mind like yours.”

Amy was already walking toward her table. She heard it, turned back and yelled, “I will work for you, Gerald. Give me a call!”

Dr. DeGroot laughed out loud. It was the first time he laughed like that since he came to the meeting. *Yeah, if she were 5 years older I would have hired her right here without a blink.* He thought to himself.

At the same time Dr. Chang already took 3 rounds of drink. He looked a little drunk, but was bold enough to try his luck with the beautiful young Asian scientist. Dr. DeGroot held him tight and walked him toward Lara Yang.

...

4 days later.

"You looking for me? Mr. Hanso?" Dr. DeGroot asked.

He was standing inside a huge office which looked more like a presidential suite of a five-star hotel. The only odd thing was that there was a full Suit of ancient Japanese general's armor standing in the middle of the large room, which completely destroyed the post-modern feel of the room.

"Of course I am. How else can you pass all the security and come all the way up here?" Alvar Hanso was not a patient man, "I thought you are smarter than this."

"I am sorry for asking you such a stupid question." Dr. DeGroot shrugged, "What can I help you?"

"I know that your research on the rock had reached a dead end." Alvar watched him in the eyes. "The rock cannot give you any more answers. Right?"

"That's right, but I had no doubt that ..."

"Stop right there." Alvar interrupted him like a whip, "Don't do any unnecessary explanations. I need straight answers."

"Then you will get it." Gerald started to feel uncomfortable with him. *I know you are the president of Hanso Foundations, but don't speak to me like this.*

"I know someone who got some more information about the event you mentioned in the meeting."

"You mean the atomic bomb event?"

"Yes. And he said you might help him find the answer they have been searching for a long time. So I am thinking, with his information, you can form a team to discover the answers."

"..." Gerald didn't say anything. He needed to know what the mysterious man wanted before he said yes or no.

Seeing Gerald hesitating, Alvar threw in a bone, "Hanso Foundation will fully fund the operation. I won't set any spending limits. You can get anything or anyone you want in the team."

"Why you do this?" Gerald stared back to him, "It sounds too good to believe."

"Believe it." Alvar gave him a reassuring nod, "All you need to say is 'yes'."

“No.” Gerald felt in his gut that something was not right, “Before I know what information the other guy knows and what kind of operation you are planning, my answer is always ‘no’.”

Alvar became annoyed, “Doctor. There is no free ticket for great discoveries. The information was level 1 top secret. Even I don’t know what it is. The man will only share the secret once you agree and create the team. It’s the only way if you want to find out more about the rock, but once you say ‘yes’, there is no way back.”

Gerald thought about the option he had, and let out a bitter smile, “I felt like Alice.”

“??”

“In order to find out how deep the rabbit hole is, I had to jump in. Once I jump in, Texas is no more.”

“Precisely your situation.” Alvar nodded a little, “You are not that stupid in the end.”

“If I jump in, what will happen to my wife? Do I get to see her?”

“You can include her as a team member, but of course she must make the jump too, just like you.”

“What if she jump in and she doesn’t like it, can she get out.”

“No, there is no way out.”

“Even she knows nothing.”

“Yup.”

“That really sucks.”

“Don’t forget. It might be the discovery of the century. No. It might be the discovery of the whole human history. You and your wife might become the most famous scientists in the world. The reward is huge. And with our unlimited funding, your success rate is high.”

“But I am just a geologist.”

“We have been watching you, my friend.” Alvar said it in a not so friendly tone, “You have been pulling a lot of strings, conducting a series of experiments with your rock, and no one had suspect anything unusual. You collected all the data together and drew the conclusion all by yourself. It was very impressively organized. The man liked the way you keep everything under the cover until that very meeting. He said that you shouldn’t have announced your discoveries at all. Now you are the best comedian of the science society. The man said you should have learned the lesson by now.”

“Indeed a big lesson I had learned, that no one is capable of handling the truth, not even me.”

“Good. So now give me the answer. Yes or no?”

“I need to talk to my wife first.”

“You are such a wimpy kid!” Alvar finally was angry, “My time is precious. I have business worth billions of dollars to handle. Don’t waste my time here. Yes or no?”

“If this matter is so important, and you need me to do it, then you can wait.” Gerald stared back at him, “I won’t force my wife into it. I need her consent first. There is no other way either.”

Pang! Alvar hit the table with his fist. It left no marks but obviously express how mad Alvar was.

“Just to be clear, I am not the one who needs you here. It’s that man. I think he make a mistake by choosing you. If you cannot control your wife, how do I expect you to control your whole team? You are not the leader we are looking for. I will tell the man what you just told me. I hope he will change his mind so I don’t need to see you again. Anyway, you have two days to talk to your wife.”

“Two days then.” Gerald stepped back and opened the door, “In case you don’t see me, good night and good luck.”

...

Four years later. It was 1959.

“YOU?!” Dr. DeGroot almost jumped up from his chair. He couldn’t believe the young lady was one of the candidates of Dharma Initiative.

“Yes, it is me.” Amy Maxwell came up and extended her hand toward him, “It was a long time since I saw you in the party. You never called me.”

“Wait. What are you doing here?” Gerald picked up her resume and look at her again, “And why did you use a fake last name?”

“No, it’s not fake. It’s my mother’s last name. My parents went through a divorce. It was sad but it also gave me an opportunity to legally change my last name.”

“Why did you do that for?”

“To be able to see you, Dr. DeGroot. My previous last name was too famous. You will shut me down before I have a chance.”

“Woah, woah, young lady. What do you mean by that? You know I already have a wife, right?”

“Relax, professor.” Amy showed her young girl’s naughty grin. It reminded him the way she looked the first time he met her. Even though she was still a teenager, she had a special charm of a mature woman. He got a feeling that somehow she had all the control over him, which made him really uncomfortable.

Amy smiled again, her pretty flawless face almost made him dazzled, “I am here only to apply for a job in the Dharma Initiative. It’s purely professional.”

“How did you know the DI? Well, anyway, in that case, you are too young. How old are you, by the way?” Dr. DeGroot wiped a little sweat from his hand. *I feel like I am the one being interviewed now. Damn it! Take the control. Don't let the embarrassing scene four years ago happen again.*

“The age is not important. I already have a master degree in Electronic Engineering. One more year I will finish my Ph. D. See? I am fully qualified for the job you are offering.”

Gerald made up his mind, “You are still too young. Our job requires a lot of overtime and handling of secret information. I need an adult with strong self-discipline and good work ethics.”

“Director. This is exactly my qualities. How do you think I got the bachelor and master degree in such a short time? I didn't cut any corners. I studied day and night for my classes. As you can see in my resume, I got A or A+ in all my courses.”

“The answer is still ‘no’.” Dr. DeGroot said, “The work might become dangerous. I need someone with experience to handle difficult situations.”

“My parents just went through a bitter divorce process. My mother had an affair and my father was sued by his employees for millions. I help them fix the problems while enrolled in six courses. I assured you that I can handle anything you threw at me.”

“The job required extensive traveling. You might have to live in an island for years.”

“I already had all the survival training when I was in the Girl Scout, and I don't mind leaving this town forever. There is nothing for me here.”

“My staff is full. The position is already taken.”

“By whom?”

“The previous one I interviewed. He passed all my tests with flying colors.”

“You got to be kidding me.” Amy's eyes turned wide, “He's my classmate. I saw him sleep in the class and only got a C in Electro-Magnetic Physics class. If you need someone who's really good at Electro-Magnetic field, he's the last one you want. At the same time, don't forget, my family discovered the EM equations. It runs in the blood. I am the best you can find if you ever need an Electro-Magnetic research scientist.”

Dr. DeGroot opened his mouth, but he couldn't say anything more. Amy had choked him completely.

Amy grinned like a crowned Miss USA, “Plus, I got a recommendation letter from Mr. Hanso himself. Here you go.” She handed him an envelope.

Inside the letter, Alvar Hanso praised Amy for her extraordinary talents, and suggested Dr. DeGroot hire her immediately. The wording sounded more like a demand. Gerald put down the letter and shook his head.

“So... Dr. DeGroot, would you like me to join the team?”

“Do I really have a choice?”

“I don’t think so. I am very well prepared. I even changed my last name just to get in this interview.”

“You are REALLY well prepared. I had never seen anyone as smart as you are.”

“Thanks. Dr. DeGroot. Can I start today? I have been preparing this for the last four years. I am really eager.”

“Too eager, I have to say. Again, do I have a choice?”

“Well, I can start tomorrow if you want.”

“Get out of my office, young lady.”

“Yes, director. I see you tomorrow.”

...

The searching for the mysterious island was a very long and strenuous process. While Amy was travelling around the world tracking down EM anomalies, Gerald stayed in the university and monitored the whole project. With millions of dollars poured in, Gerald’s high efficiency made the project turn into a vast global networking, while DI was kept at a minimum profile.

There were a couple of reporters caught some wind and tried to unearth the whole project. They disappeared the day before their announcement and their house were burnt down. Gerald knew it must have something to do with the mysterious man who hired him in the first place. He even gathered some clues which implied that the man must be someone high up in the U.S. military, but there was no proof. He didn’t dig up the dirt further. He already got him and his wife in a deep rabbit hole, he didn’t want to jump in another.

Amy proved herself in the second year by designing the Lamp Post. Her specialty in EM research had greatly boosted the progress of finding the island. The Lamp Post had a whooping 1% of success rate to locate the island at the right time, which was thousands times better than the previous blind searching method. Dr. DeGroot finally promoted her to be the second in command, which everyone in DI thought she deserved.

After Paik Enterprise joined force, his long time friend Dr. Chang became the co-director. Amy’s position dropped to the third. It seemed that she was too busy to mind it.

Chapter 11: Dr. DeGroot (Part 2)

1970.

Dr. DeGroot remembered the day he heard about the good news. Well, maybe it's not that good.

He was watching the "Whitbread Round the World Race" with his son when the phone rang. The son was not happy because he only had 2 hours with his father every month. All the other time was all work and more work occupying his father's life.

"Dad, no phone calls from the work, you promised!" He protested.

"Sorry, sweetie. Daddy just take the call really quick. Something is happening." Gerald jumped to the phone and picked it up quick.

"You better tell me very good news." He said, "You know how little time I had with my son."

The son turned around and put his attention back to the sailboat race. He watched how American team finally passed the Australian Team and seized the champion. Very excitedly, he jumped up and yelled, "Yeah!! We won! We won!"

He stopped in the middle and realized something was wrong. He looked around and saw his father hugging and kissing his mother. "Ewill... Dad! Mom! That's disgusting! Please don't do that."

They didn't say anything. Both of them had tears dropping down their faces.

"What's wrong? Mommy? Why are you crying?" He tried to reach her cheek.

His mother suddenly turned around and ran out of the house. He could still hear her crying in the backyard.

"What's going on, daddy?"

Dr. DeGroot slowly bended down and held his little hand, "I am really sorry, sweetie. We have to take you to live with your Uncle Humes in England. We cannot stay with you anymore. We are leaving soon."

"No!" the son was shocked by the idea, he had never imagine that one day his parents would leave him.

"Why? Am I being a bad boy?"

"No, you are a very good boy." Tears ran down Gerald's face, "You are the sweetest boy in the world. I am so sorry that we cannot take you there."

"Why?"

"Because that's a very dangerous place. We cannot risk your life there."

"But..." the boy started to weep, "No, I don't want you to go...Daddy, please."

“Sorry. Your mom and I have to go there. We don’t have a choice, but you do.” Gerald held his crying son in his arms, “We want you to live a long, happy life. If you go to the island, you will suffer.”

“An island?” the boy caught his father’s word, “I want to go there too. I have never seen an island.”

“No, you won’t.” Gerald’s voice became very serious, “Promised me you will never step in that island.”

“No, daddy. I will take a sailboat, I will cross the ocean and I will look for you and mom.”

Gerald was scared. He was afraid that his little slip of the word might have changed his son’s whole life, “No, you don’t.” he held him close, “My son, my dearest son. You are my last treasure in the whole world. Promised me you will never, never look for us.”

His son bit his lower lip, not saying anything, only the tears came down on his little pink cheek.

Finally Gerald said bitterly, “What’s the use? You won’t find us anyway. Nobody can.”

His mother walked slowly back in the kitchen. She bent down and hugged both tight and cried, “We are so sorry... to do this to you ... Desmond.”

.....

3 months later. First night on the island.

“Nooooooooooooooooooooo!!!!!!” Gerald roared at the top of his lung. The scene scared him to death.

Just moments ago, Karen was caught by the smoky monster. He saw his wife’s eyes for the last time. They were full of terror. Her face was twisted by the extreme pain, and the next moment she disappeared like a ghost. The next thing he saw was a little black dot far in the sky. Under the moonlight, that little black dot fell vertically to a rocky cliff, and disappeared again in the darkness.

Karen is gone? Just like that? Twenty years together and in just one moment she is gone? This is not real! This is absolutely NOT real!

Instantly he was completely frozen at the horrible sight. Even his employee’s extremely piercing scream didn’t wake him up to the cruel reality. He fell down to the ground and kept staring up at the sky, where he last saw his wife. The scene of her falling to her violent death kept playing in his brain over and over and over and over and over again.

After making sure the monster was gone, DI guys found him still lying in the grass motionless. His eyes wide-open and his mouth kept moving with no sound. They put him on a stretch and took him into a tent.

Four souls were lost that night, but to Gerald, it was like the whole world was dead. The monster took away everything he had and left an empty carcass for him to die slowly. The emptiness was so overwhelming that sky was no longer blue, the grass was no longer green. Everything lost its color in a snap. The only image left was a little black dot falling, playing in his head thousands of times.

How can I live without Karen? How? She is dead now. She's dead because of me. It was all my fault! I shouldn't have brought her here. I shouldn't... He felt so guilty about it. His heart kept aching for the whole day. DI nurses tried to feed him, but he refused to eat. In the end, they had to put a tube in his nose to force-feed him.

Two days later, Amy came. She wore a beautiful bride's gown. It made her look like a perfect model in a wedding magazine. When she stepped in the tent, everyone couldn't help but let out a "wow" in her presence.

"Hey, Gerald." She gently bent down in front of his bed, "Do you hear me? Gerald?"

Gerald turned his eyes slowly to her. She saw nothing but hollow inside. It was a heart-wrenching moment.

Amy wiped out her tears and said, "Remember you promised me that you would walk me down the aisle? My dad passed away. You are like my father now. Come on, please, do it for me."

Gerald stared at her. His eyes became more and more lively. Suddenly he was like a dying patient in OR suddenly gained back his heart-beat, he choked at the air and took a lot of shallow breath, like he was alive again. Then he held Amy in his arms and let out an anguish wailing.

Everyone in the DI tents heard him crying and was momentarily shock. It sounds more like a badly wounded wolf howling at the moon. That's not a sound a human could make. The nightmarish sound had haunted them in the months to come.

"It's alright. Gerald. It will be all right." Amy said it like a mother comforting her little baby, "We are all here for you. I will tell Paul to come here. We will have the wedding right here."

"Amy, he is moving." Dr. Chang pointed out.

Everyone's eyes switched to his leg. He was struggling like a paralyzed man who's trying to get out of the bed. Immediately a wheelchair was presented. Dr. Chang and Lara helped him sit onto the wheelchair.

"That's my boss!" Amy smiled to Gerald, "I am really proud of you."

Gerald's face was all numb. Drops and drops of tears came out of his eyes. He didn't even try to wipe them. He just held Amy's hand tight. Dr. Chang pushed the wheelchair behind him.

...

With the Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" playing in the background, Amy walked slowly toward Paul with Gerald by her side. Her tears came out again. Her whole face was all covered by them. She didn't put any make-up for her wedding, but to everyone's memory, she was the most beautiful bride ever.

Paul stood by the priest and watched her with care. He knew that Karen was like a mother Amy never had. With her gone, Gerald also turned into a vegetable. She must feel like losing both of her parents again. It was too much to bear. He did suggest postponing the wedding, but knowing Amy for so long, he

knew what she would do next. Not surprisingly the wedding was even pushed earlier. The moment the priest was on the island, the whole ceremony started.

“Hi, Paul!” Amy walked close and gave him a wink. She carefully took her hand from Gerald, and lent it to Paul.

“Hi, Amy.” Paul was truly admiring his bride, “You are so amazing!”

“Thank you.” Amy smiled, “From now on we are one. Don’t ever leave me!”

“No, never!” Paul said with a determination, “Until the day I died.”

“No, don’t say that.” Amy put a finger on his lips, “That’s bad karma.”

They hugged and kissed deeply. The priest stood aside and joked, “Hey Paul, I haven’t told you to kiss the bride yet.”

They were a little embarrassed and stopped the kissing. Everyone in the DI cheered and yelled. The thundering happy voices drove away all the miseries. Even the Sun had finally moved out of the cloud and generously shone its full warmth onto them. It was a truly magical moment.

“Well, now you can.” The priest urged them, “What are you waiting for?” He didn’t even make the announcement for them of being husband and wife. In his mind, they were already married a long time ago, and there was absolutely nothing could separate them two. So why bothered to go through those mumbo-jumbos?

.....

Amy’s Wedding improved Gerald’s situation a lot. He started to eat and looked, but no talking yet. He stayed in his tent all day long. The nurse claimed that he was thinking about something. Amy and Paul visited him every day. Dr. Chang took over his position and managed many works to settle everyone in the island. He didn’t have Gerald’s high efficiency, but at least he was doing okay.

.....

7 days later, it was time for the funeral. DI guys did their best to make it looked like a regular one. All four closed caskets were surrounded by white flowers. The priest hosted the ceremony again.

Unfortunately none of the four bodies were recovered. They were believed to be all tossed into the cliff and washed out into the sea. Sharks must have gotten their bodies. The only comfort was that they must have quick deaths.

Pierre Chang gave a 5 minute eulogy. He didn’t really know how to say things in such sad situation. To him the 500-word piece was more difficult than a post-doctor graduate thesis.

It was Amy’s turn. She didn’t even have a paper in her hand. She walked to the middle and started her eulogy:

“Dear friends in DI, a few days ago we had witnessed a tragic, a tragic that stabbed through our heart. I believed everybody here could feel the pain of losing them. I, for one, felt a great loss from the bottom of my heart.

My parents were not perfect. My mother was always drunk and my father was always in the lab. I followed my father and learned all the electronic tricks from him. The talent was like in my blood. I built robots when I was 5, and a fully automatic house when I was 9. However, I spent so much time with my father, that I forgot my mother was very alone. I can't blame her for the affairs. It was I and my father who abandoned her, not the other way around. They both went through a very bitter divorce. I was on my father's side all the time. It was not fair to her.

Three years later, I learned the news that my mother drove a car, ran over my father, and committed suicide. It was a great shock to me. I couldn't eat for days. It was Karen who took care of me, who held my hands when I was in a nightmare. It was her who dragged me out of the room and took me traveling around the world. To me Karen was my real mother, a mother that I have been waiting for in my whole life. Working with her and Gerald felt more like working with my family. I was complete and I was happy again...”

Amy turned her face around, wiped off a tear, then she continued,

“I don't know why sometimes life is so unfair, that the good people just died like that without any help from the higher being. I just know that we have to be strong. We mourn the loss but at the same time we should take action. We cannot stop here. They are still watching us; they are still blessing us from above so we should do things to make them proud.

A few days ago, I lost Karen, the one who was dearest to my heart. I didn't want to lose Gerald at the same time. So I arranged the wedding and he is better now. I am very glad that my little scheme work and I really appreciate him coming to the wedding in spite of his great loss.

Gerald, I know your suffering must 10 times over mine, but I want you to be strong. To me, you already had taken place of my father. You are even better than him because you loved your wife so much, and you are my best boss ever...”

Everyone laughed a little bit. Amy tried her best put up a little smile,

“So I urged you. Please be strong for us. We all need your leadership. It just felt differently without your help. No offence, Dr. Chang.”

Everyone looked at Dr. Chang. He shook his head a little bit, meaning “none taken”.

“We should also give our deepest condolences to all the scientists we lost. They were the fallen heroes who face the death and did their best. We will remember them as long as we can.

It was a great tragedy, and we are determined to not let it happen again. We will finish setting up sonic fences this week. No more innocent lives should be scarified to the monster. We will investigate the

nature of that monster and find a way to kill it. We will get through this difficult time together. Thank you everyone.”

The applause was deafening.

...

Near the end of the funeral, the priest asked, "Is there anyone wants to add anything?"

Slowly, to everyone’s surprise, Gerald moved again.

He struggled with his wheelchair. In haste Dr. Chang pushed him to the center, while Lara lowered the microphone for him.

It was dead quiet. The wind brushed palm trees above, making a low wailing sound.

Gerald looked around at all his employees, one after another. He remembered he or Karen had helped each of them at one point of their lives. They all tried to pay him back by working hard for him. DI was like a big family. He was like the head of the household, but the happy moment had passed. It was over when they stepped onto this cursed place. He knew it very well. Now he had to face another difficult choice of telling the truth or not. All the emotions came up, regret, love, hatred, happy, sad, guilt ... they weighed on him and made it difficult to speak. He opened his mouth but he choked, "Uh... I ... I ..."

It was deafening silence. None of the DI members moved or said anything. They just watched him eagerly. *Tell us what to do, and we will do it. If you want to avenge Karen and charge the monster, we will do it without a word. Just tell us, please!*

Those twenty seconds of silence was very very long. Just like Einstein pointed out, time is a relative thing.

Gerald finally spoke in a trembling voice, it sent shocks to everyone.

"My fellows in DI, here I give you my most sincere apology. From the beginning, I knew this island had some unnatural forces that were extremely dangerous, and yet I was being overly optimistic, and seriously underestimated the potential risk that we all had to face, so I came, in the name of so called 'scientific research'. I even convince Karen to come with me because I knew she had the same curiosity, and the same eagerness of great discoveries, just like me. We had to leave our son, Desmond behind, because, again, I knew there were grave dangers lurking in the island..."

His words were quite stirring. No one would have expected him saying things like that.

“Now when I looked back, I would say it’s not worth it. Why I have to leave my lovely son, put my wife in harm’s way, just to chasing the fame and fulfilled my curiosity? I made a stupid choice. I hope everyone here won’t make the same mistake like I did. Life is too short, my friend. Go for the things you really need, please!”

It was awful silence after this. People started to look at each other and thinking the same thing: *Maybe he is right. The risk here is too great. Amy and Pierre could only shake their heads. Gerald is doing self-*

destruction of Dharma Initiatives. He doesn't want to continue the project anymore, and now he is bringing it down.

“So here I offered all of you a choice. A choice that would no doubt affect the rest of your life. You can choose to leave this island and enjoy your normal life, we will provide you with enough money so you can start your life again, or you can choose to stay. We might see some great things together and make history together, but you have to know that you are risking your life by staying here. Which one you will choose is completely up to you. I guarantee that DI will not affect your choice in any way.

Enough is said. Now whoever wants to leave, please stand up and go back to your tent. I can arrange a submarine to come tomorrow. Pack all your personal belongs, please, because once you leave you can never come back.”

One by one, DI employees stood up and left. Some of them held their head and didn't know what to do. Some begged his friends to stay. Some girls asked their boyfriends to leave with them. The funeral became the testing ground of faith. People's voice became louder and louder. Not very long it was filled with cursing, crying, begging and yelling. It became as noisy as the morning wall street market.

Gradually the noise tuned down. All the heated debates have their winners and losers. The sound became mostly “goodbye” and “farewell”.

Amy, Paul, Lara and Pierre stayed in the front row. They hugged each member who decided to leave and wished him/her good luck, they comforted the people whose good friends were leaving, and they tried to persuade some key members of DI to stay.

The whole process was surprisingly peaceful. A lot of tears were shredded, but no blood was drawn.

2 hours later, Amy started to count the remaining ones. “30,31,32 ... 40, 41, 42. Well, including you and me, we still have 42 members left. Not bad at all.”

Dr. Chang said with a little sarcasm, “Right, I thought there would be only 5 left.”

Lara, “Yeah, whoever stays definitely deserves all the Dharma Beer he wants.”

Paul, “Well, I can empty all those beers just by myself.”

Amy, “Stop! I prohibit you from drinking.”

Paul, “Oh, sorry, dear. I won't.”

Pierre, “Come on, Paul, be a man, show her who's the head of the house hold.”

Paul, “Well, she is.”

“Hahahaha....” Loud laughter burst from the remaining crowd.

.....

3 days later.

Amy, Paul, Pierre and Lara all got a different letter from Dr. DeGroot in the morning from the doorstep.

Amy opened the letter and read it carefully,

“Dear Amy,

It’s very difficult to say goodbye to you. I already feel too much pain. I am not sure if I can take it to see you cry again. So I just leave this note to you. I am terribly sorry to leave without saying goodbye...”

Oh, NO!! Amy rushed out of the house with her husband. She woke up everyone in the DI and started an extensive search operation. All 41 remained members joined the search.

However, just like everyone expected, when Dr. DeGroot decided to do something, there was nothing to stop him. He disappeared just like he never existed. All his belongings were gone. No trail was left behind for them to trace. Amy and her friends searched a whole day, went through every inch they were allowed to reach, yet found nothing useful. She wanted to go deeper in the hostile territories but Paul stopped her firmly. She collapsed in his arms.

When they returned to the DI base, it was midnight already. Amy took the letter on the floor with a trembling hand, and read the rest,

“Amy, I really appreciate your contribution to the Dharma Initiative. You put in your whole life behind it. Without your help, the whole DI wouldn’t be possible at the first place. In my mind you are the real creator of DI, not me. I cannot thank you enough for what you did.

In my mind, you are always still the little girl I met in the award party, the little girl who played spying on her father, and the little girl who was so curious about my rock. I know that along all these years you have grown up quite a lot. You became more intelligent, more practical and more beautiful. I don’t believe in God, but I thank him every day that you are here to help me. You are like our own daughter, and I am so happy that you had chosen a good husband. Karen should be happy to see you two love birds finally got married. You two really deserved growing old together.

However, I couldn’t get rid of the guilt of bringing you all here. This island is an extremely dangerous place. Karen and other three already paid their ultimate price. The other day I was trying to drive you all away, but you, Paul, Pierre, Lara and 35 other members still stay. At that moment I did cry, except there were no more tears in my eyes to shed. I felt good that day, but now every time I see you talking to me, my wife’s face showed up in my mind. She was completely terrified at that last moment. I can’t help but thinking that face could be yours. It makes me very worried. My mind didn’t have a moment of peace since then.

So I decided to finish my life. I know that as long as I live here you won’t go away. I cannot leave this place because this is where Karen is. So the only option I have is to end my life here.

By the time you read this letter, I should be dead already. You don't need to find my body because you won't find it. Meanwhile, I strongly urge you to disperse the Dharma Initiative. Amy, you don't belong here, your bright mind will shine anywhere you go. You don't need to keep taking such a big risk here. I'm sure that you and Paul will live a much better life back in the outside world. The choice is yours but I strongly recommend you to leave.

Goodbye my dearest daughter!

Sincerely with all my heart,

Your second father,

Dr. Gerald DeGroot"

Amy sat down in her sofa heavily. She felt so tired all in a sudden, and realized that she must be physically and emotionally exhausted.

She took a look at Paul, and seeing him wept with his letter, "Are you OK? Honey?"

"Oh..." Paul quickly wiped his tear and replied, "I am fine, dear. It was just that Dr. DeGroot was like a father to me."

"Yeah, I felt the same."

"I still remember how he saved me from getting killed by a gangster. He paid my debt without even knew who I really was. My life turned around completely that day, and he introduced me to you. I never thought I could meet someone so beautiful like you."

"Oh... baby!" Amy crawled to Paul and hugged him from behind, "You are so sweet!" She could feel the body warmth and hear the heartbeats of her husband.

"I am just telling you the truth. Now he's gone, I am not sure what to do. What do you think, dear?"

Still hugging his chest from behind, Amy stopped her motion for a while.

Paul just waited quietly.

From the back, Amy could feel Paul's heart beating fast. She could hear each of his breath. And she knew that whatever the direction she pointed. Paul would follow without any hesitation. One word from her could determine the rest of his life. So she must think carefully, she must analyze all the facts and not affected by her emotion, just to make the best decision. Moreover, it was not only his or her life. It connects to all 39 remaining DI members. This decision would determine their lives as well.

"Do you know Marie Curie?" She asked.

"No, why?" Paul was wondering.

"She was the scientist who was a pioneer of radioactivity and won 2 Nobel Prizes. She is my idol."

“So ...”

“She died of aplastic anemia, because of her research.” Amy said, “But I think even if she knew the danger, she would just keep doing the research, because our lives are too short, and the chances of making great discoveries are too low. This island has amazing things that I am willing to put my life in it. It’s just like radioactivity to Marie Curie. I want to stay, but I am afraid that I will lose you.”

“You will never lose me.” Paul laughed, “You found the island, and I found you. You are the lady that I am willing to put my life in it too.”

“So we will stay.” Amy said.

“We stay, and I will protect you.” Paul said, “With my life.”

Chapter 12: Tales from the Others (Part Two).

My name is Eloise Hawking. I was born on July 4th, 1928.

My father was Major Stephen Hawking. He was a remarkable military man. He graduated in West Point among the top 10 in 1916. Soon World War I took place. He was in the first batch of the army to send to Europe after the U.S. declared War on Germany. He got a Bronze Star in the Battle of Amiens, and a Silver Star at the end of the Hundred Days Offense. He was a hero in the battlefield. His subordinates all followed him and fought beside him with confidence. By the end of the World War I, he was promoted to major, but unfortunately he lost the left leg due to a serious infection. A purple heart was awarded, but it doesn't have much meaning to him anymore. He was forced out of the battlefield and came to our town as a recruitment officer. I believed this arrangement gave him more pain than losing the leg.

After being in town for a few years, he married my mother, who was a nobody. She was only a country girl who had a crush on men in uniforms. You don't need to know her name.

I had two elder brothers: Charles and James. Because my father's influence, they began their military training ever since they could walk. I watched them marched and exercised in toddlers. My father didn't like me to get involved in the drills. He always said a girl should always act like a girl. However, being born into such a military family, Barbies and all the girly stuff were just disgusting to me. I became one of them eventually. If you were there, you would have seen me climbing up and down or running around with a BB gun. And if you dressed in uniform, I would salute you with a perfect posture.

My brothers always needed someone as the practice target to play their little war games. They had no choice but use me as a little bogey man. In the beginning I was always the first one who lost, which brought them a lot of joy. Later I learned to use my advantage of being small and fast, things became differently then. Sometimes I could even maneuver around to their back and gave them a surprised attack. Those occasional victories had given me the happiest moments in my childhood.

My eldest brother, Charles, always tried to be the protector of us. In my school no bullies dared to touch me, not only because I could really fight, but they all feared the "Hawking Three". There were once James had run into troubles with local gangsters because of some girl's issue. Charles went to their lair alone and single-handedly put down all four of them. He instantly became a popular guy. Girls would give him gifts on holidays, and they would try to know me to get close to Charles and James. However, it turned out that it was difficult for me to be a friend of girls. I was a tomboy who always talked loud and acted tough. My closest friends in my childhood were all boys.

I remembered vividly that I was practicing my newly learned stick fighting techniques with a friend in the cornfield when a boy ran near and yell, "War! War! Japs hit us at Pearl Harbor!"

I was only 13 years old, but I was so pumped up after hearing the word "War" that I broke my playmate's rib-bone with the stick. (Later I was grounded for a whole 3 months.) I let him lying on the field moaning, and ran as quickly as possible back to my home.

Charles joined the army that day. He was only 18, not the drafting age yet, but since he joined the army voluntarily, my father and the other officers were happy to accept him. He would be transported to a training camp within a week.

My mother cried a lot that day, but my father was happy. He seemed more excited than my brother. He rarely touched alcohol, but that night he drank a lot and told us his heroic stories all over again. Frankly we three had heard his WWI experiences thousands of times already. None of us were really interested, but we all knew it might be the last time we were together as a family, so we let him do the talking one more time.

After putting my seriously drunk father in bed, Charles pulled me aside and asked me to take care of our parents when he was gone.

“You know James always put all his mind in chasing girls.” He added, “Our wheat and corn will all suffer drought before he dumped the girl. So you are the only one who I can really depend on.”

“You know you can always count on me, Charles. Go and kill some Japs for me. OK? Get me some souvenir from the war, like our father’s Luger.”

“Yeah, I will.” He smiled, “I am not afraid of the Japs, but my little sister’s scissor kick.”

I tried to kick him with my signature “flying scissor kick” but he dodged it easily. We both laughed.

“Don’t be a hero there.” I suddenly started to concern, “That’s really dangerous in the battlefield.”

“Relax, my little sissy. Dad had been training us well for something like this. I will be safe. No worries.”

And that’s the last word I heard from him. The next day we found out that he was gone. He couldn’t even wait for a week to join the army.

One year later we heard the bad news from an officer. Charles’ tag was found among piles of bodies in Guadalcanal. No one knew how he died, or even which body was his. It was believed that he was the first one who rushed the enemy and was gunned down into pieces.

His death hit us really hard. We couldn’t smile ever since. My mother cried for a long time. She blamed my father for sending her son to his doom. My father became a silent man. He never said anything to refute my mother’s accusation, which really worried me. You see, if my father was not speaking, that must be because he was extremely angry or extremely upset. In that case it was no doubt the latter. My second brother James went out and got drunk many times. His girlfriend left him because he was intolerably annoying. The smart and funny brother I used to know had gone, and he was replaced with a bitching alcohol addict. Me? I felt like I lost my best friend, the only one who really understood me. The pain was indescribable. I can’t really tell you how lost I was.

After wiping out the tears, I arranged the whole funeral, went back to school and at the same time took care of the crops with my father. It was all tough work. I did manage all that without crying in public. It was not easy.

James joined the army three months after the funeral. In contrast to Charles, he was drafted because the age limit had expanded. He tried to escape to Mexico, but my father and I captured him and sent him to the station. There he was warned that refusal of the military service would be punished by a maximum 5 years in Federal prison and/or a fine of \$250,000. I felt shame of him.

Two weeks before he was sent to the front line, my father and I visited him in the training camp. He cried in front of everyone and said, "Papa, I am scared!" My father hugged him really tight. I could see his face was twitching, like someone was cutting his heart out.

The next day my father announced his decision in the dinner table, "I am going back to the army. And I will go with James to the frontline."

I was only mildly surprised, but my mother went berserk and she used all kind of language on him. It was like in the middle of storm of cursing, begging and swearing. My father just stood there, calmly and quietly like a rock. My mother hit him hard in the chest and eventually collapsed in his arms. I went up and hugged them both.

My father looked at me and said, "Sorry!"

I said, "Don't be. Someone got to take care of James."

He managed a slight smile, "I just want to show him that there is nothing to be feared, not even the death."

"You already taught us that, dad." I said, "It's up to James to understand it."

"I'll make sure he will." He said, "He can't be a shame of the family."

"Yes, I know." I kissed him in the cheek, "Don't be a hero. You are already one."

He looked at me like he wanted to say so many things, but he didn't. He just wiped his tears and told me, "Go do your homework, Ellie."

"Yes, SIR!"

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2 years later, it was a freezing early spring day of 1945. We met the same officer who brought us the same bad news. It was last winter in a small hill near Bastogne, Belgium where they found both of my father and my brother's bodies. They fought bravely against the Germans, as they said. My father was hit by an artillery shell in his foxhole, while my brother was 300 feet away to the front, killing a German soldier while his head was shot by someone else. They had to break his hand in order to pry him away from the dead German soldier. James didn't shame us at all. He was awarded a bronze medal.

My mother went crazy after hearing it. She ended up in a mental hospital where many soldiers suffered severe post-drama symptoms, just like her.

Still wearing the black dress from the funeral, I went to the local recruiting center where my father used to work. The officer rejected my enrollment for 2 reasons: one, I was a girl, and two, I was only 17. He said I could only be a nurse if I wanted to go to the front, and I need at least 2 years of nursing experience in a hospital. He begged me not to do anything foolish, because he couldn't take the news of another Hawking died anymore.

I knew there was no way they would accept me in that town, for everybody knew me and my family's tragedy. However, I was so determined to take revenge. So I cut all my hair and packed my bag, drove to the big city and joined the army there.

It turned out that they did have special branches for women in the army, but I was very disappointed to learn that none of them could carry a gun. Women were only allowed to do office, mail, cooking or nursing. I was completely useless in all the above. So it didn't take long for me to decide that I would impose as a man and join the marine.

It seemed that the big city's office was too busy to check who I really was. They hastily sent me and many 18 year olds to the training camp. Right after we vacated the truck the drill sergeant informed us that, due to the shortage of the manpower, the training period were shortened to 2 months only, and we would be inducted into the Marine Corps right after that.

I had no problem with it, actually it was good news to me, because the longer I trained with those boys, the higher possibility I would be exposed as a girl. At the same time, all those boys were quite upset. Obviously they had no mental preparation for the war whatsoever.

You must be wondering how did I enrolled as a man, and how did I passed the medical exam in the camp. I will explain them one by one.

Faking the look and voice was easy. At that time I had a jarhead, and looked exactly like another pretty boy. For the voice, over the years I perfected my skill of faking a man's voice. It was like I was a natural. So at that time when I stood in my uniform, you wouldn't be able to tell that I was a girl.

How about my breasts? What a sick question! Okay, you wouldn't see it either because they were, uh..., undeveloped yet.

The medical examination? Yeah, that was a little bit trickier. The same day I arrived in the camp, I followed the doctor to his home, and I told him everything about me. I begged him for his help. It turned out that the doctor lost a son in the war too. After promising him to take care of his other son in the camp, he agreed to cover me as much as possible. You see? Everything is possible, as long as you have the will strong enough to do it.

The training for those 2 months was a piece of cake. It was exactly the same way my father used to train us, only easier. It reminded me of him many times during the training process. I really missed him and my brothers.

The showering was easy to handle too. I did everything faster than anyone, usually when they even took off their pants I already finished my shower. Sometimes I even joined them in the shower room. Nobody was suspecting so no one was really looking at my body. I always choose the faucet in the far end of the room, so they could only see my back, which had some battle scars, courtesy of my brothers. Of course they would look away immediately.

Two months later the doctor asked me one last time if I really wanted to go to the frontline. I told him that he must be joking. It was too late to back out. If he said anything about my sex, I would certainly kill his son in a single blow. The doctor finally succumbed to my lethal threat.

Just like that, I was promoted to sergeant and I led the boys to their naval transportation ship. On the way to the pacific warzone, more and more troops joined us in the ship. I was completely indulged in the excitement of the coming battles. Most of them shared the same enthusiasm; they would yell, "Let's kill some Japs." or "A good Jap is a dead Jap", lines like that, but I knew that they were seriously under-trained for what was coming. Hell, even I was actually not ready for the brutality of the Battle of Iwo Jima.

It was on the ship where I met that boy, Charles Widmore. Somehow he knew something the moment he saw me. I couldn't explain why. It was like he knew who I really was from day one. He would sit with me in the mess hall and try to initiate a conversation. I insulted him anyway I could think of, but he never backed off. His persistence drove me crazy.

It was a chilling day when the loud speaker announced that all the personnel onboard must go through a genital inspection, because some soldiers were infected by herpes. A rumor was widely spread that some gay officer was having very inappropriate sexual relationships with privates. In order to catch the sex offender, everyone must take off his clothes in front of the doctors and the officers. I hadn't prepared for things like that. Just when I was deeply troubled by not finding a solution, Charles pulled me away. He took my position and pretended to be me. It was a foolish and risky move, but he succeeded. I was very lucky that I kept a low profile in the ship so the officers couldn't tell my name. Later he shaved his head and joined the line again. The doctor noticed something, but he didn't say anything. In the end of the day I went to his quarter and thanked him. He just smiled at me, making me very uncomfortable.

That crisis was averted, but it worried me more. My situation actually became worse because some soldiers found out my secret through that event. They didn't report to their superiors yet, but I knew it would come down to a showoff sooner or later.

So it was not surprising that one night two big hulky guys stopped me on the way to the shower room. They had evil grins that gave me goose bumps. But before they could say anything, I charged them first and broke three fingers of the first one and one rib of the second one. They lay on the ground and cried like pussies. I passed them and took my shower.

The next day I was summoned by the captain.

“Are you seriously telling me that you are risking being gang raped and sending to jail, just to fight an even more dangerous war?” The captain was puzzled, “Why are you doing this, young lady? Are you out of your god damn mind?”

I replied loudly, “No, Captain! I know what I am doing, sir.”

“Really? Then explain why you pretended to be a man.”

“To join the army, sir!”

“There is no place for a girl in my ship. I need soldiers, not a sissy.”

“I am a soldier as good as anyone else, sir!”

“I don’t care. There is no god damn way I will allow you to continue. Now Private Ryan here will escort you to the confining cell. Once we reached Hawaii, you will be court-martialed. Dismiss!”

And just like that, my plan of revenging my father and my brothers had failed. I was thrown into a cell, which was in complete darkness. There was nothing but my desperation.

Charles Widmore came almost every day. He couldn’t see me in person so he tapped in the wall and sent me some Morse code, “Hang in there, Ellie. We are looking for a way to get you out.”

I replied in Morse code, “Get away from me, pig!”

He sent, “We are all encouraged by you! Now you are the most popular person in the whole battalion.”

I sent, “Stop sending me messages. Are you an idiot?”

He sent, “We love you. And I love you too, a lot!”

I sent, “FUCCK OFF!”

It was like that almost every day.

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We didn’t stop at Hawaii because the war was at a critical time. The ships were instructed to go to New Guinea directly. On the way we encountered our first battle with Japanese.

Even though I was in a cell with solid steel walls, I knew it was daytime because I heard the lunch bell rang before the air alarm sounded off. My cell was lighted for the first time since I was there by a red blinking lamp. I sat up, checked my uniform and waited quietly.

Following the alarm, the transport ship opened fire. I could feel the whole floor trembled when a 5-inch cannon shot its rounds. Before long other anti-aircraft guns started firing in a rapid succession. The Japanese planes were closing in.

I remain sitting still. Amidst all the noise around me, I was in such a serenity state that I felt my mind was never so peaceful before. I wondered if my brothers and my father felt the same way before they engaged the enemies.

My war is coming. Please God give me strength to fight without fear. Please don't let me do anything that shames my family. I will give you my life; I will build you a church. Please at least give me a chance to fight.

My prayer was answered when the steel door was opened, and Charles Widmore stood outside. He was holding a lifejacket and smiling. Before he could say anything, I rushed out and gave him a quick kiss in the mouth. Obviously Charles didn't expect such a sudden move from me. He was shocked for a while. Hell! I didn't kiss him because I like him, but because I thought I was going to die soon, kissing a boy before my imminent death was a swell idea at that moment.

I ran to the upper deck. Instantly the strong sunlight pierced my eyes. I had to stop for a while before I could see anything. That's when Charles caught up with me and said, "Ellie, come on. Wear the jacket. We had arranged you to escape to another ship ..."

I shut him up, "Fuucking quiet!"

"But ..." he was trying to say something. That's when I pushed him back in a quarter and ran out to the deck.

The booming sound of the cannons on the deck was deafening. I saw many small clouds in the sky while twenty to thirty small airplanes were dancing, drawing one circle after another in the sky. Those should be Japanese Zero fighters. The other 40 to 50 of warplanes surrounding them should be ours, which were flying in squadrons and trying to stop the Zeros from getting close to us.

They were not so successful in stopping them. Though those Zeros were dropping like leaves, half of them had broken through the line and coming toward us at high speed. All the guns opened fire at them. It formed a breath-taking firework display.

Everyone was either working at his post or looking up at the sky. Nobody noticed me of being there. I watched the main anti-air guns in the bow firing for a while, and saw it missed the targets miserably. The first wave of Zeros passed us without a scratch and headed directly to the aircraft carrier nearby. One of them crashed on it and caused a series of chain-explosion. They were Kamikaze pilots!

At that moment I was extremely angry. I could imagine that the soldiers in that carrier could be someone's brother or father. They didn't have to die if we had at least shot one down. In a fury, I jumped to the gun-turret and slapped on the gunner's face, "What the hell are you doing, Rookie?!"

He was instantly shocked by my hard slapping, "Uh...Uh..." Half of his face turned red.

I scolded him, "You shot in front of the airplane, not at the plane! You idiot! You could have killed our pilots who were following the Zeros!"

“Uh...Uh...” He was still in shock, or he just couldn’t argue against me. I was sure that he knew everything from the training already, but in a real combat situation, he just too nervous to remember them. Well, I didn’t have time to calm him down or remind him of everything. The next wave of Zeros was coming.

“Get out of the freaking post!” Without his agreement I untied his harness and dragged him out of the turret in a smooth wrestling move. His back hit the ground flat and everyone nearby was stuned at the scene.

I didn’t really care about what they thought. I just took over the gun and got ready for the next wave of Zeros. The soldiers sitting next to me stared at me like they were going to take me down. What the hell? I shouted at them, “Get back to your gun post. Prepare for the fight. You all know the drill.”

At that time Charles Widmore finally ran up to us, and he shouted out loud at the top of his lung, “Everyone, calm down! This is Ellie! She’s the Ellie.” His words did change the attitude of the soldiers dramatically. One moment ago they were considering about arresting me, the next they were all my friends.

A soldier next to me showed his hand to me, “Pleasure to meet you, Ma’am.”

I shook his hand and say, “You too! Now everyone go back to work. We are going to shoot some Japs.”

A round of cheer rose up.

At that time the sky was a complete mess. Many warplanes flew up and down. There were no more formations. It was really hard to tell which one was friendly and which one was not. All I could see was some planes were flying toward us.

“HOLD YOUR FIRE!” I ordered. Officially I was suspended and waiting for a trail, but it seemed nobody cared about my status. Hell, even the lieutenant behind padded me in the back and said, “Give them hell, Ellie!”

Being unofficially in charge, I announced, “Wait for them to get closer. Pick your target. Make sure it’s a hostile, and always aim in front of it. Remember: once you open fire, don’t stop until you nail the SOBs.”

“Yes, sir!” They acknowledged simultaneously.

As the planes approached, one by one the big canons opened fire at their own targets. Under the unbearable loud bang, the sky once again filled with small puffs of black mushroom clouds. That time it was much more efficient. High above the coming Zeros dropped like they had hit an invisible wall.

My gun remained silence because it was an Oerlikon 20mm canon. It had a practical range of only 1.5 km. So I had to wait for them to come in closer.

Very soon I found the perfect targets. Two of the Zeros passed our defense effortlessly like two ballet dancers waltzing in a crowded rock party. It was not luck that made them through the heavy

bombardment. It was pure skill, almost to the perfection. They flew in broken circles, going up and down unpredictably while maintained their direction. From my point of view they looked like two Olympic freestyle ice dancing partners making their best show, or two butterflies fluttering in a storm. I never thought flying warplanes could have such a beauty.

It was too bad that their opponent was me.

It took me more than 5 seconds, which was way too long, but I found their flying patterns: the leading Zero was actually following the one behind, whenever the latter one moved, the leading one would do a opposite (mirroring) maneuver a split second later. That was why they looked like danced in synchronization.

I opened fire at last, just when they were above us. They pretended to pass us at left but I saw the latter one was turning on right. It made perfect sense to me: those two pilots were both right-handed, so when they banked right, it would be much faster when passing us.

A streak of 20mm projectiles pierced the air. It lay exactly in the path of those two Zeros. The first one had almost no time to react, and it was torn into pieces by the devastating power of each round that hit home.

The second Zero made a drastic turn in the middle of the maneuver. I didn't know how it was humanly possible that it could change its course in such a short time, and how it could manage not to stall. More impressively, it went head down right at me.

I kept pumping all the shells until all 60 rounds in the magazine were out. The remained Zero rolled wildly to dodge the bullets and released its two 60kg bombs under its wings. While everyone yelled "Bomb! Bomb!", I kept stared at the Zero as it was diving in a crazy fast motion, it made an unusual inverted roll at a dangerously low altitude. I could see its canopy flying upside down and just barely passed me at 20 feet above.

At that split second I saw the Japanese girl who was flying the Zero.

She should have worn an aviator hat but she didn't. Perhaps the shattered glass of the canopy had cut off her hat. So I could see her long hair flowing backward. At that exact moment I saw her looking up at me below. She was just a pale, young Japanese girl with an empty expression. And the next moment she and her plane disappeared from the upper deck.

One bomb missed our ship by meters but the other one hit the other end of the ship. Instantly the whole ship jumped up under me. Everyone on the deck was knocked down by the powerful blast wave except me. I was tied up to the gun turret so I was still up while I was pushed violently to another direction. Luckily the metal shield of the gun turret had blocked some shrapnel for me.

Everything happened so fast that I didn't have time to think about what kind of lost we had just suffered. I swiveled to the direction that she disappeared, and saw that she managed to roll flat and pull up when the Zero hit a wave. It almost looked like she played a throwing-stones-in-a-pool game with her Zero,

touching the water then she got up in the air again. I was so disappointed that she didn't crash in the ocean.

Immediately I shouted at the soldier next to me, "Reload! Quick! She is coming back." Realizing that I couldn't hear my own voice because my ears were still ringing, I gestured him frantically.

The soldier struggled to his feet. Still in shock, he changed the heavy magazine with trembling hands and asked, "Who's coming back?" right at the time when my hearing was back.

"The girl in the Zero." I replied.

"You sure?" He wondered, "She already dropped her bombs." It's true that she got some revenge, but I wouldn't bank on that. *By the way she looked at me, yeah, she will be back.* I thought. *That's what I will do if I lost a perfect partner. I will kill the one who kill him, nothing less.*

I took a glance at our ship. It was a living hell. Half of the bridge was gone. Thick smoke came out of the huge hole the bomb had created. Soldiers cried out loud by the extreme pain they were suffering.

She was quite a formidable enemy, a deadly adversary. It made my blood boiled with excitement.

Come on! Come and get me, BITCH!

The battle continued around me. One by one the 5 inch cannons resumed firing. All the smaller anti-aircraft guns turned back to the sky and shot at their targets. Navy personnel shouted each other at the top of their lungs to pass orders. It was loud and chaotic, but I felt quiet.

It was the quiet before the fieriest storm. I knew it. I searched the sky but couldn't find the plane.

Where would I attack me if I were the girl? I considered the possibilities, then suddenly I swiveled around and pointed my gun to the sun.

It was the oldest trick of the books, attacking from the direction of the Sun, but it was really difficult to think of it when you were in a combat situation. Even you did realize it, it was really hard to shoot a moving target while the sun was shining directly in your eyes.

From there, she opened fire first.

It was an unbelievable scary yet exciting experience. Big bullets rained down at me. Each one opened a hole on the steel surface as large as my face. Debris, splinters and shrapnel flew all around me. I felt strong pain all over my body but had no time to find out what caused it.

Ironically her Zero was equipped with the same kind of 20mm Oerlikon cannon I was using (they were called type 99 cannons in Japan). I had 60 rounds in my magazine while she got 120 in two guns, so the fire power was basically equal. However, she had the overwhelming agility and position advantage. I had no choice but to let her fire at me first, and she did wreck havoc in my direction. I didn't know how I could still be one piece after that first two seconds, but all I needed was those two seconds to find out where she was and how fast she was coming.

From the dazzling fast passing tracers I spotted the little black dot above the sun. She was doing a barrel roll to adjust her shoots. Of course once she was done my gun turret would be in the dead center. I pulled the trigger hard. A streak of bright yellow dots rushed out toward her in a small circle, which was the opposite direction she was rotating.

It was no way of telling whether I hit the target or not. All I could do was stabilizing the gun with my body as hard as I could, and watching the ballistic string of fire racing up toward the Zero. While at the same time she lay everything she had at me. Scattering big bullets narrowly missed me and destroy everything in their path around the turret.

In about 8 seconds I shot all my rounds. It was the most hellish 8 seconds I ever experienced. However, during that short moment I was not afraid, or nervous. I concentrated so much of my attention up and above, that I didn't feel any pain or hear any sound around, though they were both extremely unbearable. I guessed I would never have such a strong focus again in my entire life. All I could think about was, "DIE! BITCH! DIE!"

Now I wonder if she was thinking the same at that moment.

It was purely my luck that saved me. It really should have been me who died there, instead of my projectiles breaking her left wing and ending the duel.

Her plane span out of control like a kite with a broken string. While still shooting randomly as it tumbled around, it was no longer a threat. When finally it crashed flat on its bottom on the upper deck of my ship, a fireball came up instantly. The Zero plane, though remain relatively intact with one wing left, burned like an inferno.

I saw her burning inside the plane. She must be dead already, because no human brain could survive such a high speed freefalling crash. Still, I could see her pale face and black silky hair. Her facial expression looked surprisingly calm, not the fearing or screaming face I was expecting. I guessed at the last moment of her life she felt relief, not panic. In under a minute, her pale face was burned into black chars. I was hating her that minute before, but the horrible scene had permanently pressed in my mind. It made me pity her. Even today, I still remember how her beautiful doll-like face turned into a nightmarish Grim Reaper.

Charles Widmore came up and held me in his arms. "Ellie, it's okay; it's all over." He helped me sitting down on the floor.

I said something like, "Get away from me." That's when the pain in my back hit me hard. I groaned in agony and gradually lost my conscience. Charles told me later that my whole back was soaked in blood. The marine uniform was torn into long strips. A piece of steel pierced into my shoulder and remained there. Doctors later took out 15 pieces of metal from my back.

It was the next day when I finally found out how much she devastated us. The captain was killed, along with other 50 officers and soldiers, over a hundred wounded. The navigation and the communication system were gone, so we all had to transfer to a battleship in our fleet. In the bow where my gun turret

sat, volleyball size bullet holes were everywhere. 10 of the vehicles in the lower deck below were serious damage. Two of the 5 inch guns were torn apart. I had no idea how could I survived, being in the center of the firing.

It was a win at a hefty price.

.....

The doctor on the battleship wrapped me in bandages and made me looked like a mummy, but believed it or not none of those injuries were life-threatening. So the next day I could walk again. This time the whole battalion became weird: when I passed anyone on the way, no matter he was a private or a colonel, he would salute me and said, "Sergeant Ellie." It was quite embarrassing, especially when a superior officer did that to me. My hands were all wrapped up so it was hard to return the courtesy.

Three days later we reached Pearl Harbor. Our transport ship had been seriously damaged, so it would be under repair while we waited for her to take us back to the journey. The battleship which took us in had left for the battle of Iwo Jima. I was upset about not able to go with them. The boys all took their time to enjoy the pleasant life of Hawaii.

One week later, I was summoned to the headquarters.

There I met a general in a meeting room. He was reading some documents when I slowly walked in. He at-eased me before I could finish saluting him.

"Young lady, you had pulled quite a stunt!" He said.

I was not sure that was a compliment or a damnation, so I could only said, "Yes, Sir!"

"The pilots you shot down," he pointed to the folder of documents, "were navy idols in Japan. You had slain their heroes. Do you know that?"

"No, Sir!"

"They always flew in a pair. The man was Hiroyuki Dogen. The girl was Kyoto Lu. They were the best pilots in Japan. Each of them had shot down at least twenty of our planes."

My eyes must have opened wide, "But I never heard of them, Sir!"

"Of course, we couldn't let public know about them. Are you crazy? It's war time. We won't sing the praise for our enemies."

"Sorry sir."

"That's alright. Now I don't know how you did the impossible. Shot down two aces in a row with that no-power too-slow little-ammunition 20mm gun? It was a remarkable feat, young lady!"

"I am sorry that I couldn't protect the ship better, and many good soldiers died because of me."

“Don’t blame yourself at all. It was much better than those two bastards sunk our carrier again. Do you know that they did that before?”

“No sir.” I was really surprised, “Are you serious? They could sink the carrier just like that?”

“See? That’s exactly why we had to keep it as a secret. You should be much happier to know that since you have stopped the unstoppable, now our fleets are much safer, so we decided to promote you as 1st. Lieutenant. What do you think?”

“I am really happy, sir!”

“You should. We also asked the pentagon to give you Medal of the Honor, but those idiots in Washington didn’t want to give it to a girl. So the best we could do was a Silver Star. Here you go.”

He handed me a gold star medal, which had a blue-white-red strips ribbon.

“Sir, I am really honored.” I was almost in tears when I saw the medal. It reminded me of my father.

“OK, remember to wear it in tomorrow’s funeral.”

“Yes, Sir!” I imagined how proud my father would be, from heaven watching his daughter wearing a Silver Star, just like he did before.

“One more thing, we are sending you home.”

“What?!” It was an unexpected twist.

“You had done your job here. Now your new job is to go back to the U.S. and sell the war bonds. You will be the first female heroin in the army. We can get a lot more support from that half of the population. Hell, you don’t look bad at all. You will be the perfect model that everyone looks up to. We can sell a lot of bonds through you.”

“Sir...” I hesitated, “Permission to speak frankly, sir?”

“OK, you have it. What is it?”

I looked him in the eyes and said, “I came here to fight the Nazi, not to be a salesperson, sir!”

“What?”The general took off his eyeglasses and stared at me, “You had your war, lady. And you won! You killed their best pilots, got a silver medal and can go home safe. What more do you need? Uh?”

“Sir, I didn’t join the army for the medal or fame, but to fight my enemy. So far I only had one battle like everyone else in that ship. I don’t deserve going home so early.”

“Oh, gosh!” The general walked around in small circles in front of me. He must be irritated. “You really want to die there? Are you serious out of your mind?”

“Apparently I am, sir!”

He stopped the circling and stared at me up close and personal. I felt uncomfortable by his intensive gazing.

Finally he said, "You know what? I hope my son can have half of your guts. I wish it was him who said those things to me, instead of running off to Canada. But young lady, now you are giving me a big problem here."

"Sorry, Sir!"

"Pentagon already knew your name and your story. We must follow the order and send you back home."

I turned my head quickly to him. At that moment I almost wanted to beg.

He made a difficult decision, "However, I do understand the reason you want to continue. I read your files. That's hell of a story. So let's screw the orders! Here I offer you a way to stay here. It depends on how determined you are. Do you want to know what that is?"

"Yes, sir!" Whatever that was, I would do it. I just hope he wouldn't ask me to blow his old pipe.

"We can tell Pentagon that Eloise Hawking was severely wounded and die a few days later. This way you can use a new name and continue your fight, but you will lose all the honors and start as a private again, and it's highly possible that you will die in action as a nobody. Can you really do that?"

I was very glad, "Thank you, sir! Thank you so much for covering me up. I will do my best in your division."

"You are sure you don't want your Silver Medal?"

"No, sir! I love the medal, but I want the fight even more."

"Crazy woman!" he muttered, then announced, "OK, the matter is settled then. You are dismissed, private."

"Thank you, sir!" I suddenly had an impulse, "Can I ask one more thing?"

"Fire away."

"Can I take a look at those pilots' files?" I asked carefully, "I just want to know more about them."

"Those are classified documents." He said, then he thought about it for a while, "You can only read them here. You got 10 minutes. Starting now."

"Thank you, Sir." I truly felt that behind the general's cold rigid face he got a good heart.

Actually I was really curious about those two pilots. Somehow I felt like their lives had something to do with me.

I read the files about Hiroyuki Dogen first.

He was born with a silver spoon. His family business had once dominated the Japanese airplane manufacturing market. Unfortunately, a serious car accident happened when Hiroyuki was still a child. It put him in a hospital for two months. All the doctors said he was going to die, but miraculously he woke up and got better day by day. His father mysteriously disappeared during the two months and never showed up again. The government sent out all the policemen in Japan to search for his father, but still couldn't find him. Since then his family business went downhill in a steep slope. Eventually the whole business was sold to Mitsubishi for a very low price. Even so, the family's money was enough for him to support his life-time goal: becoming the best pilot of Japan.

Hiroyuki had a talent of flying airplanes. He got his pilot license even before the accident. After his fully recovery he won many aviation competitions. Every year in Sakurai Festivals he would show people how to fly a plane through a 10 feet gap between two poles. Most of the time, he would drive his amphibian plane all around the Japanese Sea. Rumors said that he was looking for his father.

At the age of 18, he joined the Imperial Japanese Navy Air Service and became a test pilot. It was at that time he met his future wife Kyoto Lu, who was half Japanese and half Chinese. They were inseparable from then on. All the carrier fighters were tested by them before they could be mass-produced. Therefore they had the highest flight hours among all the Japanese pilots. They knew the Mitsubishi A6M Zero inside out before any other pilot had a chance to touch it.

They excelled in all the air-combat training. Most incredibly their record of 100 win 0 lose was still a record that nobody could change. Unconfirmed source said that they had such a high precision of control, that they could fly the planes back to back and hold hand-in-hand mid-air while both planes were doing a perfect synchronized barrel roll.

It was hard to believe at first, but when remembered what I saw that day, I thought that was possible for them.

As I wanted to read the files about Kyoto Lu, the general said, "Time is up. Go back to your tent, private."

I put down the files unwillingly. It was the girl I really wanted to know, but too bad my reading speed was slow, for I was never a book worm.

Her burning face reappeared in my mind. *My god!* I thought. *Maybe I will remember this horrible thing for the rest of my life.*

Indeed I did.

.....

After 6 months, they finally finished repairing the ship. We were one the way to the battlefield again. Along the way I was dispatched to this island to investigate some unnatural phenomenon with Charles and our platoon. Some strange things happened and I was trapped here ever since.

At first I wanted to leave this island very bad, but the leader, Jacob, told me that the war would be over in one week. It turned out to be true. After that he said there was a battle waging in the island between good and evil. This battle was far more important than the war we were fighting outside. We were the good guys. He said, if we lost, the world would be over. I trusted him, so I stayed and joined his force.

As a way to show his appreciation, Jacob extended our lives. That means we won't get old for 10 years, and it was true. Can you imagine what kind of power he must possess in order to achieve this miracle? To me, he was like a new Messiah.

In this island, the life was simple and time passed fast. 25 years had gone since I arrived here and started the war against the monster. Now is 1970. We had fought many battles against him. We used every weapon we knew except that Hydrogen bomb. Yet we still couldn't find a way to kill it. That thing is truly the darkest evil being on earth...

"Wait!" Gerald DeGroot said, "What are you talking about? What Hydrogen bomb?"

It was inside a dark cave in a hill. A pile of fire slowly burned with pine branches. Eloise Hawking sat on a rock with two sticks tied up one of her leg. She was already 32 years old yet still very attractive. Dr. DeGroot sat next to her and checked her wound on the leg while raised the question.

Eloise said, "Never mind. It's a dud. We buried it already. It won't do any harm."

"But how did you get it at the first place?"

"We don't know it either. The villagers said it was there since the day we arrived at the island, which was 25 years ago."

"You sure it's safe to bury it underground?"

"Yeah. A young scientist once told me that before he disappeared in front of me. Somehow I trusted him."

"What do you mean by 'disappeared in front of you'?"

"What more could I say? He just disappeared in a flash. One second he was there and the next he was gone."

"And you are not surprised?"

"Well, there were many magical events happened in this island. I got used to it after a while."

Dr. DeGroot thought about it and said, "Ironically it was for the same reason I and my wife came here." Karen's last moment played back in his mind, which made him feel the pain again.

Eloise patted on his back and said, "I am sorry for your loss, doctor. And thanks for saving my life yesterday."

“Oh, that’s nothing.” Dr. DeGroot wiped his eyes and said, “I just passed by and saw you chased by that smoky monster. So I just jumped in and tried to get killed. Too bad that bastard just ran away.”

“That thing has been trying to kill me many times, ever since I came to this island.” Eloise explained, “Without my special ability, I would have died a thousand times already.”

“Special ability? What was that?”

Eloise hesitated. She was considering if she should tell him the truth. This man here had a special charm. He was open and completely honest with her. He told her everything about the Dharma Initiative and its peaceful research purposes. He also told her about his family, and the tragedy happened a few days ago, when they just arrived at the island. The way he talked about his feeling without any pretence made her feel like she could trust him with everything.

“You are not going to tell anyone, aren’t you?” She finally asked.

“Nope. Consider me as a dead man walking. I have no intention to spread any gossips.”

“Okay then.” Eloise lowered her voice, “Every leader of the village can gain a special ability for the service of Jacob. Charles chose to be able to read minds, but I selected the ability to predict the future.”

Gerald was in awe, “Wow, that’s amazing. You know. If someone told me the same thing 10 days ago, I would have said that he was crazy, but now I see it differently.”

“Well, actually I think I made the wrong choice. Being able to predict the future is a curse, not a blessing. It gave me more pain than I ever could imagine.”

“How could it be? If you can see the future, you can change it or make the best of it. Like back in the outside world, if someone can see the lottery numbers before it happens, he can make a lot of money in a short time.”

“That much money won’t bring him real happiness. Believe me, I don’t want this ability and nobody should have it.”

“Well, imagine that if I had this ability. I would have known that my wife Karen would be murdered before we landed on the island. Then we would never have come here, I would be a much happier man, and my son won’t feel lonely back there anymore. To me, this is really a good thing.”

“If you still think it this way, how about I give some of my ability to your son? Desmond, isn’t he?”

“How do you know my son’s name?”

“I know it because I saw a vision with him. In the future one day I will sit with him and share him my ability. I hope your son will enjoy it.”

“Well... Thanks! I don’t know what to say. It’s a great gift!” Gerald smiled when he thought about his son, “How does he look like?”

“He is handsome, just like you.” Eloise said, “And he is a good man, who is willing to help others for a great length, just like you too.”

“Really? I am very glad. Thank you so much for telling me that!” Gerald said, “We were worrying about him being a problematic teenager without his parents.”

“He will turn out to be a really nice man, and he will be happy, eventually, with his true love and his son.” Eloise said it in a not so happy tone, “However, I don’t want to tell you more about him.”

“It’s good enough. You just made a dying man really happy.” Gerald said, “I could use some good news like that. I hope I can tell Karen the same thing when I meet her in the heaven.”

Eloise patted him in the back again, “Why you want to die so eagerly? I really appreciate the fact that you saved my life, but jumping in front of the monster was no joke. He could have torn you apart.”

“I was hoping he could do that to me, so I could see my wife again.” Gerald said with a little disappointment, “I don’t know why he flew away.”

“Just a theory.” Eloise said, “Villagers said if you are not afraid of him, and you hadn’t done anything wrong in your life, the monster can’t kill you. It’s one of the rules.”

“I don’t think a monster will obey any rules.”

“There might be a bigger monster who has control over him.” Eloise said, “Again, just another theory.”

“Well, enough of those theories. I think I am all done here.” Dr. DeGroot put out the fire, handed Ellie a wood stick and said, “You can walk back to the village with this cane. You don’t need me anymore. Thanks for the story of your life. It is a very interesting one.” He started to walk away.

“Wait, doctor. Where are you going?” Ellie cried out.

“To die, of course.” Gerald said. Then he left the cave.

“Wait for me!” Ellie struggled on her feet with the cane, and tried to catch up with Gerald, “I know how you feel. I wanted to die before.” She struggled to the outside, but he was already gone. She shouted out at the top of her voice, “I really know!!”

Chapter 13: Tales from the Others (Part Three)

1970.

“Ellie!” I shouted again, “Where are you? ELLIE!” My throat hurt like being cut.

The jungle was dark and creepy. I walked alone in the empty forest. My followers were either afraid of this dark territory or too tired to continue. Only I remained in that three days search.

That island was not that big. We covered a lot of grounds in those 3 days, but we just couldn’t find her.

Where are you Ellie? Why you left me without a word? Do you know I will be so worried?

“Ellie...” I tried to yell, but only a faint sound came out. A strong fatigue took control of my body, and I fell down to the glass.

Lying down and breathing heavily, I couldn’t move a bit, but my mind was still active. All I could think of was the first time I met her.

.....

It was February, 1945. When I stepped in the transport ship with a hundred of my fellow soldiers, I saw her directing the troops to their quarters.

“Coyote Company of 2nd? You are in sub-level 1, area 5. Follow the red marks to the right and go down the stairs. If you are not sure, look at the maps on the way.” She talked aloud to the company leader ahead of us.

I noticed something immediately. Though she looked exactly like a young boy, and had a deep voice. Something was odd about her. I was born with 4 sisters who were older than me. I knew women well because I had to live with 5 of them until I joined the army. People said I had an eye for women, which was quite true. My sisters played all kind of tricks on me. Pretending to be a man was the plank they did the most. So over the year I developed a way to tell the trick. Therefore, the moment I saw her at the first sight, she just rang a big bell inside me.

It was my company’s turn. I came up and looked at her more carefully. My gosh, she was the best man-pretender I had ever seen. The clues were too subtle to tell. She looked even more “man” than some pretty boys in my company.

She frowned, “Sir. Name of the company?”

I replied, “Dharma company of the 3rd.”

She looked it up in the sheet, “OK, you are assigned to the Area 6 in sub-level 2. Follow the yellow marks to the left and you will see the stairs, Sir.”

By listening to her voice, I finally confirmed that she was a girl in a man's skin. Well, it was a very interesting thing to see. What was she doing in the army transportation ship with a thousand men? I smiled at her. She frowned deeper.

Finally I said, "Very good. Area 6, sub-level 2, right?"

"Yes, Sir!"

"You are not the dispatch officer, aren't you?" I noticed more strange things about her, "Usually it's not done by a sergeant."

"No, Sir. I am not." She replied, "I am Eli from the Mulan company of the 1st. The officer was sick. He assigned us the wrong quarters two days ago. So I took over the job."

"So you are here because he was sick, or you don't want him to make a mistake again?"

"Both, sir." She replied without any reserve.

That was the moment I started to like her.

.....

1970.

Crackling sound rose up. I struggled to the ground and started my desperate running. The monster was coming. Once he caught up with you, you were dead. I had lived in this island for 25 years. I knew the danger of coming to this area. It was exactly the fear that the monster had got Ellie brought me here to find out.

The sound was getting louder. I saw a black hole under a tree. Without much thinking, I jumped into it.

The hole was much deeper than I had thought. I kept diving down head first for about 20 feet until I grabbed some roots on the way down and stopped the falling. Just when I thought it was safe, through the faint moon light I saw the smoky monster coming down straight at me. I screamed and lose my holding.

The next moment was all a blur. I think it was the extreme terror which erased my memory of what actually happened.

The strange thing is, I still remember the dream I had right after that. It was a dream about Ellie again, or maybe it was more like memories being replayed in my dream.

.....

1945. It was in the transportation ship on the way to New Guinea.

Matt was the only recruit from the same town of mine. I didn't know him well before but once we saw each other we were buddies. In my impression he was a tough guy to crack. So it was surprising that I saw him wiping tears in his radio station.

I asked him in a low voice, "Hey, Matt. Why you send Tom to get me here? You know it's a little late, right? I have a lot of drilling for my company tomorrow. So..."

"It's about Ellie." He said.

"Who?" I didn't understand.

"Her name is Eloise Hawking. Here is her file." He handed me a piece of paper, which had a title "Classified" on it.

Reading the paper, instantly I was in shock.

Before that, we only knew her as "Eli", who was the best from the Mulan company. She was a fierce fighter, who was never afraid of taking two guys at the same time. She was a sharp shooter, who got a much better score than me. And finally, she was also a leader, who was also better than me. The whole Mulan company actually listened only to her, not the Major. It really made me envy because I could never achieve that when I was only a sergeant. Too bad her rank was stripped away, and she was waiting in the cell for her trial. Life was so unfair.

After I read the short description of her life story, her image in my mind had changed from an idol to a goddess. I couldn't believe how strong she was, how she fought off the misery of her family tragedy and became one of us, despite all the obstacles she must have gone through.

"Oh, my gosh!" I finished the paper and slowly sat down at the steel chair. I was overwhelmed by a strong emotion, which made me want to cry like Matt. I tried my best holding back my tears and think of something to talk.

"Don't mess up the paper." Matt took it away carefully, "I still need to give it to the captain."

"So she lost two brothers and her father, and she still wants to come here to fight. What was she thinking?" I finally managed to say.

"Revenge, maybe." Matt had his index finger circling his head, "She must be crazy."

"Probably, but you know what," I said, "I am in love with her now."

"What? You are in love with Ellie? Are you gay?"

"No, it's not about her look. It's about her heart. I never met a woman as strong as her. She's really my type of woman."

"But she treats you like dirt."

"I don't care. I can see through her. Believe it or not, inside, she was just as gentle as any lady. She just won't show."

"Ha, good luck with that!" Matt shook his head, "Remember that the information I show you tonight was classified. Please don't spread this around the ship. Otherwise I will be court-martialed too. You know."

I said, "I won't, but at the same time I won't allow her to be trailed as a criminal. She deserves better than that. I will find a way to get her out. Maybe I should give my father a call."

"Oh, it's so romantic! I am touched." Matt said, "But please don't forget that I still want to keep my job as a radio operator. I took a big risk for you tonight, so do me the favor of not telling. OK?"

"I promise I won't tell the story of Eli." I said, but at the same time I was already planning on how to let everyone onboard know about her.

My promise only applied to Eli. So if I told a story about Ellie, it was not a violation, right? Yeah, you can call me sneaky, but I am a man who will do anything for my goal. Rescuing Ellie was the No.1 priority at that time. Comparing to it, breaking a little promise, or pissing off my buddy was nothing.

Therefore, before long everyone in the whole battalion heard the "rumor" about a girl called Ellie. We all knew who she was, and we all became her fans.

Days before we entered the warzone, we had plotted a plan in detailed to rescue her. The moment the air-alarm sounded, we would knock out some guys and open the cell for her. Then we used a motor boat to transport her to a battle ship nearby. There she could hide in different quarters every day until we figured out a way to send her somewhere safer.

All the contacts were made. The officers from the battleship had the new uniform and name tags ready for the secret operation. Even a few cell guards voluntarily wished to be the one who was "knocked out".

I just didn't know it could go so wrong that day.

It was not because my plan was not perfect. How could I expect that the moment I opened the door, she would kiss me in my mouth? It just came too fast. I was dizzy for a while when it happened. Then she disappeared on me. In just a few seconds, all my planning was in vain. The moment she reached the upper deck and let everyone know that she was at large, my plan was doom and I would be a criminal just like her. It was all because she never acted as she was supposed to. What could I have possibly done to prevent that? At that time I could only follow her to the upper deck and try not to get her killed.

It turned out that she almost got me killed. No, she almost got all of us killed. She seriously pissed off a Japanese ace pilot, and the pilot punished us by dropping a bomb and shooting the hell of the ship. We lost many good soldiers that day. She became a heroin while I was demoted to a lieutenant.

None of us complained about that. After all, she was doing a very brave thing, and we were just the gunpowder. But I had a mixed feeling of her since then. I still loved her very much, but her reckless action made me really uncomfortable.

Therefore, I was happy to know that our transport ship had to be towed back to Hawaii, and we had to stay there for a while, until the ship was repaired. I hoped during this time I could talk some sense into her, and persuade her not be such a hero again.

A friend of my father, who was high up in the pentagon, came up with an excellent idea of getting her back to America. She would be set up as the first heroin of the army, and she would become the most popular lady in the U.S.

We all agreed that after going through all the arrangements she would be busy selling war bonds, and no time to do anything suicidal.

I was way wrong again.

The moment I heard that "Eloise Hawking was dead". It caught me completely by surprise. I was just standing there, mouth opened and not able to move a bit. All I could think of was "how was that possible?" After that I just fainted.

Before that I never fainted for anything, not the high school wrestling contests, not the intense military training, only her fake death had knocked me out unconsciously.

I woke up the next day in a hospital, and I saw Ellie again in a girl's dress. It was so unreal, like I was still dreaming.

"Hi, you silly boy." She poured me a glass of water and smiled. *My goodness! She looked so pretty in a girl's dress!* For a while, I couldn't tell that was the Ellie that I knew and fell in love with. I couldn't help but loving her even more at that sight.

"They told me that you fainted after hearing my 'death'" She laughed a little, "That's too dramatic, isn't it?"

"I ... I ..." I really wanted to tell her what I felt, but my whole nerve system was completely malfunctioning; my brain was fried by the mere presence of a goddess like her. Her unparallel beauty choked me to death.

"What do you want to say?" She put down the glass, turned her ear toward me, "Tell me."

She was so close to me. My heart beat fast like exploding. It took all my strength and my courage to say my simple 3 words:

"I LOVE YOU!"

"Ha!" She was obviously disappointed to hear that, "I thought it would be something else."

I calmed down after seeing her reaction. Frankly I was disappointed too, "Do you?"

"No, I don't." She replied plainly, "You are too much like my brother James."

"James?" then I remembered, she had two brothers, Charles and James, who died in the war. James was the one who was awarded a Bronze Medal. "You don't like heroes?"

"James? Hero?" She felt funny, "It was interesting to put him and hero in the same sentence."

"But he got a medal."

"No, he was always a coward to me." She said, "I knew him. He always tried to get the pretty girls into his bed, but he never considered the consequences. There were once that my brother Charles had to settle down a love affair for him, because he was too afraid to do it himself."

"Charles?" I remembered more now, "He was the one who died in Guadalcanal."

"Yes, he was." Ellie had tear in her eyes. It was hard for me to believe that the mere mentioning of his name had made the strong Ellie so emotional. "I believed that he was a hero when he died. There was just nobody survived to prove that. He was the one who really deserved a medal."

"But James was ..." I tried to say something to defend him.

"Yeah, yeah, I know." She nodded, "He was trying to strangle a German before he died. Things like that. The way I see it: my father was with him in that hill. He was hit by a cannon shell in his foxhole, and James watched him exploded. It's enough to make anyone with warm blood jump out and do stupid things. He did some stupid things and got himself killed, and vola! A medal for that! It was really ironic, don't you think?"

"Uh..." I couldn't think of anything to say. My mind was still a mess anyway.

"So here you take a good rest. Forget about me, ok? I will die soon anyway. I am not the one you should love."

"What do you mean 'die soon'?" I asked, "Didn't they send you back home?"

"Silly boy!" She tapped on my head and said, "Don't you forget? I was 'dead' already. Now the only thing left to do is to go to the front and kill some Nazis. I will be the first one to charge them. I will die but I don't care."

"No, no, no." I sat up immediately, "Please don't do that. I love you, I really really do!"

"You really didn't hear me, right?" she shook her head, "You are such a sweet but silly boy! It's too bad that I won't love you. You have nothing like Charles."

I insisted, "I will be a Charles for you! My name is Charles, for Christ's sake."

"But you will never be my Charles." She said with a pity, "Sleep tight, silly boy. Bye bye." She walked out.

I tried to get up and find her, but then I found out one of my legs was tied. By the time I loosened the knot, she had long gone.

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I almost fainted again when I saw her two months later. Only this time she was back to be a marine, a male soldier in full uniform.

“Private Eli Manning reports to the duty, sir!” She used her male voice again, loud and clear.

I watched her with tears in my eyes. It really took all my mental power to control myself not to hug her at the spot in front of my entire platoon. It was one of my subordinates finally gave out the orders, “Fall in, private!”

“Yes, Sir!” She acknowledged, again, loud and clear.

...

After the drilling I stopped her in the mess hall. “What are you doing here?” I asked, with a raging voice.

“To serve my country, Sir!” she replied, loud and clear.

“No, I am asking why you chose my platoon.” I seized her hand, “Why you come back in my life again?”

She quickly moved around, got out of my hold and twisted my arms, while at the same time put down her plastic plate on the table. She did all of them in an unbelievably smooth manner.

After making sure I couldn’t get out of her hold, she said, “I chose your platoon because I knew that you would always cover me. Isn’t that right?”

I knew what she meant, but I was still angry. I jumped on the table and made a 360 degree summersault. Her hands couldn’t hold me anymore, and I made a quick dash to take her down.

On the floor, I sat on her waist and controlled her hands, then I said, “You left me alone in the hospital, thinking you were somewhere in the Pacific, dying. You almost killed me!”

She struggled and said, “But I did say goodbye, right?”

“No, don’t say that again. It was horrible!” I said, “Don’t you ever leave me like that.”

She used the opportunity of my emotional speaking and pulled me down to the ground, at the same time she opened her legs and locked my neck between her legs, then she said, “I won’t go anywhere now. I chose to join your platoon, remember? Besides, I want to give you a chance to be Charles.”

I was locked down by her scissoring legs. It choked me tight to a point that I couldn’t breathe at all. After hearing her words, I was so happy that I forgot I was out of air for a while. *Halleluia! She wanted to give me a chance to be her Charles! Thank you almighty God! Thank you...*

Then I fainted again, by the deprivation of oxygen.

.....

Back to the 1970.

I woke up in a strange place. It looked more like the inside of an Egyptian Temple. Strange hieroglyphs were all over the stone walls. I was lying in a large stone coffin which should be reserved for pharaohs. Two torches burned in the walls, which lighted up the whole room.

I sat up from the coffin and looked around. My head felt so much pain that I couldn't remember how I ended up here, or why I was brought here.

Well, the answer revealed itself. A man came in. He half-kneeled down and looked at me with curiosity.

I kept my calm and asked, "Who are you?"

"I had no real name." He said, "My mother didn't give me a name before she died. You can call me Samuel, if you like."

"OK, Samuel." I said, "Where am I?"

"Well, I just answered your question honestly. It's your turn to answer my question."

It seemed fair to me, "Alright, ask me then."

"Where is Ellie?" he asked.

The question was more troublesome than the answer. How did this guy know about Ellie? What did he want with her? Did she disappear because of him?

"Well, the answer is ..." he asked again.

"I don't know."

"Honestly?"

"Yeah, honestly."

"I believe you." He looked at me in a strange way, "Now I answer your second question. This is an underground palace for Egyptian princes. They came here to be blessed by the island." He pointed to some graph on the wall, "The Sun on that drawing is actually the island. The pharaohs below were all blessed by it."

I took a good look at the wall. To me, the graph was more like the Sun was radiating her lights to the people below. However, having lived in this island for so long, I knew he might be telling the truth.

“Now it’s my turn to ask you again.” He said, “Why the scientist wanted to protect Ellie? They are enemies, right?”

“What?” I was surprised too, “What scientist?”

“Too bad. It seems you don’t know anything either.” He said, “You have no use to me. Now you got to give me some reasons not to kill you.”

At that time I finally understood, “You are the monster, aren’t you?”

“Yes, I am, but I prefer you calling me ‘Samuel’.”

“Okay, then. Samuel, before I die, can I ask you a question?”

“Of course.”

“Obviously you didn’t get Ellie again. But why over the years you always went after her? Did she do anything wrong to you?”

“She did nothing wrong with me.”

“Then why you chased her every chance you got? She got so many close calls.”

“Because she has a bad soul. I could feel that she has killed people without any mercy before. For more than three times I demanded her to repent her sins, she refused and continued the way she was. So I had no choice but to kill her.”

I looked at the man. Strangely I was not afraid at all. He didn’t seem like a bad guy. It was even stranger that he took his time answering all my questions. It was not the monster I had pictured for the last 25 years. So I took my chances and tried to talk him out of killing Ellie.

“As a husband of her for 14 years, I can tell you that Ellie is not the evil woman you are thinking.”

“Really? I seriously doubt it.” He said, “When I looked at her soul, all I could see was mostly darkness.”

“Yes, she killed people. Sometimes she could execute a whole boat of innocent men without mercy. But I know how she thinks. She was tricked by Jacob and thinking she was fighting the evil. In her mind, she was just doing her job.”

“You see.” Samuel said, “That’s why I have to keep killing you guys. Under Jacob’s command, you guys had done terrible things to the outsiders. Killing adults, kidnapped children and looting ships, which one you guys haven’t done?”

“I didn’t do any of those.” I said.

“You didn’t, but they did a lot before you came here. What do you think where those villagers were from? In this island, most of them died before they could make babies. So the new bloods were actually stolen from other ships when they were children. You and your team are the only exception.”

I said, "Yes, I knew that already. I am not stupid. As the leader of the village, I got the special abilities of knowing what other ones were thinking. It was really a curse, but it also allowed me to know a lot of secrets of the past."

Samuel said, "Bingo! Now I understand why you didn't do any of that. And that's why I didn't kill you, yet."

"Well. Then here is the reason 1 you don't want to kill me. I know the secrets of Jacob. One day I can tell everyone those secrets and persuade them to leave."

"That's a good point, but I need more."

"Reason 2. I am the only one who can get Ellie out of the island. You can keep trying to kill her. Good luck with that. You have been doing that for 25 years."

The man who dressed in black nodded slowly. It seemed that he had accepted his failure gracefully. A reasonable monster! I was really lucky!

"Reason 3. There are new comers to this island. They called themselves Dharma Initiatives. We had been monitoring them ever since they landed. They are good scientists, but the sponsor behind them must have their own agenda. I know you want to drive them out without killing too many people. But I have to tell you that you should have killed them all."

"Why should I do such a terrible thing?"

"It's because that scientists had the ultimate weapon: science. They already figured out how to stop you from getting in their area using those strange poles. One day they will find a way to kill you. So you need me to drive them away. Your power alone cannot achieve that."

"Then what's your plan to get them out of the island?"

"From outside. I will do it from outside."

"What do you mean?"

"That kind of operation needs a lot of money. I can send Ellie to the outside world. There with her special ability she can accumulate a lot of money in a short time. Then I can use that kind of money to bankrupt the corporation which is sponsoring the Dharma Initiative. Without the money supply, DI will just faint away."

The man in black dress looked at me like he was just recently discovered me, "For 25 years, I thought you were nothing but a pawn."

"I am glad that now we really know each other." I said sincerely, "For 25 years I thought you were nothing but a monster."

He even laughed, "Okay. We're even then."

I extended my palm to him. He shook it and said, "Alright, you have 3 months to get her out. During this time I won't bother her."

"Thank you! I will do everything I can to realize my promise." I said, "But first thing first, where did you see Ellie and the scientist last time?"

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I found Ellie easily. She was calling out for someone, "Gerald! Gerald! Dr. DeGroot!" The whole mountain could hear her.

When I approached her, she was eager to run toward me, but her leg gave way and she fell down.

I rushed to her and gave her some water to drink. Her voice was as bad as mine.

"I miss you." I said, "Don't you ever leave me again!"

"Silly boy!" She said, "You should never come for me. I will get you killed."

At that time I couldn't say anything more but to hold her tight in my arms.

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"No, I won't leave the island." She said with determination, "You cannot order me, Charles."

We actually were not talking in a regular way. Because I can read her mind, so she would just think of the answer without saying. I, on the other hand, had to speak out.

For other villagers, I never let them know I could read minds. So I kept talking to them the normal way. To Ellie, I had nothing to hide, neither did her.

"I am not ordering you." I said, "I am begging you, Ellie. For the sake of our 14 years of marriage, for our love, please leave the island."

She stopped pacing in the tent and looked at me. Our gaze met and we kept looking at each other for a long time. We were both silent. All I could hear was the wood-cracking in the bonfire.

Finally she said in her mind, "At least you need to tell me why I have to go."

I looked around. There was no body awake now, but I still didn't want to risk it, "Sorry, I cannot tell you."

She got close to me, held my hands and asked in her mind, "Is that because of my visions?"

I shook my head.

"Is that because I knew Jacob's secret?" She asked.

My eyes were open. She caught it and nodded, "I saw a vision. In that vision, Jacob killed everyone in the Dharma Initiative. He was laughing in a very evil way. Then I saw Jacob outside the tent, he looked at me like he knew I saw that vision. I was so afraid that I ran away."

I said, "I didn't know you would be afraid of anything."

She said in her mind, "Now I do. Do you know that you are going to be a father?"

My mind was blank for a while. *I, a father? I just made a deal with the monster, my life and my wife's life were both in grave danger of being killed by Jacob or villagers if they find out. Just right in the middle of all the life threatening events, I am a father?*

"Oh, no." I said, "I got to get you out of here."

She spoke in her mind, "Again, I am not going! I was too afraid and lose my visions temporarily, and the monster almost got me. But now I am not afraid anymore, I will stay here to protect you. You know how useful my visions are. We will stay together and fight, like we always did."

I sighed, "I already had the perfect plan to get you out. Why you always not follow it?"

She laughed, "Because your plans were always back-fired. Last time you tried to get me out resulted in a disaster. Remember?"

I gently brushed her hair, "Yeah, I remembered. You became a heroin and I got the blame of letting you out."

She smiled. Over the years, her smile still could melt my heart, "Then don't get me out this time. Let's see what will happen. No matter what, we will be together, and it's enough."

I kissed her, with all my heart.

Chapter 14: Princess Jeanette (Part 1)

1970. 10 days before Dharma Initiative landed in the island.

Dr. DeGroot and his wife, Karen arrived at a heavy metal gate with security guards in the booth.

“May I see some ID, please.” The guard asked politely.

“Sure.” Gerald handed him the passports.

“Very well, Mr. and Mrs. DeGroot. Welcome to the Lewis Castle.” After checking with a computer, the guard opened the gate and lowered the anti-vehicle steel poles. “Her highness is waiting for you in her reading room.”

Karen asked Gerald in a low voice: “Is this kind of security really necessary?”

Gerald replied, “Of course. We are visiting a loyal kin here.”

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“This is amazing!” Karen said. She pointed to the butterfly specimens on the wall. There were a few hundreds of them in that room. However, since the room was so big, they didn’t look cluttered at all.

A beautiful young lady with red hair stepped closer and replied, “Thank you! You must be Karen. Dr. DeGroot had mentioned you many times.”

“I hope he didn’t say how ugly I have become.” Karen said playfully, “Comparing to you I look really old.”

The young lady smiled gracefully, “Not at all. Mrs. DeGroot, you still look fabulous, and your wisdom is unparalleled.”

“Well, we better stopped the compliments.” Dr. DeGroot said, “Otherwise they will never end.”

“Would you like some tea, then.” The young lady asked in a perfect English accent.

“Stopped those courtesy things, please.” Gerald shook his head, “Jeanette. You are driving me crazy.”

“Haha, I got you.” The young lady suddenly burst in laughter, “I am just showing you my loyalty training. How am I doing?”

“So good that I can’t stand it anymore.” Gerald replied, “We are here to ask you for a little help.”

Jeanette said, “Is there going to be another adventure?”

“Probably.”

Jeanette waved her hands around. All the servants retreated outside of the big room.

Once they closed the door. Jeanette’s pose was suddenly all relaxed. She talked in a completely different tone: “Hey, Doc, this time what kind of groovy things are you giving me?”

Gerald smiled finally, "This is the Jeanette I know. Of course it's some good things. Take a look at this picture. Tell me what you think."

She snatched the picture away, sat down on a high chair with her legs wide open. Karen couldn't help giving Gerald a questioning look. Gerald shrugged.

"Are you freaking kidding me?" She exclaimed, "This is impossible!"

"Yeah, I know. The polar bear was in a tropical island with a coconut tree in the back." Dr. DeGroot said, "Anyone would say it's a fake picture."

"No, I am not talking about the bear. You can catch a polar bear and put him in Hawaii to make a picture like that. It's easy." Jeanette observed the picture carefully, "I am talking about the blue butterfly the bear is trying to catch. It looks like the ones live only in Mount Ali in Taiwan, but the shape of the eyes is not right. Plus, the size of it is very wrong."

Karen asked, "Why is it wrong?"

"It's way too big. Butterflies used to be like this millions of years ago, but not today."

Jeanette suddenly froze, her eyes opened wide like she just discovered a new continent. "No fuucking way!" She almost yelled. Her voice was surprisingly loud.

"Is everything alright, princess?" the butler opened the door and poked his head in.

Jeanette sat up straight immediately and waved him away with grace.

Karen asked her, "Are you really a princess?"

"Yup. 100% loyal blue blood. One day I could be the queen of England if all my 15 uncles and 20 aunts plus 50 cousins were all dead." She said with some sarcasm. "And being a princess is a curse, really."

"Wow. Should I call you 'your highness'?"

"Hey, Karen, please don't freaking 'highness' me. I have too much of that already."

Gerald asked her, "Hey, Jeanette. What made you so surprised moments ago?"

"Yeah, that. Let me show you." She looked through a thick catalog and got a number, "16-23. OK, it's right here." She opened a drawer on the wall and took out a book. Inside that book there were more butterfly specimens. They were all blue ones. It seemed that she got a lot more collections of butterflies inside the walls.

"Here you are!" She said it with a hardly controlled excitement. "I knew it was there." She took out a picture in the end of the book. There they could all see a partial butterfly's wing sealed inside a large piece of amber.

"I took that picture myself at Insectarium in Montreal, Canada." She was almost high, "There was a special exhibition of extinct butterflies. That thing was the central piece of the show. Look at the shape of the eye. It matches!"

Gerald was really impressed, "You have a really good memory."

"Not really. I only remember every butterfly's shape in the world, but I can't remember what I ate last night."

Karen smiled, "Nonetheless, we have to say thank you! You helped us solve a piece of the puzzle."

"What kind of puzzle is that?" Jeanette was confused, "Do you mean that we found out the butterfly is a living fossil?"

"No, it's not about the butterfly." Gerald said, "It's about the island."

"What about it?"

Karen explained, "As we all know, most butterflies were extinct because of the dramatic weather changes between ice ages. So if this kind of ancient butterflies can survive in that island, it means the island has never gone through ice ages."

"Well, if that island is close to equator. It can explain that." Jeanette said, then she corrected herself, "No, this kind of butterflies can never live anywhere near the equator. It is too hot for them."

"Yeah, that island is not near the equator." Gerald said, "It is roughly the same altitude as Taiwan."

"I am really freaking confused, doc." Jeanette opened up her hands, palms up, "You mean this island is near the tropic of cancer, but it has never gone through ice age? How is that possible?"

Dr. DeGroot smiled, "It's even better than you think. In that island, it's always summer. Everyday you will have sunshine and raining, but never a typhoon or hurricane."

Jeanette was deeply intrigued, "What kind of magical island is that, doc? Come on, tell me already."

"This is the island we have been searching for the last ten years. We finally found it." Gerald looked at his wife. She was smiling back. "We are currently doing reconnaissance on it. The picture was taken from our ship by a camera with a long Zoom lens. I already chose a landing zone, and we will walk in that mystical place in about 2 weeks."

Jeanette thought for a while. She had a little grin and asked, "So two of you come here today is to ask me for some loyal support? You guys need some funding? Diplomatic solution? Or Military support?"

Gerald said, "No, we had enough of those already. I just came here to ask you to join us. Knowing you for so long, I think you don't want to miss the fun."

Jeanette jumped up from the chair and punched Gerald in his shoulder, "Yeah! You are really my big bro!"

Gerald rubbed his sore shoulder and said, "My highness, you stayed too long in my university."

"Sorry, does that hurt?"

"A little."

"That's part of my training too. They said if a terrorist kidnapped me I could give him hell."

"Good for you. But I have to warn you. We still don't know much about that island. There might be dinosaurs still living there. Your life could be in danger."

"Hey, doc. You are talking to the gal who did all kind of crazy things. I am not afraid of anything in the nature." She pointed to the butterflies on the walls, "Just think about how I collected those specimens myself."

Karen came up and shook her hand, "Then we welcome you to join the Dharma Initiative. Together we will make the biggest discoveries in the human history."

Jeanette was so thrilled that she jumped on the table and made a toast to them, "Yeah! To the great discoveries!" She drank up all the martini in one gulp.

Karen raised a cup too, "To you. You are really some princess."

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10 days later. On the island.

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH....." Jeanette screamed in a way she never screamed before. It was all her strength focused in her throat and burst outward, energized by the sheer terror she just witnessed.

Karen was swooped away by some hideous black smoke and thrown away like a baseball going for a homerun. She disappeared from her sight, and now that black monster was coming at her.

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH....." She didn't know how she could keep screaming in such a loud and high pitch for so long. Maybe her loyal vocal teacher did a really great job. Her screaming pierced everyone's ears and broke some glasses.

Under everybody's eyes, the black smoke crashed into an invisible wall and split into 3 smaller parts. They flew away.

Jeanette froze on the ground and breathed very fast while she heard someone shouted, "Dr. DeGroot! Dr. DeGroot!" She wanted to turn her head to see what happened to him, but only found out that her body was trembling so much that she couldn't turn her stiffened neck.

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One month later.

Jeanette crouched in the grass like a tigress. She wore a camouflage poncho so it was really hard to see her among the grass. Very slowly she pulled a string.

An almost invisible net fell slowly from the tree above. The grid was made of thin silk threads. The four corners of the net were thicker so when the net went down, it kept the shape of a half dome.

The poor blue butterfly below had no idea such a highly sophisticated trap was using on her. She managed to fly up a little, and was caught by the thin threads of silk. She tried to struggle, but the more she flapped her wings, the more tangled she was in.

Jeanette jumped up and came to the spot immediately. She murmured to the butterfly, "Oh, baby, don't struggle. Your suffering will end in just a sec." She took out a syringe and injected something into the poor thing. Almost immediately the butterfly stopped moving.

Wearing latex gloves, she carefully removed the net and put the butterfly into a rectangle plastic box. After sealing up the edges, she looked at her new collection with a grin so big that you would have thought she just won the lottery.

"Oh, baby, baby, you are so beautiful! I love you!" She kissed the box wet. "Ummm..ah..."

The tree above her started talking, "This is so wrong!" It was a male voice.

She was overly surprised that while she jumped back she lost her balance and fell on her back. Still holding the box to her chest, she looked at the tree and shouted, "Who's there? Come out!"

A muscular young man glided down from a branch. He was tall and big but he landed swiftly without a sound. It was such a perfect move that even a monkey couldn't have done better. He wore some primitive clothes with holes here and there. No shoes.

"What the hell do you want?" Jeanette became very nervous. That young man had strong arms that could easily break her neck. She remembered the martial art training she had, and tried to pick a move.

"Uh..." Strangely, the big guy just stood there. He couldn't say a complete sentence, "Uh... I ... uh..." He had a flush on the face, red like an apple.

Jeanette saw he didn't move further. She calmed down and slowly stood up. "You were watching me, right? From the tree?"

"Uh...Yeah..." He still flushed and nodded shyly like a little student.

"Why the hell did you do that?" while talking to him, she carefully reached to her backpack on the ground, "You know it's not polite to peek, right?"

“Uh... I’m ...uh... sorry.” His head was down, like a little kid who was caught stealing candies.

Jeanette put the box inside her backpack and got ready to leave. She took a look at this man with curiosity. *This is the biggest 7-year-old I have ever seen.* She thought.

Instead of leaving, she carefully circled him and sized him up. He was still bowing his head, but she could see that he was a handsome 20-year-old who was avoiding her eye contacts.

“This is just great.” She said, “This Island never ceases to surprise me, first the monster, then the butterfly, now a big foot.”

“I’m not ...”

“Quiet!”

“Yes... ”

“Ha...” she almost wanted to laugh. *An English speaking ape man who obeys her like a puppy? This is really fun.*

“So what’s your name, big boy?” She asked, “You got a name, right?”

“Ryan...”

“Ryan who?”

“Ryan Pryce.” He finally could finish a sentence. “P-R-Y-C-E.”

“Okay, okay. So I just call you Ryan, alright?” she was a little impatient. “Where are you from?”

“I am from my village.” He pointed his finger to a direction.

Oh, a hostile. Now I see. Jeanette thought to herself. *No wonder he is so naïve. He must have never seen such a beautiful woman like me. Haha...*

With a big smile, she asked, “Are you stalking me?”

He shook his head, still nervously.

“Then why are you here?” She wondered, “Am I in your forbidden territories?”

The next sentence from him really surprised her, “Dr. DeGroot sent me.”

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“Everyone please calm down.” Paul raised his hands and tried to quiet down the crowd around him. He continued to announce the good news:

“Dr. DeGroot is still alive.”

A thundering cheer burst out. Everyone was clapping hands.

“Ok, ok. Please let me finish.” Paul had to do it again, “Right now he was with the hostiles.”

The cheer stopped immediately. The mood became intense.

“He sent a messenger to us, and said that he just made a truce with them. He was willing to be a hostage of them. If we violate the conditions, they can kill him.”

“No...” the crowd sighed simultaneously.

“This is the map they drew.” Paul took out a primitive type of paper, inside it an island was divided by half with a red line. “There is a slave ship called “Black Rock”. It lied in the middle of the island. We cannot step anywhere north of this ship. This is the condition they gave us.”

He looked at the people around him, who were all silent. “Are we going to agree on it?”

“Yes.” Amy said, “I agreed. Gerald is like my father. I won’t put him in any danger.”

“Yes.” One by one, the crowd started to follow Amy’s decision.

Only Jeanette didn’t say anything. Inside she was not happy about the arrangement. So far she already searched the whole southern part, and only found one blue butterfly. The rest should be in the north.

The specimen she collected could prove the butterfly’s existence, but she wanted more. She liked to collect some of its eggs, and transport them back to her home in Essex, England. There she could raise a hundred of those “extinct” butterflies in her gigantic glasshouse. She would invite the best entomologists all around the world, especially the ones in Montreal, Canada, to come and see the living fossils. She would imagine the shock and awe in their faces while they caught the first sight of such a big and beautiful thing. That was the moments she had been waiting for in her whole life.

But now it would be all ended because of a stupid truce? Dr. DeGroot was a good man, but he made himself very clearly that he wanted to die alone. So his death should be accepted by everyone already. Violating the truce was more like let him get what he wanted at the first place.

Of course she couldn’t say it out loud, but in her mind she was already searching for a way to get around the truce.

DING! A bright idea came up. Romeo and Juliet!

She still remembered how she played the Juliet and made the whole school cried. The idea was simple. She would be the Juliet, and the dumb big guy would be the Romeo. She could pretend to date him so when anybody saw her cross the border. She could say that she was on a date with him. Because it was a mutual violation, they would just punish him and her, and leave Dr. DeGroot alone.

Brilliant, princess! She could imagine all her loyal citizens applauded at her. *A very fine piece of ingenious idea, your highness!* She almost bowed down.

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“Hey, Ryan.” She said it with a sunshine smile, “Do you know why I asked to escort you out?”

“Uh...Because you are the one who found me?” His face was red again. *This is super easy.* She thought.

“No, that’s just my excuse.” She said, “The real reason is that I want to know you more.”

Ryan stopped walking. He bowed his head even lower and spoke in a very low voice, “Why you...Uh...”

Haha. This big guy doesn’t know anything! A 20-year-old pretty boy with no girlfriend experience? He is another living fossil!

“Because you are very unique,” she said, “I have never met anyone quite like you.” Actually it was not a compliment.

“Uh...uh...” he lost the ability to speak again.

Jeanette jumped in front of him. He quickly turned around to avoid her staring. The cat-and-mouse game made Jeanette really happy.

“Okay. If you want to see me again, meet me tomorrow morning at the Black Rock.” She giggled, “Don’t make me wait, or I will kill you.” She walked away in a light pace.

Ryan stayed still long after she was gone. He put a hand over his heart and sighed, “Oh, my Jacob. She almost killed me back there.” He wiped his sweat from his forehead and wondered. *What was wrong with me? Why I was like this once I saw her?*

In the past, Charles and Ellie had taught him the concept of love, but he never expected that when it came, it was so powerful, so overwhelming, and completely turned him into a chicken little.

.....

“Here you are.” Jeanette waved at Ryan as he approached. “Don’t make me wait again. I am serious.”

“But it was just dawn.” Ryan said, “I don’t know...”

“Shut up on that.”

“OK.” He lowered his head.

With a big smile, she took out a set of Armani suit and tried to measure it against Ryan, “Hmm... It might be a little tight, but I think you can fit in. OK, now take off your clothes.”

“What?!” He couldn’t believe his ears.

“Do as I said.”

“Okay, okay.” He took off his primitive worn out clothes, and Jeanette used a stick to throw them away.

“Now you wear this.” She demanded, “Start with your pants.”

“Yes.” He took the black pants and tried to fit in.

“By the way, you have a very nice body, like this year’s Mr. Universe. What’s his name? Arnold something. I forgot his last name. It was too long.”

“Uh... Thanks?”

“Now take the shirt and wear it.”

“Yes...”

“Call me Jeanie. It will be more real.”

“Yes, Jeanie.”

“Don’t just say ‘yes’ or ‘no’.”

“Uh...”

“Oh, my gosh! Someone really needs to teach you how to talk to a girl. Alright, you can say ‘yes’ and ‘no’. It’s better than nothing.”

“Yes, Jeanie.”

Jeanette shook her head in disappointment. *If I ever wanted to cross the line, this dumb gorilla is the thing I have to deal with. Come on, big girl, you can live with this.*

“You are beautiful.” He said.

“Uh?” She looked at him with surprised, “What?”

“You are beautiful.” He repeated sincerely.

She looked at herself. Oh, right! She wore a yellow blouse, long white skirt with a matching embroidery hat. Not a sexy night gown, but it’s enough to woo the King Kong.

“Thank you!” She said with a big grin. “This is the first right thing you said to a girl. Not bad at all.”

He showed a big smile.

“Alright, now let’s get down to the business.” She said, “Ryan, I am a girl who like butterflies. So if you really like me, you need to bring me to somewhere with butterflies. Can you do that?”

“Yes, Jeanie.” He nodded fervently like a puppy.

.....

When she finished, she saw Ryan covered his ears with fingers. "You see. I can really scream."

"Absolutely." He said, while he still had some ringing in his ears. "Not even a bear can roar like that."

"Hey, don't compare my beautiful voice with a bear. That's disgusting." She said, "You still don't know how to talk to a girl."

"Sorry!"

"So what should we do? How do we get out of this hole?"

He looked at her with a bitter smile, "Usually we can use a knife to dig out a stair and climb up."

"That's a good plan. What are you waiting for?"

"My knife was with my clothes." He took a look at his Armani suit, "Not here."

"God damn it!" She cursed, "Why didn't you tell me earlier?"

"I couldn't. You were acting like my master and ordering me this and that. I couldn't say anything."

"No, no, you should have told me that 'I need this knife for our own survival', and I would have let you keep it. Now we lost our hope of getting out of there, it's all your fault! I hate you!"

Ryan didn't say anything. Under the sunlight through the hole, she could see that his eyes were full of tears.

She could feel that he was really hurt. "Ok, ok. I am being irrational. I am sorry. That's how I am. I am really sorry!" She hugged him.

"I am alright." Ryan wiped his tears and said, "There is another way to get out of here."

Jeanette hit him in the chest, "Why didn't you say so?"

Ouch! Ryan put his hand over the chest. This small woman could give out surprisingly strong punches.

"Well, it's really easy. I will find a rock, and I will tear all my clothes up, and make them into a rope. I tie the stone with the rope, throw it outside, and if we are lucky, the stone will caught something outside, and we can just climb the rope out of the hole."

"Wow, you are not as stupid as I thought!" Jeanette patted him in the back, "Ok, now get onto it. Make the rope."

"It's just that..."

"What?"

"I don't have enough clothes here. I need yours too."

Jeanette hit his head so hard that he fell to the ground. When he came back to his conscience he felt dizzy and stars flying around.

Jeanette was on the other side of the pit, rubbing her aching fist, and cursed, "SOB. Now I know you are a freaking pervert! I'd rather die than let you fuucking touch me."

"What's the matter?" He couldn't understand, "It's just the clothes."

"Shut up!"

"No, you shut up!" Ryan finally couldn't stand her anymore, "Ever since I met you, you were acting like a spoiled child. I tried my best to make you happy. Now it's not about you happy or not, it's about live or die. You understand?"

"You..." Jeanette never expected him would say such words to her. She was choked for the first time.

"So if you don't like this idea, just forget about it. Think about another one, just don't hit me in my face, for Jacob's sake." Ryan said, "I have been surviving in this island for so long. I know there is always another way out. Just think about it, ok?"

"Okay..." Jeanette looked at the big guy in a completely different perspective. He was no longer the simple-minded gorilla, but a strong Tarzan who went through a lot of survival struggles.

So now I am the Jane? She thought. It was really ironic. Even my name is similar.

No, what was I thinking? I am a princess, not a Jane, for Christ sake. He is nothing but a jungle ape.

Jeanette stood up, walked around the small pit and looked for anything that could help.

"Any ideas?" Ryan asked.

"Why can we just climb out of there?" Jeanette asked, "I stepped on your shoulder, then I could reach the hole, from there maybe I could climb out?"

"Don't waste your energy. There is nothing to hold at the hole, and you still need to climb another 5 feet to reach the top. You will just fall down. We dug the hole this way because we wanted the bear to do the same. The more he tried to climb up and the faster he would die."

"You guys are really hideous men!" She tried to punch Ryan but this time her fist was blocked.

"What could we do? They tried to eat us." Ryan simply said. "The food is limited in this island and the bears are always hungry."

They both fell silent.

.....

When Jeanette woke up, it was already midnight. Under the moonlight she could see Ryan slept like a baby. Well, he really got a cute face, same muscular, but more handsome than the Arnold guy in the magazine.

Suddenly she felt a blush. Her face was hot and her heart pumping fast.

Damn hormones. She cursed, then she felt something even more embarrassing: she needed to pee.

Gosh, can you just give me a break? She slowly moved to the far corner, gingerly took off her panty and let it go.

Just when she felt a little relief, she saw something that was too good to believe.

A long vine was there. She didn't know when the vine was lowered inside the pit or why. She just saw a thick strong vine was there for her rescue.

Thank you god for giving me the help. I will donate a lot of money to churches after I go back.

She pulled up her panty and tried to wake up Ryan, but she found out that he was already awake.

"When did you wake up?" She asked embarrassedly.

"I heard the sound and smelled your piss, so I opened my eyes." He said without any reserve.

"You pervert!" She swung a right hook at him. He didn't dodge or block it. Surprisingly the punch was not hard at all.

She stepped back, coughed a little, tried to maintain a princess's pose, then she said, "Get up, Ryan. We can climb up the vine and get out of here."

"Don't climb it." Ryan said, "Don't."

"It's alright. Come on, the vine is strong enough for both of us." She started to climb up the vine. She also had a special training on climbing ropes. It was easy for her.

The vine held up well.

Jeanette quickly ascended to the hole. She looked down at Ryan and said, "See? It's perfectly safe."

Just as she finished the word "safe", a strong force had pulled her up. She disappeared in the hole.

Ryan jumped to grab the end of the vine. He got hold of it, but the force was so strong that he was pulled up to the hole too. Like a gymnastic athlete, he turned his body upside down, used his legs to stand on the brim of the hole, pulled the vine with all his strength, and finally stopped the rising.

He heard Jeanette screamed very loud outside of the hole. He had no hand to cover his ears, and his mind was all on Jeanette. "Jeanie! NOOOOOOOO..." He cried out as loud as he could.

Suddenly the upward force was gone. He saw Jeanette fell through the hole again, before he could smile, Jeanette's body hit him hard and knocked him unconscious.

.....

"Wake up, Ryan! Wake up, Ryan!" When Ryan finally came back from his short comma, he saw an unbelievable scene.

Jeanette was holding his head and looked at him closely with tears in her eyes.

"Oh, my God! I thought you were dead. I thought I had killed you." She turned into laughter while wiping her tears. "Thank God you are ok." She started kissing his forehead, his nose, his cheeks, and his mouth.

Ryan took in the sweetness of her kissing completely. He tried to kiss back when Jeanette pulled away.

"This is wrong." Jeanette stood up and walked around. "You are just a Tarzan, and I am not a Jane." She appeared to be very nervous.

"What happened?" Ryan sat up and asked, "I mean what did you see outside of the hole?"

"Bears, three freaking Polar Bears." She said with a thrill through her spine, "They used the vine to get me, like fishermen."

"Praise Jacob that you have a wonderful scream." Ryan said, "It saved your life."

Jeanette added, "Twice."

"That's impressive." Ryan stood up and held her shoulders. "Are you OK? Did you hurt anywhere?" He tried to inspect her face, but she was avoiding his eye contacts. "What's wrong with you?" He confused.

Jeanette suddenly looked at him with an intense gaze. Her eyes locked at him in a way she never did before. Ryan felt every nerve in his body was burning up by this intimate eye contact. A very strong primal urge rose up in his deepest desire. He didn't know what happened to him, but the basic instinct had already pushed him to kiss Jeanette deeply between her sweet lips.

Their bodies were instantly morphed into one. Ryan had felt a pleasure that he had never felt before. His whole body was trembling while his hands rubbing the smooth and silky skin of her. A strong impulse was pounding him to do something he had never thought he would do.

"Slow down, big boy." Jeanette gently brushed his golden hair, "Don't rush it. I will show you everything." She took off the last piece of her clothes, and slowly felt his strong body with her hands, inch by inch. Gradually, her hands reached lower, and lower ...

At that moment Ryan just wanted to explode.

.....

The morning came. Birds were chirping and butterflies were dancing outside of the hole. It was another beautiful blue sky summer day.

“Wakie wakie. Sleepy head!” Jeanette brushed his face with a little leaf from the vine. “Time to wake up, breakfast is ready.”

Ryan opened his eyes, “Breakfast? Where? I am really hungry.”

“Here.” Jeanette smiled and put the leaf inside his mouth, “Eat it.”

Chewing the leaf, Ryan sat up and said, “That’s not bad. Thank you, my love.”

“Wow, wow, wow. Don’t get that so fast.” She put her skirt on. “We just have a one night stand. That doesn’t mean that we were in love.”

“But you said you loved me last night.” Ryan didn’t understand.

“Well...” Jeanette was thinking a way to explain it, “Uh... That’s just what I was supposed to say when we were making love.”

“That’s called ‘making love’?” Ryan said, “Oh, now I understand something Charles said.”

“What?”

“Never mind. Since it’s called ‘making love’, so you must love me when you do that, right? Otherwise why we call it that way?”

“Eh...” Jeanette started to feel a headache, “It’s really complicated.”

“No, it’s so simple. I love you, you love me, and we made love. It’s easy.”

“Uh...” Jeanette’s headache was getting worse, “I am afraid that it was not in my case. You see. I, as a woman, had my own needs and desires... I mean... I haven’t had sex with others much because I travelled a lot to catch butterflies. Usually those places don’t have any male penis in 100 miles... Oh, I am sorry to say that. I am not really good at this... I mean. Look at you.”

Ryan looked at himself, “What?”

“You... you are more like a Chief of a tribe, or a king of the jungle. You belong to a wild island like this. And look at me. I am a princess. I belong to a loyal family, and I will marry a prince, or David Rockefeller, or someone rich like that.”

“So...” Ryan said in a sad voice, “You mean you don’t love me.”

“No, no. I love you. No, I like you a lot. It’s just my background is completely different than yours. You don’t know anything outside the island, while I had extensive knowledge of the world, too much about the butterflies, I have to add. Our lives are completely different. There is ... there is no way that you can fit in mine, and mine fit in yours. That’s all.”

Ryan said, "I don't really understand what you are saying."

"Gosh... I know, I know, I am a mess now. I didn't know how to put it into simple words for you."

Ryan said, "But I will try to fit my life into yours. Will that be ok?"

Jeanette stopped her babbling, looked at Ryan, and started crying.

Ryan held her arm and helped her sit down. She kept crying and said, "I don't know...I am so sorry... You are so good to me and I am a mess."

Ryan didn't know how to make her feel better. He could only pat her back and said, "It will be ok."

"No... It won't be ok. Right now there are 3 bears outside there trying to eat us, and we are stuck in a hole that we can never get out...We are not ok. We are going to die here. God, why you treat me like this? Why you leave me here to die?"

Ryan tried his best, "We will find a way to get out of here."

"Then what? We will be eaten by those bears. Right now they were waiting outside, just for us. Even if we could escape, then what? You and I cannot be together. We are enemies, remember? Like Romeo and Juliet." When thinking about Romeo and Juliet, she cried even louder.

Ryan's ears started to hurt. She really had a way of making big sound.

A vine went down. They both were startled, and looked at each other like saying "oh, no. The bears are playing the same trick again."

A round face man showed up in the hole. "Hey, guys, it's time to get you out of there."

"Horace!" Jeanette exclaimed happily, "It's so good to see you!"

"Good to see you too. We spent a whole night looking for you. And you too, young man. It's unbelievable. You guys just know each other for how long? Uh? About two hours, right? And you already eloped without saying goodbye. Isn't that too fast and too easy? I am so disappointed at you two."

Ryan said, "Whatever you say, sir. It's really good to see you. My name is Ryan."

"I don't care. Now you need to push our soprano up. She's really the one who saved your life. We could pick up her crying 2 miles away."

"Yeah, I believe so." Ryan said as he tried to help Jeanette climbing up.

"No, I got this." Jeanette jumped up and climbed the vine quickly. In about 20 seconds she already out of the hole.

When Ryan got out, the first question was, "where are the bears?"

Horace asked, "What bears?"

"Never mind. Well, be careful around here. There are many bear traps."

"Tell it yourself." Horace laughed, so the rest of the rescue team.

Jeanette got close to Ryan. She looked sideways while she said, "I am sorry, Ryan. It's time to say goodbye."

Ryan said, "We will meet again, right?"

Jeanette shook her head. She couldn't afford to watch the anxious eyes of Ryan's. *It's all wrong. My God, what am I doing?*

Ryan said, "I will wait for you. Every morning in the Black Rock, I will wait for you."

"Don't." She said in a low voice. And it was the last thing she said. The whole Dharma team left.

Ryan knelt down to the ground. His heart was hurt like someone had stabbed it and twisted the blade. Tears went down like a dam collapsed. He stayed there for a very long time.

Luckily the bears didn't return, and finally he left.

Chapter 15: Princess Jeanette (Part 2)

2 months later. Dharma Initiative, Orchid Station.

“What are you gonna do?” Lara Chang asked.

Jeanette shook her head, “I don’t know. I don’t know.”

Lara pulled a chair and let Jeanette sit down, and pour some hot tea for her.

Jeanette felt a little better. When she set eyes at the pregnancy test result, her tears came out again.

“So you are sure the father is that hostile guy, right?” Lara asked.

She nodded slowly.

“Then it’s a little bit complicated.” Lara started to analyze the situation for her, “We won’t accept a hostile guy in DI because he could be a spy, plus he is such a big guy, we will be all threatened by him.”

She nodded slowly.

“On the other hand, if you bring your baby to their side, they will also suspect your motive. You and your baby will always live under their distrust. Their primitive life style will be hard for you and your baby too. So going to the other side is also not a good idea.”

She nodded slowly.

“Therefore, the best option is going back to England, where your baby can get the best education. Your loyal family will feel shame in the beginning, but after one year or two they will forgive you, and your life will be normal again.”

She nodded slowly.

“Are you listening to me? Jeanette, hey, Jeanette!”

“What?” She looked at Lara with confusion, “What did you just say?”

“I said the best option is to go back to England.”

“No, I can’t. I would be crucified by my family and the press. I would be the shame of the family forever. My child will be a laughing stock among all my cousins. It will be horrible. Plus, if I leave this island, then I will never see him again, and he will never see his child either.” Jeanette murmured, “He is a good man, you know, he truly loves me with his heart. He doesn’t deserve this.”

“Then you have the last option. You stay here with your child. We can take care of his or her education while you help me out in the lab. However, you and your child will take a lot more risk, because, you know, recently there were a lot of accidents happened. People kept dying here for no reason.”

“I know.” Jeanette said, “I’ll stay. I’ll take my chances.”

.....

It was a breezing early morning. Ryan came to a cave with some bread and water. He knocked at the stone wall and said, "Knock, knock."

"Come in, my friend." A weak voice acknowledged.

He walked in and gave the bread and water to a man who lay on a stone bench, "Good morning. Dr. DeGroot."

Gerald looked like a dead man. He was pale, thin and weak. Slowly he sat up and started eating.

Ryan eagerly waited for him to finish, and he asked, "Dr. DeGroot. What story do you have today?"

Gerald finished drinking the water and answered, "It's a story about a girl called Cinderella. You can tell your friends to come in too. It was just a fairy tale."

Ryan shouted to outside, "Come in, guys. He said it's ok."

One after another, about 20 men and children filed in. They found their places to sit down and got ready to listen. Previously it was only the privilege of Ryan's, but after he repeated the stories to them by memory, more and more people wanted to hear them first-handed.

Gerald started, "Once upon a time, there was a girl who called Cinderella. She got a step-mother and two step-sisters..."

"What is a step-mother?" Someone asked, but was hushed down. Everyone was listening to Gerald with full attention. Nobody wanted the story to be interrupted.

"I will explain that later. Now back to the story. The step-mother and step-sisters treated Cinderella like a slave. She needed to do chores day and night ..."

The story continued. The cave was very quiet, except the voice of Gerald's.

...

After the story, the sun had risen. Ryan walked toward his second destination of the day.

Richard stopped him in the way. He said, "Ryan, it's not good for you to continue like this."

"Continue like what? I don't see anything wrong."

"It has been six months, and you still go there every morning and talk to the air. Are you out of your mind?"

"Richard. Listen to me." Ryan said, "I already got use to it. If I don't go there I will be really out of my mind."

“Jacob doesn’t want you to do it anymore. He said six months is too long already. Forget about her. She doesn’t even have a good soul.”

“Let me be the judge of that.” Ryan said, “Now if you excuse me.”

Richard shook his head while Ryan passed him.

...

The outside of the slave ship “Black Rock” was decorated by butterflies, more than a hundred of them. They had different color and size. Each one reflects its vivid color as the early sunlight touched it. They formed an incredibly beautiful mosaic. Watching it afar you would have thought that was a flower stand.

Ryan arrived at the scene, as he did every morning. Carefully he took out a new butterfly and pinned it to an empty space of the wood. It was the big blue butterfly, the same kind he saw her catching that day. Looking at it made him missed her more.

“This morning Dr. DeGroot told me a new story. It was about Cinderella.” He started talking to the butterflies. “In that story, Cinderella married a prince and lived happy-ever-after. You see? She is not a princess, yet she could marry a prince and live a happy life. I think we can do the same. I am not a prince, but I wanted to marry you. It doesn’t matter that you are a princess or anything. We can live happy-ever-after, too. Please believe me, and give me a chance...”

It took him about one more hour, from the fish he caught to the shooting star he saw, to tell the butterflies everything that came up in his mind. After that he just kept silent and waited.

When the Sun rose to the top, he said goodbye to the butterflies, “It’s not morning anymore. I got to go. Very nice chatting with you guys.” Then he turned around and left.

...

“Stop, Pryce.” A male voice came up from nowhere. Ryan Pryce looked around, all he could see were trees. For a moment he thought he had mistaken it from some other sounds, then he heard it again:

“Come here, Pryce.”

Ryan followed the voice, and finally saw Jacob among Bamboos. He was always the same look, still wearing white clothes with a charming smile.

Jacob seemed delighted to see him, “Hello, Pryce. Nice to meet you!”

Ryan asked, “Who the hell are you?”

“My name is Jacob. I believed you had heard about me.”

“Oh, that’s great!” Ryan felt he suddenly invigorated by a new hope, “Jacob, you are our Protector. It’s so good to finally see you!”

“The pleasure is all mine.” Jacob said, “I know that you had trouble with a woman recently.”

“Yes, I do. I was just thinking maybe you could help me.”

“Of course I can help you. And I got good news for you: you are a father now.”

FATHER?! It was like a lightning just stroke Ryan, rendered him paralyzed but at the same time filled with electrifying joy. He had been waiting for Jeanette to change her mind. He figured he should let her decide if she would come for him. After all, Jeanette was right, they lived very different lives. If Jeanette didn't want to participate in his primitive way of living, he understood and he would accept it. That's why he never went to DI to find her. He figured that he was content to talk to the butterflies and keep his own fairytale story alive. It would be enough. But now he knew he had a child, suddenly he wanted to cross the line and find Jeanette, to see his child and to be his father at all cost. The impulse was so strong that he almost left Jacob right there and ran to find Jeanette.

Jacob saw through his mind. He smiled, “My friend, I know you are really anxious to see her, but give me a minute here. I have a plan to get your wife and your child back to you.”

What other thing could possibly be better than that? Ryan was deeply touched, his God, his Protector, Jacob was taking care of him. He really listened to his prayers!

Ryan said, “Jacob, my Protector, I will do anything for you. Anything, you name it.”

“Good. Here is what I like you to do.” Jacob said, “Tonight you will go to their tents and take Jeanette in her sleep. Bring her to us, and we will treat her well.”

“But... but ...”

“Yes?”

“Almighty Jacob. You always say we should give everyone a choice. I want to give Jeanette a choice too. I don't want to kidnap her.”

“She won't come with you. Isn't that obvious? Otherwise she already met you here.”

“Then it's her choice to not be with me. I respect that.”

“How about your daughter then? You want her to live without a father? Jeanette is not a good mother. You have the right to raise her to be someone gentle and kind like you.”

Ryan considered that for a while, then said, “You got a point, but I still don't want to kidnap her. Can you give me a chance to talk to her first?”

Jacob's smile disappeared, “No, sorry, my friend. That's beyond my abilities. You know that if she yells or screams, she will wake up the whole base, then you will lose the chance forever.”

“So the only way I can talk to her is to snatch her first, and ask the questions later?”

"I am afraid so."

It was a difficult decision. Even a kind and nice man like Ryan couldn't know which one was the right thing to do. Eventually the strong will of having the child overcame his conscience.

"Okay, I will do it." He said, "Tell me how."

"That's perfect!" Jacob smiled again, "Tonight at precisely 11:45 their alarm system will all malfunction. You have 15 minutes to enter her tent, which is in the southeast corner, and take her before anyone notices. You'll need this." He handed him a small bottle with yellow liquid.

"What is this?"

"A strong sedative. Put one drop in her mouth and she won't wake up until tomorrow."

"Uh...Is it safe?"

"Safer than her kicking and yelling, plus you don't want anything happen to the child inside her, right?"

"Right..." Ryan took the bottle with some hesitation. He was thinking, *by doing that, I turned myself into a criminal. Is this really the right thing to do?*

Jacob knew he was being too upright, so he added some bonus, "If you do this for me, I will add you as one of my candidates. One day you will become me, and have all my powers."

Ryan said, "The all powerful Jacob, I couldn't thank you enough for your kindness. It was my dream that one day I could be a protector, just like you."

"I know. And you have become a kind and wise man yourself. You have all the qualities we need. That's why I am offering you this now. You should take the chance."

"But before I say 'yes', I need you to promise one thing."

"What is that?"

"If Jeanette doesn't want to stay with me, she can leave and go back to her people."

"Yes, of course I promise you that. You know I always give people a choice."

So just like that, a deal was made. Ryan knelt before Jacob and praised him with all the words he could think of. Jacob disappeared before he could finish his compliments.

.....

Jeanette had a nightmare.

In her dream, polar bears caught her, torn her apart and ate her flesh piece by piece. She wanted to scream but no sound came out from her mouth. She wanted to wake up from the nightmare but she

couldn't. She saw the bears finished her body and walked toward a little girl. That girl had red hair just like her. It was her daughter! She tried all she could to warn her, but the little girl couldn't run faster than the bear. When the girl was grabbed and a bear bit her neck, Jeanette almost went crazy. *No, let me wake up! I don't want to be here anymore! Somebody wake me up!!*

"Jeanette, are you ok?" Thankfully someone did wake her up. "You are having a nightmare."

She opened her eyes slowly. Her head was very heavy, and her throat was dry, but she still could tell the man who woke her up. It was Ryan.

"I must be still dreaming." She said, "I guess I missed you too much."

"No, you are not dreaming." Ryan said, "This is real. I brought you to our village."

"Hahaha..." She laughed, "This is a funny dream. I get it." She tried to get up.

Ryan helped her sat straight, "No, it's not a dream. I am here with you. It's real. Do you know how much I missed you in the past 6 months?"

Jeanette said, "I missed you a lot too. I was always wondering what would happen if I decided to meet you in the Black Rock. I know you are there. I know you are putting up the butterflies. No wonder I had this dream now."

Ryan felt a wave of strong emotions surging in his chest. "The dream had come true, Jeanie. Now we're together. We can have our happy-ever-afters."

"Hahaha..." Jeanette laughed again, "Even the way you talk is not real. What do you know about happy-ever-after?"

"Enough already. From now on you can always be with me, and I will be with you. We will never separate."

"Good." She was still being funny, "Then our story is much better than Romeo and Juliet."

"Romeo and Juliet?"

"You are supposed to know it in my dream. This is not right. My lover should know every work of Shakespeare."

"Who's Shakespeare?"

"Wait, you don't know Shakespeare? It didn't feel like a dream anymore."

"It's not a dream."

"Why my throat was so thirsty? I am not supposed to feel thirsty in a dream, right?"

"Again, it's not a dream."

She hit the stone wall next to her. Ouch! A lot of pain instantly woke her up completely.

“This is not a dream!” She stood up and looked around nervously. She could see that she was in a cave with some wood burning in the center. She was not in her tent anymore.

“Told you so.” Ryan shrugged.

“What did you do to me?” Jeanette became angry, “What the fuuck did you do to me?”

“Calm down, Jeanie.”

“Don’t fuucking ‘Jeanie’ me. I don’t know you that well.”

“But you miss me, right? You want to be with me. You just said it moments ago.”

Jeanette stopped for a while, and she said, “No, that was when I thought I were dreaming.”

“Okay, okay.” Ryan said, “Just calm down here. I brought you here because I missed you so much. And I want to talk about the child.”

Jeanette looked at her stomach, looked at Ryan and turned into a fury, “You ruined me! You bastard! I am in a complete mess because of you!”

Ryan lowered his head.

“And now you kidnap me here? What do you want? Uh, do you want me to be a hostage like Gerald? IS THAT WHAT YOU REALLY WANT?!” She yelled at him.

A voice came out inside the cave, “Hey, young lady. I am sleeping, you know.”

Jeanette didn’t know there was another man inside the cave. She was momentarily shocked.

A familiar face showed up under the light of burning fire, “Hi, Jeanette.” He said.

“Dr. DeGroot?!” Jeanette opened her eyes wide.

....

Back in the base of Dharma Initiative.

“Where is Jeanette?” Amy asked.

“I don’t know.” Paul replied, “She just disappeared.”

“That’s impossible.” Amy said, “There must be some trace left. Did you find anything on the tape?”

“We had an accident in the lab. A machine had triggered a strong Electro-Magnetic burst at the mid-night. All the tapes were wiped out by it. Our alarm system was offline for 15 minutes.”

“My goodness!” Amy’s mouth opened wide, “She must be kidnapped at that time. There is something in this island much more powerful than we had thought.”

“You mean the monster?”

“No, it’s not the monster. The monster didn’t see the future. Otherwise it would not have attacked Jeanette and let everyone know its weakness. This one knows the future. It knows exactly when the EM burst will happen.”

“You mean there is another monster in this island, with different capabilities?”

“Perhaps, but it didn’t seem like a monster.”

“What do you mean?”

“It didn’t do any damage or kill anyone, only grabbed Jeanette. I think this must have something to do with the hostiles. You know her love affair with one of them.”

“So you mean the hostiles kidnapped her?”

“Most likely, but they must need some help from this thing. Maybe it is the ‘Jacob’ they have been talking about.”

“I thought ‘Jacob’ is just a deity they worship, like Apollo to Egyptian.”

“Now I think it’s a real thing.” Amy said, “We need to find a way to stop him soon, before we all disappear.”

...

Back to the cave from the others.

“You must be wondering why I am here.” Gerald said.

Jeanette nodded.

“I was supposed to be dead. However, I didn’t want you guys found my body and sent it back. I wanted my body to remain here with Karen. So I just kept walking deeper and deeper. I met a few people from the village. There is a woman named Ellie. She is the leader here, and she told me her story. It was very interesting...”

Jeanette looked at him impatiently.

“Sorry, I was too used to tell a long story now. In short, Ellie sent her whole village searching for me, and she saved me from jumping a cliff. So I suggested them that we could have a truce between the villagers and the Dharma Initiatives. The other leader, Charles, didn’t want it, but he listened to Ellie. So it was all settled then. After that, I became their story teller. They gave me a lot of food, but I couldn’t eat. So now you see my body is very thin. I guess when a man lost the will to live, this is what will happen.”

Indeed Gerald's body was too thin. In Jeanette's memory, he used to have a little fat stomach. Now he looked like a victim of a concentrate camp.

"Jeanette, I had known you for a long time. I can help you with this situation. This young man is the nicest one in the whole village. If you stay here and marry him, you will be happy. He will do his best to take care of you and your child..."

Jeanette took a quick look at Ryan.

"On the other hand, I understand why you don't want to be here. You have to give up everything, including all the luxuries of being a princess, all the modern toys and clothes, and all the family connections. It was not an easy decision to make. Whichever the one you choose, I will support you, but I hope you could make the decision after carefully consideration with a clear mind. That's all."

Dr. DeGroot stood up slowly and walked toward the cave opening. Ryan helped him.

Outside the cave, they could both see the Sun is setting down in the ocean. Clouds were painted in red and yellow. Half of the sky was dark blue, and the other half was orange. Breeze passed gently over the beach below, and green waves rushed to the sand over and over. The crimson sun had only half left over the horizon, the other half was broken by little ripples into millions of sparkling lights.

"Beautiful, isn't it?" Gerald asked.

"It is."

"Always remember that." Gerald said, "The sun will not stay there for long. In 5 minutes all the beauty will disappear. What we have left is just memories. You and she had spent a wonderful evening together. I can tell. But no beauty is forever, love faints too, no matter how strong it once was. So keep your memories, as long as you have them, it's good enough."

"Thanks. I understand."

"So whatever the decision she makes, you will support her and do your best to protect her, right?"

"Of course."

"That's good. Cause you are too simple to know what is coming." Gerald said.

"What do you mean?" Ryan asked, "What is coming?"

Gerald smile bitterly and shook his head, "You will know."

The sun went down. The bright orange turned into light green. Stars appeared in batches. Over their head, the milky way gradually showed up its light grey edges. It reminded Gerald what a vast universe we were all in. The milk way was only one of the billion billion galaxy systems inside it. The entire Earth history was nothing comparing to any of the galaxies. And this little decision was also nothing,

comparing to the whole human history. Yet he knew that it was extremely important to that young man. To him, the whole world was nothing, comparing to this little decision. It was a funny way of thinking, uh?

They both saw Jeanette walked out of the cave slowly.

“I have thought about it over and over, with a clear and open mind.” She said, “Sorry that I decided to go back to Essex, England.”

“That’s the best for our child. I completely agree.” Ryan said. He came up to Jeanette and hugged her, “I guess it will be a goodbye then.”

Jeanette wept in his shoulder. She didn’t say anything. Her tears went down uncontrollably. She put her arms around Ryan’s body, hugged him as tight as she could, and felt the same strong heart-beats she had felt that night. *I will keep you in my memory, forever!* She suddenly found out that it was really hard to leave him, way harder than she did before.

...

There was no moon.

In almost complete darkness, a torch was moving among the trees. The jungle was a dead zone: no birds, no rats or squirrels. It was only eerie silence.

Ryan walked in the front. He knew every tree in this area. It was not far to the Dharma Initiative’s base. His escort mission would end soon.

“Jeanette.” A strange voice came from the tree above. The sound was creepy.

Jeanette was jumpy, “What’s that?”

Ryan raised his torch and looked above. He couldn’t see anything in trees.

“Jeanette.” The ghostly sound echoed around. It was very close.

“Who’s there?” Ryan swung his torch around, trying to see anything or anyone above, but he couldn’t find anything. He was in this forest for a very long time, but he had never heard or encountered any of that kind of things. It made him, the veteran of the jungle, feel really intense.

“Relax, it’s just a bird.” Suddenly almost right next to them Jacob appeared. He was still wearing the white clothes. It made him look like a ghost in the dark.

Ryan pointed the torch at him, “Thank Jacob, it’s you. I was very nervous.”

“Well, you should be. Why did you leave without saying goodbye to Richard?” Jacob asked.

“Oh, I just didn’t want to bother anybody. Besides, since you said she could leave if she wanted, so I thought it’s really not necessary to tell Richard the same thing.”

“Yes, I did say that she could leave.” Jacob looked at him without a bit of smile, “But I didn’t say that the baby could leave.”

“What?” Ryan couldn’t believe what he just heard. “What did you say?”

“Let me make it simple for you: the mother can leave, but the baby has to stay.”

“Wait, wait, wait...” Ryan said, “This is not the deal.”

“This is exactly the deal. You bring the baby there. I will make you a candidate. I don’t care if the mother stays here or not. She can leave anytime after the baby is born.” Jacob said it coldly like steel.

Jeanette’s opened her mouth, but she just stared at Ryan and couldn’t say anything.

“No, no, no.” Ryan held Jeanette by the arm, “This is not the deal that I made. Please believe me.”

“You tricked me!” Jeanette shouted at him, “SOB, you freaking tricked me! I will never trust ...” Suddenly a shadow came down on her. A black bird as big as Ryan landed behind Jeanette. Before she knew what happened, the bird pecked his beak into her neck. Instantly Jeanette lost the ability to speak, her eyes looked empty, and she fell down to the ground. The bird was still holding her neck with the beak.

“No!” Ryan took out his knife and tried to stab the bird, but then he found out his whole body was not under his control. Some force was holding every muscle of his body. He could only watch the bird sucking life out of Jeanette’s body helplessly. He couldn’t even close his eyes to avoid that heart-wrenching scene.

“This will teach you never doubt my determination.” Jacob said, “Babies are the best future candidates. I won’t let any one of them slip through my fingers.”

PANG! PANG! Two gun shots fired, and the black bird changed his color to bright yellow. He opened his wings and shrieked, “Jeanette...” and flew up to the sky.

Amy, Paul and some other DI security guys showed up. They pointed their guns at Jacob.

Jacob smiled, “You cannot kill my bird. You think you can kill me?” He waved his hand lightly to them.

Amy and Paul felt like a tornado just arrived. A strong force pushed them all to the ground.

Ryan felt the force holding him was loosen a little bit, and he could speak again. He shouted out, “STOP! STOP! Jacob, I have a deal for you.”

Jacob loosed his grip on Ryan and said, “Really? Tell me about it. I am interested.”

Ryan said, “How about I gave you all my life? Whatever you want me to do, I will do it.”

“In exchange for?”

“For Jeanette and her baby. Please, leave them alone, and I will be all yours.”

"It's too late. After this, I am going to cross your name. Your life doesn't worth the baby." Jacob said, "It's a no deal."

"Please, Jacob, I am begging you." Ryan knelt down in front of him, "Please let them go!" His wailing voice was too sad to hear.

"Get away from me!" Jacob kicked him to the ground, "Look at the way you are. It's really disgusting."

A crackling noise spread around. It attracted Jacob's full attention. Everyone on the ground suddenly felt the holding force disappeared. They stood up, and saw Jacob scanning the trees.

Paul looked at Amy with a question. Amy shook her head. Paul nodded and made a gesture for everyone else not to move or shoot.

Someone walked out of the tree and said, "Hello, Jacob."

Everyone turned his eyes on him. It was a bald man with a knife. He was about 50 years old. Nobody had ever seen him before.

Jacob couldn't smile anymore, "Why you are here?"

He replied, "I am here to kill you. Of course."

"So you found your loop hole." It seemed that Jacob was genuinely surprised.

"Yup. Found it in the future. I got some help from ... uh ... Amy there." He pointed his knife to Amy.

"Do I know you?" Amy asked.

"You will." The bald man said, "And thanks again for your help."

"Uh...You are welcome?" Amy felt it very strange, "Whatever that is."

"That's impossible." Jacob said, "The rule says you cannot even hurt me."

"Then why you could punch me into a bloodbath and throw me into the light?"

"Uh..." Jacob couldn't explain himself.

"See. The rule can be bent. You cannot kill me, but you can indirectly cause my death. Now I am doing the same thing to you." The bald man said with a smile. He got wrinkles all over his face.

"Well, it won't work." Jacob said, "If you can kill me now, then you don't need to ask Amy's help in the future. Then you won't know how to kill me. It's a paradox."

"It's worth a try anyway." The bald man said. He handed the knife to Ryan and said, "Kill him."

"What?" Ryan was beyond surprise, "You want me to kill Jacob?"

“Yes. Your name is not crossed yet. So you still have the ability to kill him. Once you kill him, your wife and your child will be free. Isn’t that what you want?”

“Yeah... but...” Ryan held the knife tight, hesitated. He never thought that one day he could kill Jacob, even in his wildest dreams.

“Don’t think too much.” The bald man pushed him, “Think about your wife and your child. Once you kill him, they are free.”

Ryan took a look at Jeanette, who was still lying on the ground motionlessly. A rush of anger rose up in his heart. *How dare you deceit me like that! How dare you use me to get your hands on my baby!* He suddenly became a fearless lion, walking toward Jacob step by step.

Jacob already read his mind. He tried to escape, but for some strange reason, once Ryan held the knife, it had completely neutralized all of his special abilities. He wanted to run but his legs were filled with lead. He could only see him coming closer and closer. He knew that he must be very careful with the next sentence he would say.

“I will wake up your Jeanette.” He said, “And I will let them go.”

Ryan stopped.

“You still have a choice. If you kill me now, she will be in a comma forever. Your daughter will have to grow up without a mother. If you let me go, I will do what I just said, and forget everything that happens today. Only your name will be crossed, but I don’t think you care.”

“You just deceived me. I can’t trust you anymore.” Ryan held the knife high.

“What about you?” Jacob said quickly, “Ryan, you are a good man. You never did anything bad in your life. If you kill me tonight, you will be haunted by the guilt for the rest of your life. You will not be the same person anymore. You don’t want this. Trust me, I know.”

“That’s interesting to know.” The bald man said. “What have you done?”

Jacob avoided his stare and said, “I hurt my brother badly and indirectly caused his death. I have been feeling guilty for two thousand years. Every day I wished I hadn’t done that. He would have been a much better leader than me.”

“I am touched.” The bald man said, “Too bad it’s two thousand years late. Apology not accepted.”

Ryan looked at the knife in his hand, then looked at the helpless Jacob on the ground. He handed the knife back to the bald man: “I am sorry. I cannot kill him. He’s right. Killing him won’t bring back my Jeanette.”

“You shouldn’t let him talk.” The bald man said, “However, you scared the shit out of him. That’s good enough for tonight.” He put his knife back to the holster. A strong flash brightened the whole area, and he was gone.

Jacob silently got up, and went to Jeanette. He patted on her shoulder. Instantly she exhaled heavily and started coughing.

He turned around and looked at Ryan with a cold face, "I kept my promise, now it's your turn. Frankly I don't care if you want to keep your end of the bargain."

Ryan said, "If I come back, you will leave them alone?"

"Yes."

"Then I will come back. Make no mistake. I come back to help my brothers and sisters, not for you."

"As I said, I don't care. By the way, you will lose the island's blessing. So if tomorrow you are hit by a van, don't blame me."

"I don't care either." Ryan said, "You go to hell."

Jacob disappeared.

Chapter 16: How Paul Died.

Olivia Goodspeed was an attractive blond girl. Everyone in the DI had to admit that. The first day she arrived at the island, she already got three love letters and ten bunches of flowers from her secret admirers. She threw all those away.

Every time a young boy tried to initiate some flirting with her, she walked away and left him deeply embarrassed. No one in the island was good enough for her, except one, but that one was unavailable.

His name was Paul.

She didn't know why out of so many handsome young men on the island, she only loved him. Maybe it was just because he never took her seriously, or maybe he was already married.

This secret love tortured her. She tried her best not to show any sights. But it seemed everyone knew about it, and when they looked at her, she felt the sympathy, which made her even crazier.

"I don't need your pity. I will forget about Paul and love someone else. You will all see." She said to herself. However, it was hard not to think about him every day, especially when he was around all the time. She would be melted by his sound of "Hello" and "Goodbye". She would fantasize about one day, he and she would go to the mountain top, enjoying a formal picnic, just two of them.

One day she finally found an alternative candidate. He's as handsome as Paul. He also had a leader's quality, and his gentle voice made her high too.

His name is Richard Alpert.

It was easy for them to meet each other. From time to time, Richard would come and tell her where to find some dead bodies, which was killed by the monster or some unbelievably bad luck. They both spoke Latin, and both loved history and poems. So there had been a lot to talk about, after the bad news was delivered.

She was surprised to find out that Richard had a very kind heart. He could communicate with all the animals on the island, and he would protect the weak ones from their predators. He noticed all the little things that Olivia had missed, and he knew about her feelings more than any DI boys did. She found that gradually she fell in love again.

However, it was too bad that Richard never said he liked her. He never talked about his marriage, or the secrets of the island. From the conversations, Olivia could guess that Richard was much older than her, or even older than her grand, grandparents. How could he stay so young after all those years? She always wondered. It made him more mysterious than ever. It was a fatal attraction to her.

Richard seemed very interested in talking to her too. He asked all kind of question about her life, her previous work as a UN translator, and the world that was outside of the island. It seemed that every little thing she said fascinated him. He was the best listener she ever had.

She was so glad that finally she had someone to love and be loved. There was no more pity or sympathy around her, all she saw was sunshine and rainbows everywhere. She knew DI boys said things behind her back, but she didn't care at all.

One day Paul found her and told her, "Olivia. We all know what you have been doing. You cannot go on like this anymore."

"What are you talking about? Paul?" She was surprised to find herself peaceful with Paul's presence. No more sweating or butterflies in the stomach. It seemed that her love with Paul was officially over.

"You know what I am talking about." Paul said, "You and Richard. It's not right to go behind our back like that. After all, I am the head of security. I have to make sure you won't be compromised by him."

"Since when did you care about my personal life?" Olivia started to get angry. *You idiot, you could have had me, the beautiful smart blondie, instead of the cunning pale Amy. Now you want to interfere in my love life?!*

"I am sorry, Olivia. I really don't want to get in your way, but it's a matter of security of DI. It involves everyone's safety in the base. I simply cannot let you continue like this. It's obvious that Richard is using you to get some inside information."

"You mean once I fall in love with him, I will be a snitch? Rat everything out? You disgust me, Paul! Unlike what you think, I am not stupid. I know what to say and what not to. Now if you excuse me..."

It was Paul's turn of sweating, "Olivia, please. I don't mean like that. We all know you are a smart lady, but we just don't want anything that might happen to you. It's always a bad idea to fall in love with an enemy..."

"Hahaha..." Olivia laugh, "You think this is 'Romeo and Juliet'?" She looked at him, feeling her love toward him was no more, now he appeared to be ugly. "Then who should I fall in love with? You?"

Paul didn't seem to understand the strong sarcasm, "Olivia. You have so many admirers in the base. You can have anyone you want. For example, Horace, he is a good man."

"Horace?" Olivia almost had to laugh again. He liked your wife, you idiot! You still don't know?

"Yeah, he mentioned you a lot of times. And Stuart, he likes you, too."

Ewilll, that ugly geek! She had to doubt, *does this man really understand girls? Why did I fall for such a stupid guy?*

"Olivia, just think about it, OK?" Paul was almost begging.

"You know what?" Olivia couldn't hold it to herself anymore, "I think you are jealous."

"What? No, no, no!" Paul suddenly found himself in a corner.

“Yeah, yeah, yeah! you are jealous of me and him. Originally you could have me, all of me, anything you want, but you never took a chance. Now you see me going out with him, and you feel a lot of jealousy. So you are here to tell me not to hang out with him, not because he is an enemy, but because of me. Am I right?”

Paul had a headache with this overly smart woman. He didn't even know how to begin to rebuke. The silence convinced Olivia that her guess was 100 percent correct.

“See? Now you admit it. It's too late, Paul. Oh, please don't cry, Paul. I am with him, but we are still friends, right?”

Paul had to say something, “Wait a minute, lady, who do you think you are? Plus, I am not crying.”

“Oh, yeah, like I will believe you.” Olivia left with a big smile in her face, like she just won a battle.

Paul didn't move. After a long while, he let out a long long sigh and said:

“Women!”

.....

It was a very lovely morning on top of the mountain. However, something bad was about to happen.

There were a handsome man and a pretty lady sitting on a picnic cloth with wine and fruit on the side. They talked pleasantly for a while, then the conversation gradually went bad.

“I am sorry, Olivia.” Richard said, “But I don't love you.”

“What?!” Olivia felt the world was crumbling down. She almost fainted at the cruel words. How could he possibly say that?

Richard held her arm and let her lying on the picnic cloth, “I am very sorry. I still love my wife, and I know she's always around somewhere. So I cannot love you.”

“But why?” Lying on the cloth, Olivia suddenly lost a lot of strength, “Why did you talk to me so much? Why did you ask me so many questions about my life?”

“I don't get out much. I'm always wondering what the world outside looks like. You are the only one who I can really talk to in the whole DI.”

“But how about the ways you care about me? The things that you said you only told me?”

“I am a gentleman, and you are a fine lady. That's the courtesy I should have shown.”

Olivia felt the sky getting really dark, “MY GOOOSH. For all the time, it was only me. Oh, my god! It was only me! What have I done?”

“What?” Richard said.

Desperately, she found a new hope, "What about this picnic? Why you invited me to the mountain top, and share the wine with me? Huh? Do you know that it is always my dream to do something like this?" Paul's face flashed over her mind, painfully.

"Uh... It just seems like a good idea." Richard replied, "But now I think I'd better go." He stood up.

"Please don't ..." Olivia tried to get up and grabbed his arm, "Give me a chance. I love you! Please..."

Richard swung his arm. Olivia grabbed only the air and lost her balance. She fell to the ground and kept rolling down the slope for another 50 feet.

All the lights went out. Olivia lost her consciousness.

.....

When she woke up, Richard was long gone. All he left was pain everywhere. She cried so hard that she never thought it could be possible.

Sitting up, still trembling like a small tree under the winter blizzard, she used her walkie-talkie.

"Olivia, what is going on?" Paul asked anxiously.

"Just ... come" Olivia lost her words in tears.

Twenty minutes later, Paul was there. He saw an Olivia that he had never seen before. Her hair was a mess; her face was a mess; her clothes were also a mess. He was furious right away.

"Did he rape you?" he asked, "Richard. Did he rape you?"

Olivia just jumped into his arms and cried.

"OK, OK. It's alright, big girl. We will take care of you." Paul said it very softly. Then he motioned a man to come, "Horace here will escort you back to the base. Everything will be alright, I promise, OK?"

Olivia didn't say a thing. She just kept weeping and crying. Horace helped her into a jeep, then he drove back.

"SOB!" Paul sworn, "I knew the freaking bastard was playing her. Now he dared to rape her and leave her here to die?! I will personally make him pay!" He took out the walkie-talkie and dialed to another frequency.

.....

One hour later, two men showed up with guns. They searched around first, seeing no one else is there, and they relaxed.

The first one came up and said, "Paul, go back, you are in our territory. I can just kill you without questioning. You know that."

“How dare you say something like this?” Paul’s eyes were bulging, “Are you seriously thinking that Richard can commit this horrible crime and get away with it?”

“What are you talking about, Paul?” They both had no idea.

“I am talking about Richard RAPING Olivia.”

“Richard?” first one repeated it doubtfully, “Raping?” the other follow, “Olivia?” Their faces both turned very strange.

“Ha ha ha ha...” They both laughed out loud.

“What’s so FUUCKING funny?!” Paul almost exploded. “I swear to you, he is gonna pay for this!!”

One of the two said, “There is no way Richard will do that. I think the other way around is more possible. She is so attached to him. There is no way we can drive her away...”

It was too much to bear. Paul jumped ahead and knocked the man in the face, very hard.

PANG!! A gun shot was fired, and a woman was screaming. “No, no, no!!”

Amy appeared from nowhere and rushed to rescue Paul.

“Why you protect the bitch so much? I hated you!” She cried, then she changed, “No, no. I am sorry. I love you. I love you so much! Please wake up for me, please!” She held her husband tight. She felt his body temperature was sinking, so did her heart.

Paul knew he did a stupid thing. He gathered up all of his remaining strength, trying to kiss her cheek, then he died.

“Oh, no! Oh, no!” Amy felt ultimately lost. All in a sudden the whole world meant nothing to her. Dark, cold, sorrow and emptiness filled up her heart. She felt a pinching pain that piercing all over her body. A pain that she only felt when she lost her parents came back even stronger. It torn her into pieces and drained her all the strengths.

All she could do was keep calling him, “Paul, Paul, talk to me! Talk to me, Paul!” But it was already too late.

The two men seemed not touched by the misery a bit. Over the years, they had watched way too many deaths. Those emotions already meant nothing to them. Instead, since they already began killing, why not just finished it? Their ghosts would meet each other again in the jungle. Killing her was more like doing her a big favor. So they put a mask on her face, and prepared to shoot her as well.

Suddenly a deep male voice came out of nowhere, “Alright, drop the gun!”

Those two men turned violently toward the source of the sound. They both raised the rifle, but before they could aim. They were both shot by some ones they had never met.

Their names were Sawyer and Juliet.

.....

"Is Amy alright?" Dr. Chang asked.

Horace shook his head slowly. Amy was in a deep sorrow. He felt a strong responsibility to protect her.

"What happened today? Why Richard came and took Paul's body?"

"He claimed that we killed two of them, but it turned out that Mr. LeFeur was the killer."

"Who the hell is Mr. LeFeur?"

Horace thought about it, and said, "I am not sure who he is, or where he is from. I just know he have been lying ever since he woke up. He is a damn good liar, though. I give him that."

"Is he one of them?"

"No, it's true that he killed both of those hostiles. So he is not on their side."

Dr. Chang nodded his head. Horace was well trained by Paul. No wonder he was the number two in security. It was too bad that Paul passed away like that. Now the position was empty. "Horace, now I promote you to the head of security. You have to do a good job, and don't involve in ladies' business like Paul did. It's a shame we lost him over a love drama."

"I am sorry, chief. I cannot do that either." Horace replied calmly, "I will only do the job part-time. I cannot spend a whole day running around and training rookies like Paul did."

Dr. Chang was mildly surprised, "You are the one who's always want to get Paul's job. Now you are telling me that you don't want it. Why?"

"I will do the job, but I can only work part time." Horace said, "There is someone I need to take care of. I don't want to make the same mistake like Paul did."

"I see." Dr. Chang now understood, "Amy. She's lucky to have you."

"I don't see it that way, Sir." Horace said, "I think I am the lucky one."

"So how do we solve the problem, Horace? Can you recommend someone to me? A man that's tough enough like you?"

"Uh..." Horace considered it for a while, then said, "Forgive me for being too blunt."

"That's alright."

"Our new recruits are all bunch of boy scouts. They are all chickens. None of them can really do the job. The tough and bad guys all died either by the accidents, or killed by the monster. So we got no one."

“There you go. You are the only one who is qualified. So please ...”

“Doctor.” Horace interrupted him, “There is still somebody who is fully qualified.”

“You just said we got no one...”

“Mr. LeFleur.”

“Are you kidding me? The cold-blooded killer? Oh, I get your point.” Dr. Chang now started to admire Horace’s smartness.

“Yup. He is definitely not on their side. He’s very clever and good at firearms. He also got a small team, which everyone respects him and trust him as a leader. If we can use them all, they will be great help for us.”

“But can you really trust them?”

Horace thought about it over, “I will be the one who’s looking behind their back. If any of them make a move, I will remove them immediately.”

“You are the man.” Dr. Chang had to agree.

.....

“Rosie, how is Amy?” Horace asked.

Nurse Rosie walked out, wiped her tears, shook her head and left.

Horace entered Amy’s house. First thing he noticed was that the whole house was a big mess. Stuff was all over the place. Broken glasses and furniture were everywhere. A strong alcohol smell filled the air. It made his heart twinge.

Amy was lying on her bed. Hugging her husband’s photo frame, and murmuring something. Her pale face and dark eyes made her looked like an overdosed junkie.

“Hi, Amy.” Horace got close and showed her a bunch of flowers, “This is for you.”

She didn’t even notice Horace’s existence. All she was doing was looking straight and murmuring something.

Horace found an unbroken vase and put the flowers in. He asked carefully, “What are you saying, Amy? Can you share it?”

No reply from her. She acted more like a wooden doll in a circus.

Horace frowned with his heart wrenching. The house was once such a clean and neat place; she was once such a lovely and bright woman. Now this!

"I am going to take care of you, OK? Amy, listen to me. I am going to take care of you. You hear me?"

"Paul?" Amy suddenly became active, she gazed at the ceiling, "Is that you?"

Horace felt the pain unbearable. He got a strong heart, but that was too difficult, even for him. "Amy, it's me, Horace. Paul is not here."

Amy just ignored him, "Paul, I know you are around. Come out, I want to see you, please come out." She looked around, then for the first time she saw Horace. She suddenly turned into a volcano, "What the hell are you doing here? Get out!"

"I am sorry, Amy, but ..." Horace wanted to explain, but he was pushed fiercely by Amy. Before he could utter another word, Amy yelled at his face, "I SAID 'GET OUT'!!!" Then she slammed the door in his face.

Through the door, Horace could still hear Amy talking to her imaginary husband incessantly. She broke a vase, then she screamed, something else was fallen and made a huge thud.

He sat down at the porch and started weeping. In the history of DI, it was the first time people ever saw him crying. It was also the last time.

.....

3 months later, in the Orchid Station secret laboratory.

"Oh, MY GOD!" Dr. Chang almost jumped when he suddenly saw Amy standing right next to him. She looked exactly like a ghost: long hair, black eyes, pale faces and white sleeping gown.

"Oh, you scare me..." Dr. Chang let out a long breath before he went on, "What are you doing in the Orchid Station? Horace said you are still not fit for work."

"It is been three months already." Amy spoke like a zombie, "I need to work."

"It's perfectly alright that you take more time off. We are all covered here. There is nothing to worry about." Dr. Chang tried his best not to offend her in anyway.

"Really?" Amy doubted, "I don't see it this way."

"What?"

"How is the progress of the digging?"

"Uh..." Dr. Chang felt very strange, it was like all in a sudden she became his supervisor, "Though it was freezing cold down below, all the drills melted in a certain depth. So we stop drilling."

"I know. That was four months ago. Did you take any sample up since then?"

"Of course we did. And we found some interesting material there."

“Show me.”

“Maybe we should wait...”

“SHOW ME.”

“Alright, alright. You are the ‘man’.” Dr. Chang complied with reluctance. Women, he thought, are always trouble.

“Here you go.” He handed over some photos, “After magnifying it 5 million times, we saw some special materials here. It can be activated by certain electromagnetic power, but we still don’t know how it works.”

Amy took the photos and inspected it carefully with each single pixel. It was almost like the good old scientist Amy was back to the lab.

“Interesting material.” She agreed, “What did the Gemologist say?”

“She said she never saw anything like that. She has no idea how to classify it.”

“That’s not a surprise. She knew nothing about microscopic material structure science (or we call ‘Nano Technology’ as today). There will be a dead end from her.”

Is this really she? Dr. Chang wondered. The Amy he knew never criticized anyone. She surely changed a lot after the tragedy.

“Alright. That’s it. I am taking over.” Amy said it with ultimate authorization, “Give me the samples. I will do some test myself.”

“Amy, I really hope that you can ...”

“Give me the sample. Dr. Chang. I am the one who got you all here. I am sure I have the right to do some research on my own.” Her sound was cold like steel.

Dr. Chang’s headache was back. Before he had a miserable grieving Amy, now he got a Nazi Dictator Amy. Both of them were intolerable.

Chapter 17: Nazi Amy

It was an eventful day for Horace.

He got an alarm early in the morning and gathered 8 security guys. Something bad was happening in their food storage house. When they arrived at the crime scene, the guy who guarded the house swore that he saw a group of polar bears used stones to break the lock, then turned the door knob to enter. It seemed that those bears somehow were even smarter than some of those timid DI guys. Horace didn't believe it at first. He used fish biscuits and honey to lure the bears, only found out that those bears were not interested at all. They were already having a feast inside, why bothered coming out and getting killed? Then he threw into the house a sonic grenade, which was thrown back and exploded among them. It caused most of them losing their hearing for the day. Horace realized he was seriously underestimated those bears.

After much debating, they decided to arm themselves and prepared to charge the house like SWAT teams. After spending a long time wearing super heavy armor, they hold the tranquilizer dart guns and prepared to rush in. Just moments before the action, they suddenly spotted a janitor's son, Ben, was playing with the bears inside. He seemed to have a great time and ate a lot of popsicles. The bears didn't hurt him but obviously held the little kid as a hostage. His existence rendered the military operation impossible.

It was a very embarrassing scene until Mr. LeFleur came to the rescue. At first he insisted on raiding the house and saying, "I don't care about that damn kid. Let him die.", but since nobody followed him, he could only curse and say, "Fine, you Frodos are always useless. I will do it myself." With everyone's surprise, he simply raised his hands high, and walked into the house unarmed. The bears roared at him, but then they were happy to see him opening a steel door with much more delicious stuff inside. Before long he started to drink Dharma beer with the bears. One hour later those bears were all out, and DI guys captured them all. It was a happy ending with no casualties, bear or Ben. Horace was smiling because he couldn't think of a better solution himself. That man had a natural ability to con others. He would be very useful in the future.

The only remaining problem was that they had to move those 500-pound heavy weight champions into cages before they woke up. It was not easy but was done nonetheless. Dr. Chang was very pleased because his wife would have new specie to do some scientific experiment on, which made Horace frown. Just last month, one of Lara Chang's sharks escaped the confinement and already ate 3 of DI workers in the sea so far. Who knew what Lara would do to those bears? They were already too smart and dangerous to handle.

By the time all those commotions settled down, it was well past the lunch time. Horace went to the greenhouse of Orchid station, and saw Lara Chang walking out. He told her the news about the bears and asked the situation of Amy.

"Oh, that's great! I always want to hug a real polar bear myself." Lara said excitedly, "Uh, about Amy? She's basically fine, except she was working like a robot."

“Are you sure? I saw her talking to someone in her house again yesterday. I believe she was still in a serious delusion.”

“That’s really bad!” Lara exclaimed, “She still does that? It has been, uh, how long was that since ...”

“It has been 4 months and 23 days.” Horace said, “I have been counting.”

Lara looked at him with some sympathy. After a while, she said, “You should ask her to move out of her house. Maybe there are just too many things in the house remind her of Paul.”

“That must be true. She’s too emotional inside it.” Horace agreed, “I will prepare a room in my house for her, and I will take away everything that has a connection to Paul.”

“Good luck. I know Amy’s situation is not easy on you. Everyone knows that, but I wish you the best.”

“Thank you! Now how is she doing this morning?”

“She seemed very normal to me, except she didn’t say a joke or anything. All we talked about was work and research. I didn’t want to say a joke either, given her situation.”

Horace nod, “That’s right. A joke sometimes will hurt people deeply. So ... did she eat anything for lunch?”

“Yup. She ate lunch just like anybody else, except that she spent only 2 minutes on it.” Lara tried to remember, “Then she went back to work right away. For the whole morning she didn’t smile a bit. We all feel sad for her.”

“Hm... I think the last thing she needs now is sympathy. Anyway, thank you so much for telling me all these. I am going down to see her now. Bye!”

“Bye. Good luck with her.”

...

Just like Lara said, Horace saw Amy working like a bee. She took some rock out of the drawer, put some tiny piece of it under the microscope, and burn something with a torch gun. He watched her with utmost care, trying not to disturb her.

Amy turned around and talked to him, “It’s you again.” The sound was plain like computer generated.

“Yup. Don’t you think you can get rid of me so easily.” Horace tried to make a light mood.

“Have you seen enough? Since last month you have kept coming here and bothering me.”

“Not really.” Horace got closer, “I just want to make sure you are alright.”

“Get out of here now, before I call security.” Amy’s voice turned icy.

"I AM the security, Amy. Please, don't drive me away like this. I only want to take care of you."

"You leave me no choice then." Amy pickup something like a gun, and before Horace could react, she shot him in the chest.

A strong wave of impact hit Horace like a hammer, knocking him down to the ground and rendering him unconscious.

Amy looked at the gun-like thing, and said, "Good. The Portable Sonic Gun passes the test." She went back to work.

...

When Horace woke up, he felt like his chest hurt like burning. He opened his shirt and saw a large area of bruise. My God! Amy, why did you do this to me? He stood up again, trying to get closer to Amy, only to see Amy raised that thing toward him again and said, "Get Out!"

He had no choice.

After he left, Amy shook her head and said, "Men never learned."

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"Ouch...Ouch... Be careful, Rosie. It hurts" Horace moaned with agony.

"Of course it will hurt. It's such a big bruise. What happened to you? Why you didn't want a doctor to see it?" Rosie was curious.

"I don't want him to write a report. That's all. I can handle this thing alone."

"Really? Why not? This bruise will hurt you for months. I don't think you can cover it up."

"Yes... Um... I can ... uh... handle it. No worries. Please... please... lighter." He was almost collapsed by the pain.

"Keep it still, will you?" Rosie put some cotton on the scary bruise and started to wrap bondages around his chest. She noticed that he really got a strong big chest!

"You know." Rosie said with a little hesitation, "I really missed dancing with you in the Flame Station. That was fun."

"Ouch, ouch... For God's sake, that was two years ago. Rosie." He said it with a great deal of pain, "How about Jerry. Are you still with him?"

"On and off, but I am not serious about him." Rosie said in a naughty way, "I am serious about you."

"I am sorry... Ouch... I can't be the one." Horace didn't want to say anything. It hurt like hell with every breath.

“Well, in case you change your mind,” Rosie insisted, “You know where to find me. Now go, before any doctor sees you.”

“Thank you!”

“I hate you!!”

“Ouch...”

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Two more months passed, there were many rumors about Horace’s wound, but none of them were confirmed by the source, the pathetic man himself. All they could see was that Horace frequently visited the psychologist and got some pain killer from him.

The following was from one of the visits.

“OK, Doctor, I am lying down, can we talk now?” Horace was impatient.

“Just a sec,” the doctor got a pen and paper and ready to write, “Now I am ready. What do you want to talk about today?”

“I want to talk about Amy.”

“Sure, we all know that you were deeply troubled by her tragedy, so you might have developed a lot of anxiety because of her. No worries, you just need to take some pills and let her go for a few days, and you will be fine.”

“Doctor, I am not talking about myself. I am talking about Amy.”

“Not again.” The doctor sighed. He knew why Horace came here so often, “What about her?”

“I still can’t understand why she was crazy for 3 months, and one day she woke up, and was normal again. That’s impossible! Do you know why, Doc?”

“Hm...You are right. Her case is very interesting. Tell you the truth, I haven’t seen any case like her before. Now you ask, I can only give you my speculation.”

“Please, let me know anything that might help me.”

“When she lost her husband, she experienced a trauma so powerful that it shut down some of her brain function. Therefore she appeared to be crazy because she was not capable of thinking. After 3 month, the effect worn off, and she could think again. That’s what happened.”

“Doctor, I am sorry I have to disagree with you. When she was ‘crazy’, actually she could think very well. I heard her conversation with her imaginary dead husband. It was long and clear. It was like he was actually there. Now she’s back to work, but she doesn’t talk at all. It makes me worry even more.”

“Well, we all know that Amy is a very smart woman. So when she was in a trauma, maybe she still appeared to be normal in conversation, but she definitely lost the perception of reality. Now she finally recognizes the situation. It is very hard for her, but she has accepted it, and put all her energy into work. I will say it’s a good sign.”

“You really think so, Doc?”

“Yes. I believe everyone has his way to deal with grieve. Working hard was her way to forget about her loss.”

“Doctor, I want to agree with you, but the whole thing is not this simple. I always feel something strange was going on with her mind, something bad.”

The doctor can’t held smiling, Horace was being paranoid, he put a note in the paper, “Horace, I think you are worrying too much about her. She is okay. I just interview her two days ago.”

“What did you find out?”

“Nothing. She is perfectly fine. A bit of obnoxious, I have to add, but otherwise she was normal.”

“Wait. That is the point! She became another person. Someone I don’t know. Now she says things that can cut you deep.”

“That is what we call ‘Post-Trauma-Personality-Shift’. It is normal for a person who suddenly lost the life partner.”

“Is that really what it is?”

“Yes, it is. Now enough of Amy already, it’s time to talk about you. You have anything you want to tell me about? Has your chest pain gone? Do you need more pain-killers?”

“No, I am fine. Thank you, Doc! I think I am finished here.”

“OK, then. Come back any time if you want to talk.”

“Sure will do.”

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1974, Winter. Orchid station.

THUMP! A pile of paper hit the table so hard that it made Dr. Chang jumped up in reaction.

“The direction of Dharma Initiative has to change completely.” Amy said like a dictator.

“What?!” Dr. Chang couldn’t believe his ear, “We just made the rabbit space-jumped. Isn’t that a good direction we should continue?”

“The rabbits all turned into ashes after the jump. It’s useless.”

“But we can develop a way to protect the rabbits, or we can find species that can survive the jump. It should be possible.”

“Since we cannot put any metal around the rabbit, there’s no way we can protect the rabbit. The strong electro-magnetic radiation will blast them into ashes. There is no doubt that all other animals will be the same. It was all waste of time.”

“Well, I have to disagree. Lara is working hard on an injection which will increase the resistance to EM. She also found a way to combine different animal’s DNA to produce new species. It is very promising.” When mentioned about his wife, Dr. Chang smiled proudly.

“She is too slow. What she is doing will take us at least 20 years to produce an unnatural creature to survive the jump. What should we do during this time, uh? Do we just sit here and wait?”

Dr. Chang’s face grew red, “Amy, I have to warn you. Your behavior becomes more and more ... uh... unacceptable. I think you really need to take a break.”

“No, I think it’s YOU who need a break. Look at all the white hair on your skull, you are getting old, Pierre.”

“That’s it!” Dr. Chang couldn’t stand of this rebellious Amy anymore, “Get out of my lab!”

“This is not your lab. It’s mine.” The stone cold Amy Maxwell fought back, “And now I need you to sign some papers immediately or suffer the consequences.”

“You have the audacity to talk to me like that...” Dr. Chang grunted, he scanned the paper and appalled, “What the hell is this? Munity?”

“Exactly.” Amy said, “I wanted you to step down to be the number two, and I will take charge from now on.”

“Ha ha ha” Dr. Chang laughed bitterly, “Everyone says you are crazy. I always argue against it. Now I have to agree with them. Woman, you are seriously out of your mind.”

“I don’t care what you think.” The overtaker Amy said, “If you don’t sign, I will make a call, then the whole deal with the island will be off, we will all die here and have nothing. Do you want to try that?”

“What kind of phone call? What are you talking about?”

“Well, actually I already made the phone call. In 10 minutes, if I don’t call somebody back. He will activate a broadcast system. And the whole deal with the island will be gone. Since the island won’t let anyone go, we will just all die here, one way or the other. So I suggest you sign the paper, and sign it quick.”

“You wicked woman!” Dr. Chang now understood what she was planning to do, “You want to broadcast the forbidden numbers?!”

“Right. It’s the only way to make you sign the paper.”

“Alright. You win this time.” Dr. Chang sat down and started signing, “But I have to warn you. With an evil mind like this, you won’t last long in this island.”

“You know what,” the undisputed champion Amy retorted, “You won’t last long either, because you are so weak.”

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The new constructions began. It was a very ambitious plan. Besides the Orchid and Flame that were already built, there would be six more stations in each corner of the island. Each one would have a different purpose.

Dr. Chang was strongly against almost every station project. In the final review meeting of the whole plan, he spoke aloud, “The Arrow Station is dangerously close to the hostiles. We don’t know how to build it without them knowing it. Even if you could somehow build it, if they found it one day and discovered all the firearms inside, that’s equal to declare war on them.”

The chairman Amy just scoffed him, “Let me worry about that, Doctor. You just need to do your research work.”

Dr. Chang got use to her attitude already, he continued the protest, “What’s the purpose of the Swan Station? And why do we have to build the Pearl Station to monitor it? That’s unreasonable!”

Amy replied with a scorn, “Doctor, if you read the papers, you will know the Swan Station will be used to research on the unique properties of electro-magnetic radiation itself. We have done enough research on the materials from the Orchid Station. It is a dead end...”

Dr. Chang objected, “You cannot call discovery of space-time-jumping a ‘dead end’.”

Amy just ignored him, “Now we need to change the direction to this so we can better harness the power of pockets of energy on this island. The radiation itself is the key. It will reveal us how the ‘magic’ of the island was done. We can make blaster weapons that are thousands of times stronger than any laser we have today, and we will be the only one who can produce energy shield to block the weapons.”

“What are you talking about?” Dr. Chang frowned, “We are here to do research to benefit the mankind, not making weapons. You have totally crossed the line.”

“Wake up, Dr. Chang! There is no line in this island. Since day one, we have been slaughtered by the island one by one. Do you know how many lives we have lost so far?”

“.....” Dr. Chang never counted.

“Let me tell you. It’s 108, including my husband Paul. They didn’t have to die if they had equipped a shield to protect themselves.”

Dr. Chang started to understand Amy. She was declaring a war with the island to revenge her husband. He had to say something to stop it, “Amy, I am really sorry for your husband, and the lost of those good people, but I just cannot agree on making weapons. It’s morally WRONG.”

“That’s why I am the director and you are not.” Amy sneered, “You are too weak to make tough decisions.”

That’s it! One day I am going to kick this woman out of this island and never see her again! Dr. Chang promised himself. Then he spoke to the computer screen with the utmost sincerity possible, “Mr. Hanso. I believed that this woman is leading us to a very dangerous direction in this island. The truce will be broken and we will be eliminated by the hostiles once we start the constructions...”

“Not if we eliminate them first.” the merciless Amy interrupted his words, “Don’t forget the Tempest Station...”

Dr. Chang ignored her remarks, and continued his plead, “Mr. Hanso, for the sake of our long-time friendship, I personally asked you to reconsider the whole project. It was extremely risky. It will put everyone’s life in danger. I cannot support this project with my clear conscience.”

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It was a long long pause in the meeting room. Everyone was quiet. The sound of the air blowing out of the air conditioner became very loud.

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Finally, Alvar Hanso on the computer screen said, “I am sorry, Dr. Chang. Her plan is so perfect that I cannot refuse.”

What?! Dr. Chang’s heart suddenly sunk to the bottom of the ocean. He felt the unbearable pain of the ultimate betrayal. “I thought you were my friend, an honorable man,” he muttered, “Now I know you are nothing but a scum!”

Alvar obviously didn’t hear that. He paid his full attention to Amy, “Dr. Maxwell. We will transfer the fund you need in one week. The number is big, but we will do everything we can to secure it.”

“Thank you, Mr. Hanso.” It appeared that Amy had won the battle. She looked at Dr. Chang victoriously with crocodile’s tear, “Are you OK? Dr. Chang.”

For a long while, he didn’t speak, and just stared back at her with an intense despire.

Amy sneered, *now you are the loser, what more can you say?* She let the pride of victory sink in, then she asked, “Dr. Chang, will you consider resigning from the position now? I understand this is very hard for you. I will approve your resignation right away. There is no need for you to suffer more from me.”

Dr. Chang’s staring at her like an injured bull looking at his predator. Slowly, he replied with a determination. “Thank you for your concern, Dr. Maxwell. But I am NOT retiring.”

“Oh, that is a surprise!” Amy smile viciously, “What happened to your clear conscience?”

“Fuuck that!” It might be the only time in his life he had ever used the F word, “You play dirty. I will play dirty too. The rule says you cannot fire me, so I will stay. One day when the shit hits the fan, I will be there. I will see you doom, and I will save everyone from being killed by you.”

Amy had to applause, “Bravo, bravo! Dr. Chang! This is the first time I see you as a man!” She turned to the computer screen, “Can I fire Dr. Chang? Mr. Hanso.”

Alver Hanso shook his head, “He represents Paik Enterprise. Even I cannot fire him without their consent. Personally I think Mr. Paik doesn’t trust anyone but him. So...”

“Then I will activate the number, and the whole project will be over.” Amy threatened him again.

“Ha ha, do it then.” Dr. Chang didn’t back down, “Last time, you have nothing to lose, but this time the war between you and the island had become your whole life. You have a big plan to carry out. Can you really cancel everything just like that? I DARE you to broadcast the numbers!”

The victor Amy now felt a little loss, “Well, congrats, then. Doctor, you score a little win this time.” She walked out of the room, “But there is still a war ahead, don’t you forget that. Bye.”

Dr. Chang looked at her back and muttered her famous nick name:

“Nazi Amy!”

Chapter 18: She's Not Crazy, but Mad

1974. Days after Paul's death.

Before the tragedy, Amy Maxwell was happy. Paul gave her everything she needed: Love. She liked the flowers he brought back for her everyday; she enjoyed the little chit-chats through walkie-talkie with him. He would say "I love you" at least 3 times a day. Every evening she would prepare some new dishes from recipes she just learned. Sometimes they were delicious; sometimes they were hard to eat. Paul always ate them all.

Amy always talked about Paul in the Flame station, where she monitored the Electric-Magnetic energy and radiation, but her mind usually was on what she should cook that night. She kept her progress of research, but she was not the previous workaholic anymore.

Their house was the cleanest and neatest one in the DI. Amy spent a lot of time with Paul to clean the house and mow the lawn every weekend. To them, those chores were actually pleasures.

They went to the bamboos after the house chores were done. There they could see Amy's parents from time to time. If they met, they would sit down and talk for a long time. The topics were usually about Amy: how she built her automatic house, how she got 5 invitations for the high school prom, how she studied like crazy in college ... Paul would listen with his full attention, even though he had heard them a hundred times. He would also talk about his life as an orphan, how he joined the army, and later how he tried to survive in the street. Some stories make them laugh, some make them sad. Through the talking they knew each other more. Amy's parents said they like Paul, and they were glad Amy married him.

Amy was really happy. That's why Paul's death hit her extremely hard.

After that day, for a long time she couldn't think things straight. She wept all day long. Every night she dreamt of her deceased husband. She could see him kissed her for the first time back in the Hydra 42 station. She could see him followed her all around the world as her bodyguard. She remembered how fierce he looked when he fought off 3 mean guys in Tunisia. She remembered how he took a bullet for her just before she was about to give a speech about the island in the Hanso Adward. Every little detail came back in her dreams, just like they were actually happening in the real life. She tried to hug him in the dreams but he always disappeared into the thin air. The moment she woke up, all the memories, the sadness and the emptiness mounted on her like Everest. There was nothing left to do but crying. When the tears were all out, she could only stare blankly at the walls. Paul's death took away all her joy in a swift moment and turned her into a zombie.

Just when she was mourning deeply, along came "Paul".

Still wearing the "Head of security" jumpsuit, he had the same caring and affecting smile, just like the way he looked that morning.

"Hi, sweetie, don't be such a sleeping head." He said it in a very gentle way, "You need to wake up. Now."

"Paul?!" Amy couldn't believe her eyes.

“Yes, honey, please don’t be surprised.” Paul got close and touched her cheeks, “I am always here for you. I will take care of you, just like before.”

“Paul.....” Amy reached out to him, trying to hug him, but he stepped back and avoided it.

“Now, honey, I know you are very upset, and I am sorry for that.” Paul said in a firm way, “But they need you. The whole DI is counting on you. Dr. Chang can’t do this job alone. You know how unorganized he is, right?”

“Paul...” Amy was begging, “I need you. Come back here.”

“No, my dear Amy.” Paul stepped back more, “You and I will meet again in the afterlife. We will have all the time we need, but now the most important thing is getting up and doing your job.”

“I will.” Amy’s tears came out again, “But I miss you, I miss you so much.”

“I miss you too.” Paul said sincerely, “I will come back from time to time, just to make sure you are okay.” Then he disappeared.

The house was empty again. For a long while Amy couldn’t tell she was hallucinating or really seeing a ghost. Only one thing was sure, that she was not dreaming. She did see him.

Paul, I will wait for you right here. I won’t go anywhere. Come back, I am right here.

She waited and waited. Paul would come back from time to time. He talked to her about all the happy moments they both shared. He would talk about how nerdy she looked back in the Hydra station, and she would tell him how tense he was when he was her bodyguard. They both laughed and laughed in tears. Amy felt much better when he was around, and felt ultimately lost after he left. Her emotion went up and down in those three months.

One night she grew really tired of talking, she missed the feeling of huddling in Paul’s big arms. So she took off all her clothes and jumped on Paul from behind. The moment her naked skin touched against Paul’s body, she was so excited to actually be able to hug him tight, feeling his strong muscle in the back, and listening to his breathing, like she did many times before.

Except, there was no breathing at all, nor did she hear any heart-beats.

It only lasted a short moment, the fake Paul got out of the surprise of being ambushed from his back, struggled out of her arms and gave her a slap in the face, then he disappeared.

It was exactly that slap which finally shook her out of her daydreaming: It was not Paul, but a ghost. No matter how similar that ghost resembled him, it was not him. The cold fact that Paul was really dead, and there was no way she could bring him back suddenly sunk into Amy’s mind. It made her body shivering uncontrollably, but at the same time her brain suddenly was clear and worked like an engine being jump started. It was fueled by pure anger.

How dare you use my husband like this? He's already dead and you still used his image to seduce me and try to achieve your agenda? I don't care what the hell you are or what the hell you want from me, I will make you pay for toying with my deepest feelings!

It was about time to wake up and do the math. After all, she had been in a cloud of misery and confusion for 3 months already.

First was to list all the facts that she had learned so far.

Fact #1: There was an intelligent being on the island. It oversaw everything and constantly trying to get rid of 'bad' people by creating various accidents. For 'good' people like her, it would give them a chance to see their love ones. Judging by the energy pockets which scattering around, this being was very likely to be the island itself.

Fact #2: The island could collect souls, and somehow manipulated them back into human life forms. It made them looked, act and talked exactly the same way as if they were alive. She believed Jacob had this ability as well. With her own experience, the island must have brought a lot of souls with him all the time, thus she would always hear strange whispers first, then see her husband or her parents later.

Fact #3: There was also that smoky monster. He seemed to be able to do the same trick, because sometimes right after the smoke monster disappeared, a manipulated soul would appear. It should not be a coincidence. In addition, because the smoke monster sometimes killed hostiles, he was not a friend of Jacob.

Fact #4: The hostiles couldn't be killed in the normal way. They were all protected somehow by their god Jacob. There were only 2 ways to kill them. One, by the smoky monster, or two, by some special guys like James and Juliet who showed up from nowhere. Jacob himself cannot be killed, but a guy from the future showed her a way. It was a knife that somehow could do the trick.

Fact #5: The island was extremely sensitive to a certain series of numbers. Broadcasting the numbers was the way she blackmailed Jacob into allowing them to come here. There must be special meaning of the numbers.

Based on the facts, she started to draw some conclusions:

Conclusion #1: Based on Fact #1, Paul was killed by the island. There was no accident in this island, so Paul's death was an act of 'eliminating the bad guys' process by the island. Dr. Chang warned her before about Paul's background. It seemed that he was right all along. Paul's death was just a matter of time.

(It was very ironic that, because the island had been using 'accidents' to kill people too many times, now even if he had nothing to do with Paul's death, and it was a 'real accident', Amy would not believe it.)

Conclusion #2: Based on Fact #2 and #3, the island, Jacob and the smoke monster all had similar powers. There must be connections among them. They might know each other, and they must be long time enemies.

Conclusion #3: To revenge Paul, I need to kill the island. To kill the island, first I have to kill all the hostiles. To kill all the hostiles, I need to do the following things.

1. Take over the Dharma Initiative and conduct a complete research on the island and the hostiles. Find out the relationship between the island and Egypt.
2. Establish a station to monitor the hostiles' activities, a station filled with toxic gas to kill all the hostiles, a station to do test broadcasting the numbers, and a surveillance station to find out what will happen in the testing station.
3. Find out who James and Juliet really are. Find the reason why they can kill the hostiles. Perhaps I can use them to activate the toxic gas station.
4. Find a way to contact the smoke monster and find out if he is a friend or a foe of the island. Make a portable sonic gun to protect myself before meeting him. A sonic gun will also be useful to disable the hostiles because it is not lethal.
5. Research on the unique properties of the energy pockets, find out a way to build a shield against the "accidents" as soon as possible. Without such a shield I will be utterly defenseless when meeting the island or Jacob.

After her own research paper was done, she got a big plan in her mind already, a plan so vicious that it would have made all the others on the island feel the winter chill again.

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The constructions of six new Dharma stations began. The plan was so bold that no one except Amy considered them possible. So far they only built two stations and already lost more than a hundred men. How many more would die in that kind of aggressive plan? Most of them didn't even dare to think about it.

However, to all DI staff's surprise, things turned out to be completely the opposite. The constructions of other stations were surprisingly smooth. The Arrow Station was built without any hostiles notice. The Tempest Station was up and running in a short time. Amy and Pierre held the opening ceremonies of two stations. Both were embarrassing events. They seized every opportunity to denounce each other. The celebrations became debating competitions from then on. Neither one of the ceremonies had a pleasant ending.

At the same time, Lara Chang discovered a vaccine that could help human bodies resist the electromagnetic radiations which existed throughout the island, while it only had a minimum side effect on the brain: it would cause minor nose breeding. After the Staff Station finished, she started to manufacture the vaccine in it. Soon, it became a mandatory periodical injection for every member of DI. Sometimes the Air Cargo from Paik Enterprise would add more of the same vaccine to the cabinet, so before long they had more than they needed.

The plunged casualty rate puzzled everyone in the DI except Amy. Since the new constructions began, the monster's activities were at a minimum. They could still hear him roaming around in the jungle, but he never came out. At the same time, the bad lucks were reduced almost to none. The change didn't

happen overnight, but everyone had a feeling that “the island of death” suddenly turned into a “paradise of Hawaii” in a very short time.

With the monster and bad lucks gone (at least temporarily), DI guys became active explorers. They cut down trees, paved roads, built golf courses, football fields and an airport strip out in the open. They drove the little blue van everywhere except the dark jungle and the hostile territories. They don't need to be scared just passing a pool, or checked a hammer twice before using it. For the first time in the island, they truly felt safe.

All DI guys loved the freedom. Because it happened during the Amy ruling days, they called Amy a new nick name: “the island's bitch”, for a popular rumor saying that she somehow had screwed the island. In a sense, it was quite true.

Dr. Chang still worked as an overseer of all the constructions, while he spent more time in his lab in the Orchid Station. Some DI guys called him “Father of the DI”, but others called him “Bad Luck Chang”. They believed that if he was the director again, the bad lucks would come back and haunt them. Dr. Chang basically didn't really care what they think of him. He tightened up the security, made sure there was some fail-safe mechanism in each of the stations, and always scolded workers loudly about not wearing a helmet. He would lead an evacuation training routine every month, even though no one but him considered it necessary.

James, Juliet, Jin and Miles were doing their jobs well. James was indispensable in every security aspect. He could almost smell a hostile from 5 miles away. He was extremely good at negotiating deals that favored Dharma Initiatives. Richard was often being tricked into agreeing something he shouldn't have. With his help, Horace's workload was reduced to almost zero. Juliet was clumsy in the auto pool at first, but she picked up things really fast. After just a few months of learning, she was able to disassemble a blue van to parts and put them all back in 2 hours. Since then nobody could find car problems faster than her. She became the number 1 in the auto pool department. James and Juliet went together many times. They got closer and closer. One day James openly proposed to Juliet, and everyone in DI gave him some support. Juliet didn't say “yes” but she moved in his house soon after. They were a happy couple that people envied ever since. No one liked Miles for his weird behavior, but he turned out to be helpful in the security department, for he could tell things only a dead man would know. Jin kept his silence all the time, but DI guys knew he was a nice man in heart. He offered unconditional help when people most need it. Children called him “Uncle Jin” for his Samaritan deeds. Horace started to trust them and forgot about their origin.

To Horace, there was only one thing that bothered him deeply: Amy was pregnant.

Though Amy finally moved in his house, Horace never slept with her. Nobody else in the DI dared to touch her after seeing the scary scar of Horace's chest. She was busy all the time, and nobody had seen her stepped outside of DI perimeters. How in the world did she get pregnant? Horace was very upset about it.

Sometimes when he indirectly asked the question, Amy would say, “This is the Paul's baby.”

“But he died 3 years ago.”

“Well, you choose what to believe, Officer Goodspeed.” Her voice turned cold.

“Come on, Amy. You can tell me the truth. I really don’t mind.”

“Horace.” Amy’s voice became soft and almost begging, “You are the only friend that I had left in this island. I really don’t want to lose you. So please don’t ask me again, OK?”

Horace’s heart melted by her pleading, no matter what others had said about her, in his mind she was always the beautiful fragile girl who needed his protection. He didn’t raise the question since then.

It doesn’t matter whose father it belongs. As long as Amy is still with me, I am happy. He decided. I will adopt the baby. If that’s a boy, I will name him Ethan. I will give him the best education, and make him a doctor.

...

In the Orchid station, Dr. Chang made a major progress with the help of his wife, Lara. After extensive experiments with many different kinds of animals, Lara’s gene-modified polar bears successfully jumped to another space and time in one piece. The good news was very encouraging: At least one bear survived the jump unharmed, and he ended up somewhere in Tunisia 3000 years ago. The excavation of an ancient Tunisia archeology spot confirmed their success. The bear’s carcass was still wearing the DI’s metal belt when it was unearthed. The moment they got the message from Tunisia, they hugged each other tight in tears. The days of human race entering space-time-traveling era were near, and they both would be the most famous scientists of the brand new age. They would be labeled as the founding father and mother of the space-jumping. It was only a matter of time that they could figure out how to space-jump the polar bears to the present time in order to show it to the world. All the scientists around the world would be all gasping in awe when they saw a polar bear beamed to the other side of the Earth in a blink of eyes.

For a short period, it seemed that everyone was happy, until the day of the incident.

.....

April 1st, 1977. Three months before the incident.

Amy’s baby was delivered by Juliet. It was a happy day for Juliet because she finally successfully delivered a baby on the island safely, but obviously Amy didn’t share the joy.

She held the baby close, looked at his cute little hands and toes, but she didn’t smile at all. Something was in her mind bothering her since the baby was born. She was very nervous at night, even when she was sleeping, a little bit of noise would have waked her up.

DI guys came in and congratulated her with gifts for the baby. She always seemed distracted and ignored them. It made Horace and the visitors quite embarrassing. Finally Juliet told everyone that Amy

might get something called PPD, "Postpartum Depression". She should get a lot of rest, and nobody should bother her for at least several days, so that she and her baby would get some peace.

3 days later, Amy showed up in Sayid's trail with her baby. Her impassioned speech about not being able to sleep while Sayid was around made everyone realize how angry she actually was. For the time being, they wouldn't pay a visit to bother her any more.

7 days passed, it was mid-night. Amy still wasn't asleep. She held her baby tight and looked around with an intensive caution.

Jacob suddenly appeared in front of her bed, "It's time. Amy."

Amy's tears dropped down uncontrollably, "Can I hold him for one more minute?"

"A deal is a deal." Jacob said, "Now it has been 7 days already. Don't make it harder than the way it already is."

"My baby!" Amy said, "His name is Ethan. Horace gave him the name, and he wants him to be a doctor."

Jacob nodded, "We will see what we can do. Now hand me the baby."

Amy put her face against the baby's tiny face and said, "Baby, I am so sorry that mommy is leaving you. You'll be strong, OK?"

Jacob shook his head impatiently.

"I want you to know. No matter what happens, mommy always loves you. No matter what..."

"Have you quite finished?"

"It's done." Amy was back to her icy personality, "Take him."

Jacob disappeared with the baby.

Feeling weak and fragile, Amy slowly stood up and made sure Horace in the next room was sleeping soundly. She opened her closet, pushed open a secret door, and a hidden stone gateway with mysterious Egyptian hieroglyphs appeared.

She walked down the granite stairs and reached to the end, where she turned a stone, and the water flushed down.

"It's time for me too." She said it in a plain voice. Her face was as grave as a priest in a funeral.

...

Outside Dharma Initiative territories, inside the dark jungle, Amy trekked slowly through the woods. She fell a few times, bruises showed up in her arms, but she just kept walking like she felt no pain.

A noisy tumbling sound spread around. Amy stopped and took out her sonic gun.

A column of black smoke appeared. It circled around Amy, taking some flashes, then it concentrated into a man.

The man said, "Hello, Amy."

Amy replied, "Hello, Samuel."

...

Horace woke up by a nightmare. The first thing he checked was Amy's bedroom. Somehow he knew bad things were happening. It was too quiet.

Not surprisingly, Amy was gone, so was the baby.

He found a note on the night table and read it.

"Dear Horace. I can't thank you enough for taking care of me when I needed it the most. You're the kindest man I had ever known. But I have a secret I never told you, that my baby's father is a hostile. Now I am going to their side, and I will never come back. Goodbye, dear friend. Thank you sincerely!"

The note dropped down to the ground. Horace stood still and couldn't move. He was frozen there for a very long time.

...

Amy asked, "How's the new cabin? Do you find it comfortable?"

Samuel replied, "Yes, it is very nice. Thank you! Horace did a great job. Now I bring it everywhere I go."

"If he knew he was building a cabin for you, he wouldn't have started it at all." Amy said with a tired smile, "But he never asked me any questions. He is such a sweet man!"

"I have to agree. You don't really deserve him." Samuel said a little taunt, "Well, now let me ask you, did you give them the baby?"

Amy replied, "Yes, I did." Her face was pale as paper.

"Sometimes I am really amazed by the will power of human beings like you." Samuel said, "I cannot imagine how you felt when it happened. You must have gone through hell!"

"Thanks. It was all planned, so it was not that bad." Amy said, "Now I felt better."

"That's comforting." Samuel said, "If you don't mind, I am just curious who the father is."

"No one."

"??"

“Richard gave me some yellow water, I drank it, and I got pregnant.”

“Oh, I see.” Samuel nodded, “I wonder why they don’t drink it themselves.”

“They are slaves. Slaves’ children are still slaves.” Amy said, “Isn’t that the first rule of the slavery?”

“I don’t think this is the case. Anyway, now they took your baby, what are you getting in return?”

“Nothing.”

“Nothing?” Samuel was surprised, “You gave out your baby for nothing?”

“No. Jacob already did something for me.” Amy said, “He made the island fall asleep.”

Samuel understood, “Oh, that’s the price for the baby! It seems he wants a replacement so bad, that he will do anything just to achieve the goal.”

“That’s how we built the stations without the island’s interference, and the hostiles’ detection.” She said, “I paid a high price for that.”

“It’s hell of a price, Amy.” Samuel had to applause, “I couldn’t imagine anyone could think of such a plan like that. You are too smart for a scientist.”

“Thanks! You brother said that too.” Amy bitterly smiled, “More than once.”

“He’s not my brother!”

“Relax, big guy.” Amy said, “You will kill him one day, and kill the island too. I will help you.”

“That’s right! I almost forgot to ask that. Did you find a way to kill Jacob?”

“Yes, I did.” Amy said like a revenging angel, “You know. I have been researching Egyptian history in the last two years. The answer did not come easily.”

“I know, and I have kept my promise not to kill your men. Now it’s your turn to give me the answer.”

“OK, here it is. Ancient Egyptian believed that pharaohs were immortal. Nobody could kill a pharaoh. This island has a lot of connection with Egypt. According to the hieroglyph we found here, the island was enslaved by the pharaohs for a long time, so it must be the island who was protecting the pharaohs.”

“Yes, and your point is...”

“Do you know about King Tut?”

“King who?”

“Never mind. There is new evidence which shows that he was killed by his general Tutankhamun, which should have been impossible. How could the general killed the famous pharaoh under the island’s watch?”

“Maybe the island fell asleep, like now?”

“He was not. The Egyptians were building pyramids. It was impossible to build it without the island’s help. So he must be wild awake. Normally nobody could even get close to the king, let alone killing him.”

“OK, I am all ears.”

“I did a thorough research of the general, and found out that at some point of the time he was blessed by the island as well. He said in his dreams he would see things which told him what to do next. Does it sound like the typical island magic to you?”

“That’s right.” Samuel remembered it well, “I used to have dreams too.”

“My guess is correct after all.” Amy said, “He was an undercover assassin sent by the island. So the island gave him special blessing and a special knife.”

“OK, I see...” Samuel started to understand her point, “What kind of knife is that?”

“According to the Egyptian archives, this knife was supposedly belonged to ‘the protector of the island’.” Amy said slowly, “It is a knife that can kill immortals.” She took out a picture and handed it to him, “This picture was taken inside of the King Tut’s tomb. Do you see that a general was holding a knife?”

Samuel’s iris enlarged, “That knife! I saw it before! I think it used to belong to my fake mother. Probably it is still near her dead body. You mean I just need to get this knife and give it to someone, then whoever owns the knife can kill Jacob?”

“Not exactly. The pharaoh was killed by his general. So it must be someone similar to this status, or maybe someone who was blessed by the island before, so he could wield the true power of the knife.”

“You mean Richard, his second in command?”

“That’s right.”

“That little dog is too loyal to betray him, left alone killing him. I offered him a deal to see his wife but he never accepted it.”

“Then you should find someone else who will, maybe a future leader of them. When the time is right, you give him the knife and persuade him to kill Jacob.”

“That’s impossible. If the leader is on his side, why will he kill him at all?”

“Well, from I know about men, if you give him enough motivation, he will do anything for you. It depends only on how well you can manipulate him.”

“Hm... you really got a point. This must be the loophole I have been looking for.” Samuel understood completely, “Great job, Amy!”

“Thank you. It’s quite a compliment coming from you.” Amy smile weakly, “One more thing, though. If you managed to kill Jacob, tell me about it. I will use my code to turn on the toxic gas tanks in the Tempest Station. This way it will eliminate everyone in the village.”

“And why you want to do such a horrible thing?”

“Because Jacob is also planning to kill you. If I do that, his plan will fail and you will win.”

“But that will kill your baby too, right?”

Amy bit her low lip. Her eyes were red, “In the beginning, he was already a sacrifice to me.”

Samuel looked at her eyes deeply, “You know. Sometimes it’s not necessary to go that far.”

“But it will guarantee your victory.” Amy said, “Don’t you worry about your brother already found a way to kill you? If every hostile died in this island, there is no way that he can strike back.”

“I appreciate your concern, and all your effort to build the stations, but I have to pass. Now please tell me how to kill the island.”

“Well. This is the part that I am still trying to figure out.” Amy said, “In order to do that, I need to know your story, how you became a smokey like this. With your story, maybe I can find the way.”

“It’s a long story.”

“I got all the time of the world.” Amy said, “I am not going anywhere. Now I am your slave.”

“What? Since when?” Samuel was surprised.

“Since tonight. I burnt all the bridges. Now I will only help you to achieve your goals. They are the same goals of mine, anyway.”

“Woman, I think you are making a big mistake. I don’t need slaves. In fact, I hate enslaving people.”

“Really? How about an assistant? Does it sound better?”

“No, you have no value to me here.”

“Do you know that I still have all the access passwords for the Dharma Initiatives? I can turn off the sonic fence for you.”

“That’s called cheating and I don’t want it. You need to go back no matter what.”

Amy looked at him for a long time. Since she met the smokey monster, he turned out to be a different person than she expected. Sometimes she was not sure whether she should kill him to avenge Karen and Gerald or not.

Eventually she sighed and said, "OK, then. Now, at least for the better service of you, I need to know your story, boss."

"Again, don't call me boss. I hate the name."

"Sorry. Uh...Samuel."

"Alright, my story began a long long time ago, when my mother was pregnant and she was on a ship to the America ..."

The story continued.

...

The morning came.

Under the dim sunlight, Horace felt so relieved to see Amy outside the sonic fence. He turned off the fence, ran to her, held her shoulder and asked, "What happened?"

Amy cried and hugged him, "They took the baby. They want only the baby."

Horace was angry but at the same time relaxed, "It's OK, dear. I promised you one day those bastards will pay. But now it's OK. I won't leave you. We will have many babies together..."

Amy cried even harder.

Chapter 19: Tales from Princess Charlotte

"... But, to everyone's amazement, the shoe fitted perfectly.

Suddenly the fairy appeared and waved her magic wand. In a flash, Cinderella appeared in a splendid dress, shining with youth and beauty. Her stepmother and stepsisters gaped at her in amazement, and the ministers said, 'Come with us Cinderella! The Prince is waiting for you.' So Cinderella married the Prince and lived happily ever. As for the cat, he just said 'Miaow!'

The End."

"I like the story, mommy." Charlotte said, "Could you tell me again tomorrow?"

"Of course, sweetie." Jeanette kissed her forehead gently, "Good night."

"Mommy?" Just when she was about to leave, Charlotte had a question in her little bed.

"Yes?"

"Do you think I can marry a prince, like Cinderella?"

"There is no need to. You are already a princess."

"Really?"

"Yes, really." Jeanette said, "Plus, princes are over-rated."

.....

Hi, everyone, my name is Charlotte Lewis. I was born in a magical island.

How do I know? Because you will know once I finish my story, so please sit down and listen.

Me and my mom had a really nice house in that island. It was not big, but we all liked it. My room was very special. It had many beautiful butterflies on the ceiling. No, they are all real. Every single one of them, my mother and I put them there one by one. Every day I would look at the butterflies before I slept. My mother would tell me fairytale stories. The favorite one was the story of Cinderella. I had heard it a thousand times.

Every weekend me and my mom would go for a picnic. We always ended up in front of a pirate ship. It was called "Black Rock". It had cannons, dynamites and dead bodies inside. It was a real pirate ship in the middle of the magical island. There my mother would get a butterfly from outside of the ship. I am telling you the truth. There was always a butterfly pinned on the ship, different color every time. My mother would take it down and put it into a box, then she would pin a picture of me and her. The next time we were there, the picture was gone and we would see a new butterfly. It was always like that.

Yeah, I knew someone was doing that, but I never saw him at the pirate ship. My mother said it was my father, and she said that he used to see us every week, but there were new rules from the others, and

he couldn't come out that far. So my father could only secretly go to the ship at midnight and put the butterflies there.

I don't know why someone would set rules like that. It was really not right because I couldn't see my father. My mother gave me a magazine and showed me a big muscle guy, Arnold something. She said he looked like him, but I didn't like it.

So sometimes when my mother was busy in the lab, I would sneak out of the base. Someone had put some kind of magical poles around my town. My mother said they were protecting us, but with those I couldn't get out to find my father, until one day I secretly stole my mother's password. Yeah, I am sorry that I was really a naughty girl at that time.

Once I was outside, I was free. I could climb up to the trees to pick apples. I could find some hogs to chase. And I could pick all kind of flowers. It was even better after I met Ilana.

Ilana was a girl from the other village. She said the village was very far north. I wondered why she came so far south. She said that she was looking for her father too. The people from the village said her mother was in a coma when she was born. They even had a drawing for her, but she never learned anything about her father. So she thought that her father might be someone in my town.

I told her that I would help her find her father. She was very happy. I let her sneak in the base and she looked at all the men one by one. In the end, we couldn't tell which one was her father. She said she was still happy because she knew me. We were best friends since then.

There was once that I brought her to our secret Hydra station. Hmm... It was a big tank under the water. Sorry, I don't know how they built it. Inside there were some nice ladies who gave us a tour. They said that 'it was designed to redirect energies from the time-space shield to the base. So an evil guy called "Jacob" couldn't not get near us, because he would lose the ability to predict the future.' All I am saying was true, I had memorized everything that lady said. I am not making them up.

After that tour I tried to bring Ilana to the Orchid station, but we were caught by Mrs. Maxwell. Mr. Maxwell was a really mean lady. People said she became a witch after her husband, Paul, died. I kind of believed that. She put Ilana inside a cell and asked her all kind of questions. I could hear Ilana cried inside it. I cried really hard outside. People couldn't stand it, and they finally took me away.

One month later I saw Ilana again outside of the base, she said she would never go back to the base. So we just wandered around in the jungle. She taught me how to climb a tree. It was so easy that I learned it really quickly. Ilana said I was a nature tree-hugger.

The funnies game in the jungle was playing hide-and-seek with the monster. Uh... the monster is a column of black smoke which flying around and making all kind of noise. Somehow he sounded like a taxi printer, believe it or not. He flew really fast. We were jumping from tree to tree to run away from him, but the next moment he was there, circling us and took some pictures of us. Every time we would say "no flash this time", but he didn't care. Sometimes I would see him playing hide-and-seek with the grownups too. Oh, I am telling you, those grownups could run really fast, but they didn't know how to

use trees. We would yelled at them from above and said things like, "Climb a tree, you idiot!" But they never listened. So most of the time I saw the monster caught up with the adult, he would scream really loud. We all laughed at that. Then the monster would pick them up like toys, and brought them somewhere else. I guessed they would start a new game in the next jungle.

At night the jungle started talking. We could just sit there for hours listening to what they were saying. We learned some good sentences from there, like "it will come around at you." I still remembered that.

The real danger was the bears. They were not black ones or grizzly ones. They were 100% white polar bears and very smart. Sometimes they could stay under the trees for hours, just to get you. I had a good friend who was lost to the bears. Her name was Annie. Her parents cried a long time. Her good friend, Ben, became very silent after that. I guessed he missed her very much. I was grounded for a whole year.

After that me and Ilana always checked twice before we climbed down a tree. It was easy to tell if a bear was hiding below. They really stunk. If the smell was not right we wouldn't go down. It saved us many times. Those bears could cover themselves with leaves; you wouldn't see anything from above.

After 3 years, Ilana finally brought me to her village, and I finally met my father. He was a really big man, looked more like a bear. We talked a lot every time we met. Ilana envied me because she never had a chance to talk to her parents. There only "Jacob" was the closest thing like a father.

About "Jacob", that was the only thing I never figured out. In my town people called him "the most evil man on earth", but in that village everyone said he was the God; he was the protector of the magical island. I didn't know which version was true. When I asked my father, he said I was too young to know.

I had personally met Jacob many times, all because of Ilana. He would tell Ilana to do some quests, like going to a cave or climbing down a hole. Of course I would always follow her, and he didn't say anything against it. In my own opinion he was just a really nice man.

The quests from Jacob were actually quite fun. I ran into their sacred tombs or magical pools. There Ilana would teach me Latin and Korean. At the same time I would tell her stories from my mom. We learned a lot from each other.

There was once that Jacob wanted Ilana to pledge her life to the island. He said it was done to better protect the island, and he would give Ilana a wish. Ilana made the oath and asked Jacob that she wanted to go outside and meet her true love. Jacob said her wish was granted. Her true love's name was Bram.

I was so jealous of Ilana that I wanted to do the same. Jacob said he couldn't because I was not belonged to one of them. I said I liked to make the pledge anyway. He agreed on only if that was what I really wanted. I said yes, and he said once I made the oath there was no turning back. I said I knew that already. So he finally let me made the pledge to give my life to the island. In the end he asked me what I wanted. I said I wanted to become a princess. He laughed and patted on my shoulder and said my wish was already granted.

See, this guy really had some magical power. Today back in my castle everybody called me “Princess Charlotte”. My wish was fulfilled, but I didn’t know how to realize my pledge. You see, since we left that island, my mother doesn’t want me to go back. Nobody here knows about that place. So the chance of finding that magical island is really small. Maybe I can never go back there.

Oh, let me continue my story. There is a lot more.

Every time I went to Ilana’s village, I would be grounded for a month, but I thought it was totally worth it. My mom would ask me a lot of questions about my father. And my father would send messages to mom through me. I could see that they really like it. So I sneaked out in a regular basis.

Now when I think of it, I don’t really understand why my mother cannot go to the village to see my father herself, or vice versa. They didn’t look like divorce to me, because they still cared about each other so much. They never talked about what actually happened so I am really clueless.

Oh, right! There was one. I almost forgot. The village had two leaders. Their little son, Daniel, one day said he liked me and asked me to be his girlfriend. I didn’t say anything, but my father was suddenly very angry. I never saw him mad like that. He said a lot of bad words, and kicked him out. I heard the little Daniel cried outside of our tent. It was not a good experience, but I remembered my father said “I don’t want you to end up just like us” that day. I think that’s a big clue.

Do you know what is more strange? One week later, I saw a grownup version of Daniel. He had a beard and he warned me that I should leave the island and never go back. And if I go back I will die there. I was so scared that I ran for my mom.

That day the alarm sounded very loud. Dr. Chang ordered us to do something called “evacuation”. He had us done that many times, but that day it was real. We all went to a submarine. My mother was with me all the time, until someone said my father was outside. My mother left me there and climbed up the steel ladder. After 5 minutes she came back and took me up to the deck. Up there she told me to wave at my father on the dock, and she said it will be the last time I saw him.

So I went up and I saw my father. He was wearing a black suit that day. He waved his hands at me, so I waved back at him.

I asked my mother, “Why daddy didn’t come with us?”

She said, “He needs to protect his brothers and sisters, so he is not coming.”

So I asked, “Why? Is there a monster?”

She said, “Yes. There are two. One is a black smoke, and the other one is called Jacob.”

I didn’t understand, so I said, “No. Jacob is not a monster. He is my friend.”

Mommy said, “That’s why he is more evil.”

I didn’t know why mommy said that.

Anyway, we stood on the submarine watching my father on the dock. The submarine started moving, so he was further and further away, until it was too far to see.

At that time, I saw some flashes and heard some gun shots from the island. I asked mother if my dad will be ok. She looked so worried that she couldn't say anything. Then a very strong flash lighted up. The sky was purple, and we were all blinded by it. The next thing I know, the island disappeared.

Yeah. The whole island disappeared like a magician said, "ABRACADABRA!", and PUFF! It's gone. Our submarine was drawn to the big water hole that the island created. Me and my mom both fell into the ocean. Luckily we were saved by our guys.

Since then we came back to England and lived in a castle. We had a really good time from then on. My mother became an activist who always protested against prejudice and slavery. I became a princess, just the way I always wanted. And we all live happy-ever-after.

The End.

"Charlotte today gave us a really interesting story." The teacher said. "I never expect anyone can write such a long story in such a good detail. Let's give her a round of applause."

Little boys and girls gave out their best cheer. Charlotte bowed to them in a princess's pose.

"You did a great job, Charlotte." The teacher said, "But our topic is 'stories of our parents', not a fairytale. So please next time write something that really happened."

"They did happen!" Charlotte protested, "Every single word of it is true." She almost cried.

"Well, then I will give you mother a call. I have to tell her that she has a daughter that was way too imaginative."

"Please call her." Charlotte still insisted, "She will confirm everything."

.....

"I am really sorry for that." Jeanette apologized over the phone, "She is really into those fairytales."

"That's ok. Tell you the truth, your daughter has an amazing talent of telling a fancy story. The way she said it was so good that for a moment we were all thinking it actually happened."

"Haha..." Jeanette laughed drily, "Yeah, she was always like that."

"Ok, next time tell her to write something real, and something much shorter."

"I will. Thank you for taking the trouble of calling me." Jeanette said.

After hanging up the phone, Jeanette made another phone call.

"Dr. Wang? My name is Jeanette Lewis and I was a coworker of Dr. Chang."

“Oh, Mrs. Lewis, what can I do for you?”

“I know that Dr. Chang had a way of brainwashing, right?”

“How do you know? Oh, of course, you guys were coworkers. He would never tell any outsiders about this.”

“While I worked with him, my daughter was accidentally brainwashed by him with all kinds of crazy ideas. Dr. Chang said I could use your equipment to erase everything that was imprinted. Is that true?”

“How could it possible that she was ‘accidentally’ brainwashed?”

“Tell you the truth, he needed a child for his experiment at that time, and I voluntarily nominated my daughter. It was a stupid decision. Now my daughter was infested by a lot of fantasy fables, and she is telling everyone those things. She can’t tell the difference between reality and fantasy anymore. It is really not good for her.”

“I am sorry to hear that. Dr. Chang was not here for a long time, but I will do my best to help her, but are you really sure you want to do that? Once she was brainwashed. She will lose all the memories, including the real ones. Her childhood memories will be all gone.”

“I knew the consequences and I had been considering it for a long time. It was not an easy decision for me. Now she is getting worse and saying her life belongs to a magical island, and she needs to go back there. It makes me really really worry. I am afraid one day she will do stupid things, and it will be too late. I’d rather her forget everything than put herself into serious danger.”

“I agree with you, Ma’am. But I have to warn you, our experiments are still risky. One of our patients is in a mental hospital now.”

“I will take the chances.”

“Alright, bring her here tomorrow and we will start the examination.”

“Thank you so much.” She hung up the phone and wiped a tear from an edge of her eye.

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“As he thus spoke, the good dwarves felt pity for the prince and gave him the coffin. The prince had his servants carry it away on their shoulders. But when they stumbled on some brush, and this dislodged from Snow White's throat the piece of poisoned apple. Not long afterward she opened her eyes, lifted the lid from her coffin, sat up, and was alive again.

‘Good heavens, where am I?’ she cried out.

The prince said joyfully, ‘You are with me.’ He told her what had happened, and then said, ‘I love you more than anything else in the world. Come with me to my father's castle. You shall become my wife.’

Snow White loved him, and she went with him. Their wedding was planned with great splendor and majesty. They lived happy-ever-after.

The End.”

“Mommy, I still don’t understand.” Charlotte asked, “Snow White was so nice. Why would anyone want to poison her? She didn’t do anything bad to her step-mother.”

“I know, sweetie.” Jeanette said it sadly, “Sometimes we adults do horrible things. Sometimes we even have to poison our own children.”

“Why?”

“We have no choice.”

“Mommy, you are not going to give me a poison apple, right?” Charlotte was joking. The answer was unexpected.

“Yes, I will.” Jeanette wept silently. “I have to protect you, sweetie.”

“Will I wake up and see a prince?” Still thinking it as a joke, Charlotte looked at her mother with curiosity. Why she was crying?

“I hope in the future you will. Maybe you will remember your dad, and his butterflies.”

“I won’t forget that.” Charlotte pointed to the ceiling, “They are always there.”

Jeanette slowly raised her head, staring at the big blue butterfly in the center, she said, “Yes, they will be always there. I will remember them for you. One day I will tell you the whole story, whether you believe it or not.”

She finally kissed gently in Charlotte’s forehead, “Good night sweetie. Tomorrow we have a lot to go through.”

“Good night, mom. I love you.”

“I love you with all my heart, sweetie!” She slowly closed the door.

The End.

Chapter 20: The Incident

July 4th, 1977. The incident happened.

In most of the ancient civilizations, when people found a place that could perform miracles, the first thing they did was to set it up as a 'Sacred Place', and prohibit anyone from getting too close and doing damages. You can call it 'superstitious', but it worked. The 'Sacred Place' would be preserved for thousands of years.

On the other side, Science is doing the completely opposite. Scientists will explore anywhere that's explorable, open up anything that's openable, invent anything that's inventable. Sometimes they explore the places that they shouldn't, open up the Pandora's box that is full of worms, and invent things that will devastate the world.

It is the same situation in the island. If DI guys knew what they were dealing with, they would never have come to the island, left alone drilling holes on it.

They drilled anyway, and from their scientific perspective, it's the perfect spot.

Deep below them was the communication core of the alien space probe, which was made of a relatively large amount of Tisillium. It was tightly integrated with a large granite rock. The original use of it was to transmit signals back to the alien base, in case of having found a planet with intelligent lives. However, since the island decided not to report back 65 million years ago, it was mostly turned off. The only use of it was to emitting strong electro-magnetic radiations to attract other rocks around it, and formed a big chunk of the island.

That communication core had a lot of energy in reserve because it was never used, and the amount of Tisillium was relatively high. The reason was obvious. Imagine that if you have to transmit a signal to millions of light-years away, you have to make sure the antenna must be big, and the transmitter must be powerful. So did the aliens. It was the biggest core of the island.

Amy, having no idea what was below, wanted her Swan Station to set up right on top of it, because they found out that the energy level was stronger than other 'pockets', and the affected area was larger too. Just like someone had said, things happened in the island for a reason. It was not by chance that the Swan Station was located there, and the "incident" did not happen by random at all.

Having said so much, here I have to explain more before we continue. Please be patient and bear with me.

Tisillium is a strange material. Each of its atoms is a very complicated super-structure designed by the alien. When those atoms connect to each other, they form the strongest material in the universe, but they can also be disconnected, folded up and became the weakest, almost none existing material in the world.

That's how it survives the harsh environments in the universe. As the solid unit, it can pass through the sun without a scratch, as the lighter-than-gas cloud, it can enter the black hole and out. It fears nothing in the universe, except one.

Liquid water.

When the Tisillium is in a gas form, or merging with other material, it will contract its atom structure to a billion fold, so it can slip inside the gaps between other atoms. The contracted form of Tisillium is also a very stable structure. However, it held back a tremendous amount of power. Liquid water was exactly the only fatal material that will short-circuit the mechanism which holds back the power.

Imagine that if you have compressed a super strong spring a billion times, and what will happen if the spring gets sprung?

In the universe liquid water is a very rare thing. Most of the water was either in ice form or in gas form. None of it will do any damage to the Tisillium. If somehow it encountered liquid water in the space, usually it will form as solid cores so nothing will happen to it. If being extremely unfortunate it dipped into water in a gas shape, it will discharge a lot of energy, but it will survive by flying to the next star to recharge. In space, discharging massive amount of energy is not a big deal. The Sun is doing it every second.

The worst thing it can happen is that the core is trapped somewhere, and the water just keeps pouring in. The incredible amount of energy that is released and built up inside the core will trigger a most devastating effect the aliens have ever known.

If you could ask an alien what was the worst that could happen. He would have said that it was Hydro-Tisillium chain-reaction. They even have a special name for it. It is roughly translated as "the void creation".

The vacuum space outside of the atmosphere of the Earth is not a void space. It can hold time and space and pass lights, energy and gravity force. We can call it empty space, but it's not a void space.

Void space is a real nothingness. Light cannot pass, gravity is not there, even space and time are not inside either. In extremely far far away deep spaces, outside of this universe, void space dominates the world, and separates the parallel universes. However, the void space cannot exist inside a universe like the one around us, when it somehow exists, that was an extremely abnormal phenomenon.

Alien knew this and have been using Tisillium as the ultimate weapon for wars, just like we human use nuclear weapons. They were aware that if they used too much of this kind of weapon, the time-space continuum of this universe would be disrupted, and the world might be destroyed in the process, just like we know that if we use too many nuclear weapons, our human race will come to an end.

Well, how could the DI guys know that pouring water inside a rock would cause such an unimaginable devastating effect? Just like how could we have known that drilling in deep sea would cause the worst environmental disaster in the history, or burning fossil oil would cause the global warming?

But how could we not know?

Let's go back to the island, July 4, 1977, the day the incident happened.

When the drill opened the granite and tons of water poured into the core, not surprisingly a strong reaction began. The water short-circuited all the Tisillium that it had touched, and energy was released at an incredibly rate, but at the same time it was tightly contained by the rocks. The temperature and pressure rose so high in a matter of minutes, that the communication core was turned into a bomb that was much much more powerful than mere nuclear weapons.

If Juliet had known that she was hitting a dud, she might have saved some breaths before the end of the world.

The core exploded in a chain-reaction. In less than a split second, the whole island vaporized, all the cores of the island were ignited, and all the atoms of Tisillium were turned into void space at the same time.

It is difficult to even describe how devastating it was. Remember Einstein's formula " $E=MC^2$ "? If the aliens saw it, they would have laughed at that formula and said, "It was not true. With all due respect, you forgot to include space and time." Material is not only made of energy, it also contains space and time. When a material's energy, space and time all disappear, it will create an unthinkable explosion that we human know nothing about.

Instantly the explosions of the island's Tisillium cores had created small voids of space-time in the universe. The voids lasted less than a billionth second, but the entire solar system was sucked into the void spaces and disappeared.

Let me say that in a different way. The void was instantly filled, but the whole solar system was gone. All it had left was a vast space that contained time but no space, energy or material. It must be filled somehow. Therefore, from a parallel universe a different solar system jumped into the space, and filled up the emptiness.

The emptiness that in the parallel universe was filled up by another solar system jumped from the third parallel universe. The emptiness in the third universe was filled by the solar system from the fourth universe. So forth and so on. Countless empty spaces were created and were filled up by a parallel universe next to it until there was no more universe to fill up, so the last parallel universe remained unbalanced, and was devoured by the surrounding void space within a million years, like a bubble busted with a hole inside.

The earth that jumped from the parallel universe had a better version of the incident. The nuclear bomb was not absorbed by the island, so it was actually not a dud. When Juliet hit the bomb, it did explode, killed Juliet but in the process saved the world.

This explosion, which was incredible from a human's eyes, created a highly radioactive empty sphere underground about one mile in diameter. Originally the Tisillium of that core was filled with water and

almost went to the point of another Tisillium chain-reaction explosion, but the nuclear detonation instantly extracted all the water and rocks from the core, and effectively gave the power to the Tisillium to form as solid material again. As the result, a golden thin film of Tisillium covered the wall of the newly created empty sphere. It was exactly this thin layer of Tisillium completely contained and absorbed the power of the hydrogen bomb explosion. Otherwise, that nuclear fusion reaction would have been far more devastating than creating a merely one-mile-wide empty sphere.

It was a complicated action and reaction between extremely dangerous materials, but somehow it was perfectly balanced so both of the material canceled each other out. A huge disaster was diverted.

Is it fate, or just science? Few of us actually know how lucky we were. It is nothing short of a miracle that the Earth can exist inside a universe that is so hostile to us. Comparing to this miracle, avoiding a Tisillium explosion was really no big deal.

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The island was sleeping. His power grew weaker by the years, and he need more and more rest. He dreamt of the good old happy days 65 million years ago when the earth was recently rebuilt. He saw the endless green grass and all the little mice jumping up and down. The sky had some big dinosaurs flying in rows. It was a very lovely scene. He could enjoy it for millions of years. Everything was so simple back in those days. No need to worry about someone is going to kill you, or finding a good protector so you can sleep for a while...

He woke up violently, like Allison always did in the "Medium", and he found out the world had been changed.

He was not in the same universe any more. Something dramatic had happened. What was going on there? He started to investigate.

Jacob offered no help as usual. He was just holding a baby, shrugged and said, "I don't know." The island didn't want to ask where the baby was from. He thought Jacob had finally decrypted the hieroglyphs in the temple, and learned from the words of his precedents that kidnapping a baby was the right way to go. It took him long enough. Let him mind his own baby business.

Then the Dharma Initiative was a shocker. All in a sudden five more stations was up, and there was a big hole where the communication core originally was. Some Tisillium is still there, but they were all formed into a thin film that he couldn't use. He needed a lot of energy to reactive them and transform them to something useful. At that time he started to regret, that he should have absorbed the energy of that nuclear bomb many years ago. Just when he needed the energy the most, the bomb's core was empty. Judging by the high level of radiation inside the empty globe, someone must have taken the nuclear core and exploded it inside the communication core. Why he did such a strange thing? He knew that human liked to play with fire, but that was way too dangerous.

(It seemed that the island had no knowledge about Hydro-Tisillium explosion at all. It made sense. Obviously the aliens didn't want to teach the space probes about how to turn themselves into ultimate weapons.)

Aside from all above, the biggest surprise came with the high concentration of souls.

He found out that the souls' quantity was doubled since the last time he checked.

It was very difficult for him to process all those strange phenomenon. He had only slept for three years. When he woke up, everything was changed. What in the hell?

Finally, he decided to collect all the redundant souls to investigate the truth and sort out the chaos. It was disturbing to see Jack's 30-year-old soul aimlessly wondering around the island, while the real alive-and-kicking 7-year-old Jack was taking a beating while trying to protect his friend back in his school. It seemed that everyone on earth suddenly had a mirrored soul, no matter the person was alive or death.

It was confusing in the beginning, but soon the island could easily tell which soul was the extra. It was always the one badly damaged, or the one lost a lot of memories. They all needed some time to heal. "Something really bad happened to those souls." He thought, but he couldn't figure out why or how.

The island started to separate them and put those extra souls into a space in his heart, which he called "the Purgatory". Due to the limited space, he only collected good souls, or the souls that he knew before. A huge amount of bad souls were disposed. It was like "judgement day" actually happened, and the island was the ultimate god again.

Inside that "Purgatory", he designed a better alternative world, for it was a place to heal the souls. In that virtual reality, lovers would meet each other again, parents would see their children, long lost friends would have unexpected encounters. This way when they were together and interacted with each other, their damaged memories would be repaired and completed. After that he just released the repaired souls back to earth.

Separating and repairing the souls took him two years of time, only to complete 10 percent of them, during this time he cursed everyday for someone who created this mess. The whole job consumed so much of his time and energy that, he couldn't even have spare time to go around and check the island like he always did.

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Two years later.

The island finally had some spare power to reactivate the Tisillium communication core. He went back to the one-mile-wide underground cave.

Well, before we go on, here I need to explain the concept of "reactivating Tisillium Core".

Each of the Tisillium atoms has an extremely complicated mini-micro-sub-nano-structure. Every atom was like a supercomputer of our humans. They can think and act independently. They can order their tiny parts to expand or contract a billion folds, or anything in between, according to the commands. When one billion billion billion of those atoms combine together, they will form a core, which has a set of unified code and rules. So though the core itself is extremely complicated, to make it do something is simple. You just need to have the right activation code and some form of power source. The Tisillium atoms will figure out the rest automatically.

In the case of a communication core of the alien space probe, since it had only one goal: reporting its discoveries to the base, the activation code was locked to prevent it from being used by any other purposes. And once the core received a code, no matter it was in binaries, decimal, Morse Codes, English, Chinese, Greek, Ancient Latin ... etc., as long as the core understands the code and the numbers are correct, it will start to search the space for the closest relay stations in the same galaxy. Once it finds the relay station, it will send its position and current discoveries to it. And within a year, the alien home planet will know the status of the probe.

Obviously the aliens didn't want the space probe to modify or disable the communication core, so they put some protection in it. Only a real alien can transform the core to something else.

That was why the island was so sensitive about the numbers. Because every time the communication core received the radio signals of such a code, it would be activated and automatically search for a relay station. If the core successfully found a relay station, his secret would be exposed, and he would have to face his masters within a year.

However, after the incident, things were different.

Thanks to DI. They had poured the worst enemy of Tisillium, water, inside the core and caused a lot of those atoms malfunctioning. The communication core was severely damaged and the protection mechanism was no longer working. So the island thought that maybe he could use the code to recycle all the Tisillium left and turn them into something else. He figured, even if he lost half of the Tisillium atoms, it should be enough to make a new "Purgatory". His heart was too crowded to hold all the extra souls, and the repairing processes were too slow.

To his surprise, when he reached the location of the empty globe, he saw that there were a lot of equipments, sensors, chambers and tunnels in the sphere. It seemed that in only two years, Dharma Initiative had already built a new station there.

Hadn't they done enough of damage already? The island was angry. In just one minute, all kind of accidents happened. The station was shattered by the explosions all over. In that minute, all the equipment was rendered completely useless.

Everything was destroyed except some loudspeakers on the wall.

For some strange reason, they couldn't be damaged, nor could he trigger any malfunction inside. It seemed like they were protected by some energy shield like the time-space barrier he had put outside of the island.

Just when the island puzzled by that little strange thing, he found out that something was even stranger: He couldn't feel or see anything outside the globe. The energy shield had completely surrounded him.

Suddenly he saw all the Tisillium around him emitting bright yellow lights.

"No..." He was completely caught by the surprise that the Tisillium was already activated without his own command, that he didn't think about escaping at all. A strong EM force followed the light and pushed him into the center of the globe. In one short moment, he was suspended in the mid-air. The island tried to struggle, but he couldn't do anything about it. Megawatts of EM force was pushing him into the center while the activated Tisillium film absorbed any energy he exerted. Since he couldn't make space-jumps without using energy, in less than a second, he was trapped.

The loud speakers started working.

"Finally you bastard jumped in my little mouse trap." A female voice came out from the speaker. "I was worrying you would not be so easily tricked."

"Who the hell are you?"

"My name is Amy Maxwell, director of Dharma Initiative. Judging by the damage that you had caused in such a short time, you are a really powerful monster."

"No, I am not a monster. You are. Do you know you guys have already destroyed the earth?"

"Well, then where are we now? Uh? Are we in hell?"

"I don't know, but we are in a different universe now. You must have done something so terrible that the old one was gone."

"Look at you. I can't believe you still saying this bullshit while being trapped."

"No, look at you. You don't know what you are messing with. I can easily wipe out you and the entire human race. So let me out, before I decide to do that."

"Hahaha..." Amy laughed, "If you can really do that, do you think I can allow you to go?"

From the speakers there was an intensive argument, the island couldn't tell what that was about. After a while he heard a male voice came out.

"Master of the island, I have to apology for trapping you down there. My name is Pierre Chang."

"That is more like it." The island said, "Let me out, if you want me to spare the human race."

“He is bluffing.” Amy’s voice came out from another loudspeaker. “To kill us, he has to get out of there first.”

Pierre said, “Amy, please don’t provoke his anger anymore. Didn’t you hear what he just said?”

“Yes, I heard that.” Amy said through the speaker, “We cannot let him go, exactly because of what he just said. We have no guarantee that once he is out he won’t eliminate us.”

“Amy, he is the last enemy we want. We should just let him go, before things get worse.”

“You are being soft again, Dr. Chang.” Amy disagreed, “He’s the one who cause so many accidents of us. For a monster like that, we should never have any mercy.”

The island said, “Again, I am not a monster. I have been living on Earth for 65 million years, and I never thought of wiping out a species until now. If you continue to do this I will really do it. You’d better consider the consequences.”

The female voice said, “Well, prisoner, you stayed there and be quiet. At the mean time, we will find a way to kill you. If we can trap you down here, it’s just a matter of time to know your weaknesses.”

The island said, “Go ahead, have fun. Even a black hole cannot kill me. On the other hand, you humans are really fragile.”

Pierre said, “Amy, you are making things much worse now. We are supposed to just ask him some questions.”

Amy replied through the speaker, “No, Dr. Chang. You completely misunderstood my intension. Since the beginning, this is a trap designed to hold him and eventually kill him.”

Pierre was very surprised, “So everything you told me about this station is a lie?! How dare you?! You are risking all our people’s life.”

Amy said, “I don’t care. I just want to kill him.”

Pierre said, “Let him out.”

“No way.”

“LET HIM OUT!”

“Or what?”

The island heard a lot of noise came out from the speakers.

After a while, Amy’s voice came out again, obviously she won again, “You are really an idiot! You think your chair can really stop my sonic gun? Lie down there and don’t move.”

The island said, “You should really thank that idiot.”

“Why?”

“Because of him I decided not to kill you all, but just you.” The island said, “His action made me understand that you humans still have some hope.”

“Change your mind so easily?” Amy said with a scorn, “I don’t care because I am going to kill you, one way or the other.”

“This prison won’t hold me long. Your EM field needed a lot of energy to maintain, and the Tisillium need to reactivate from time to time too. Your plan will fail soon.”

“Thanks for your concern. Right now I am recharging the power and reactivate the code every 108 minutes.”

“The code combination will change in the future.” Actually he was lying.

“Really? Haha! You are such a bad liar. Plus, I already prepared for that. We are putting the number in manually, so if the combination changes, we will change it immediately.”

Only then the island realized how determined she really was, “Well, it doesn’t need to come down like this. I can arrange you to see your husband again. He said many times that he missed you.”

“Thanks but no. That’s a puppet of yours, not my real husband. He was dead because of you. Now you will pay for that.”

“I swear I have nothing to do with your husband’s death.”

“First, I don’t believe that. Second, I saw the hostile put a bullet in his chest, and he was your man. So no matter what, it’s your fault.”

The island lost all his patience and became angry, “Woman. In the past, I had created all the lives on Earth. I helped all the creatures to grow and become the way they are now. Since you humans came to the scene, you guys had killed off so many other species, and ruined so much of Earth’s treasures. I never thought of seeking revenge for them. Now you want to kill me because something that I had nothing to do with? What’s the justice in this?”

Amy replied, “To me justice is not important, I just want my revenge.”

“Even it will cost the doom of human race?”

“Yes.” Amy confirmed, “Even so.”

“I have no more to say to you. You’d better make sure this prison is strong enough to hold me forever. Otherwise one slip and I will be out. Then it’s your last day on Earth.”

“It will never happen.” The speaker fell silent.

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It was a chilling day in the light house. The winter of 1980 just arrived.

On the top of the light house, Jacob focused his attention on the mirrors. He watched the 11 year old James Ford writing another hate letter to his enemy, Sawyer. He felt sorry for him. It's another permanently damaged soul. It seemed that every candidate he had picked all had some issues? Jack was under the shadow of his almighty dad; Kate stole things and had problems with her step father; Sun broke a vase but blamed the maid for it; Locke was bullied all the time ... etc (too many to say), and now this. The cute little smart James was gone forever. Now he became a Sawyer. Jacob realized that the candidates he had chosen were all damaged one way or the other.

"Well, it's really good that I don't need the island's approval any more. I will just bring them all here." Jacob looked at the mirrors and smiled. "Actually now my ideal candidates are the ones whose lives suck the most."

Right now Kevin and Stuart from the DI are pushing the buttons. I don't need to get anyone here to replace them for at least ten years.

Jacob was happy. His new plan was forming well. 20 years later he would use his power to summon those new candidates to the island, just to push buttons. The new job had a much lower requirement than being the island's protector. Almost anyone could do it. Even a professional torturer from Iraq would be just fine.

"Morning" A woman was calling him at this very bad time, and she was the last person he wanted to see.

"What the hell are you doing here?" Jacob was not happy to see her.

"I am here to tell you how to kill Samuel." The woman said, "Are you interested to make a deal?"

"Not from you." Jacob said with an obvious contempt, "The last time I made a deal with you. It cost me too much."

"Why?" the woman was surprised, "I gave you my baby. Isn't that good enough?"

"No, Amy, it was not good enough!" Jacob said, "Since you imprisoned the island, I don't need babies any more. The island couldn't bless him either because he was in jail. So one day your son would be killed by a gun, and there is nothing we can do."

"I am very sorry to hear that." Amy said, "So you are saying my baby is not useful to you anymore. Can I have him back?"

"Are you out of your mind?" Jacob said, "He was born by the sacred water. He possesses some unnatural power already. Being blessed or not, he is still one of us. Stop dreaming, woman!"

"Well, if that's the case, I have no more business with you then. Sorry for bothering you." Amy was getting ready to go.

"Stop right there." Jacob ordered, "You still have two things to do with me."

Amy was surprised. She turned around and asked, "What kind of things?"

"First one. Since that day the sky turned purple, all the women in the village keep dying when they are pregnant. Why?"

"We are currently doing research on it too. It must have something to do with the increased radiation from the ground."

"Why there is an increase of radiation?"

"What do you expect?" Amy knew he could read mind, so she just said it out, "Someone detonated the Hydrogen Bomb to stop the so called incident."

Jacob knew she was telling the truth. So he continued, "Second one. You haven't told me how to kill Samuel yet."

"But you said you don't want a deal."

"Yup, I don't want any deals. So just tell me how, as exchange I won't kill you for imprisoning my master."

"But you want him to be trapped." Amy felt that was really unfair.

"Shut up. Tell me or you will die." Since the island was not around anymore, Jacob didn't need to be a good guy and maintain his soul to be "good", so it was easy for him to say or do anything he wanted.

"Ok, ok, now I know I am really dealing with a devil." Seeing Jacob smiled at her like a hyena, Amy sighed and let go of her observation, "Samuel is not solid material. So you cannot kill him with bullets or knives. He is just a form of pure energy. That energy cannot just exist. It must have some kind of power source behind it. So to kill Samuel, you need to find the energy source. Do you know where it is?"

Jacob said, "I know, but I won't tell you."

"That's fine." Amy said, "You just need to turn off that source. I am suspecting that the energy source might be the same source that the island is using. So if Samuel dies, the island will be gone with him too. One stone two birds."

"Hmm..." Jacob nodded, "Now I just need to find a way to let Samuel die and keep the island alive."

"Why?" Amy said, "The island was the one who enslaved you. Don't you want to be free?"

"I am free now. Thanks to you!" Jacob said, "Now I can go anywhere in the world without strings attached. However, my special abilities are provided by the island. If he ceased to exist, I will lose all my powers and die in 100 years. It's not a good idea. Now you just do your best to keep him trapped there, while I send my people to the outside world and build up an empire. With the special abilities we have, we can become super-rich in a short time, and one day I will take over the world."

Amy was disappointed. The little scheme of using Jacob to kill the island didn't work. He would still protect the island. The only reason he didn't kill her was because she did exactly what he wanted. She started to think maybe actually Jacob was using her all along, and he had something to do with his husband's death. Maybe she was a pawn of Jacob from the beginning.

However, it was a far-fetch theory. Amy could not prove it.

Back to the lab, she was pondering the way to kill the island. Looking at the lab results of Tisillium, she realized that the island was telling the true: even a black hole could not damage him.

So the only hope was finding the power source. She should comb every inch of the island until she found it.

In the Swan station, she used a special pen to draw a map on the wall. Under the ultra-violet light she could see a pattern of each energy pockets they had discovered. They already built each pocket a station on top of them. However, the central one was still a mystery. No matter how hard they looked, they never found it. She drew a question mark in the center. *How on Earth can I find this last pocket? I am so close to my goal now.* She kept thinking about this unsolvable puzzle, using every piece of information she had learned so far.

Little that she knew, being as extraordinarily smart scientist as her, she never found the answer.

Chapter 21: The End

It was a dark night. Jacob was weaving under the broken statue. The sound of the loom always reminded him of his mother, who would always sing while weaving. As wind blew in from the open ceiling and made a humming, it mixed with the sound of ocean waves like a song. He could almost feel her presence again.

“Evening.” Samuel suddenly showed up.

“Evening.” Jacob hated to be interrupted like that. The mother’s presence had gone. “Are you here to kill me?”

“No, not yet.” Samuel said, “Though I really want to do that now.”

“Then what can I help you?”

“I am here to ask you to change your mind.”

“Change what mind?”

“Tomorrow you are going to make Richard turn on the toxic gas in the Tempest station. I hope you will not really do that.”

“Why not?” Jacob was mildly surprised, “Aren’t you the one who likes to kill people?”

“Yes, I am.” Samuel admitted, “I used to kill them all, but now I will judge them first. If the person admits his crime and repents his sin, I will let him go. But tomorrow you are going to slaughter them all. Most of them are innocent.”

“There is no such thing as innocent here. This island is not a church, or a supreme court. The moment they stepped into the island, they are doomed. If none of them is fit to be a candidate, then they should be all dead.” Jacob said with a smile.

“Don’t you feel bad at all, killing people indiscriminately?” Samuel frown, “The island will not permit it.”

“Ha! You still don’t know? The island was trapped by those DI guys a few years ago.” Jacob said with a deep smile, “I can do anything I want now.”

“Including killing over a hundred men, women and children?”

“Actually they brought it to themselves. They are going to announce to the world about their discoveries in the island. The secrets of the island will be revealed to everyone on earth. Of course I won’t allow that from happening.”

“But they are going to just publish some scientific papers, they won’t tell our location.”

“How many years did you live on Earth? Why you are still so naïve? Once the papers are out, DI will not be a secret anymore. Governments will trace their activities to find us. Do you really want them to send their whole army to find us and destroy us?”

“Then we stop them from publishing the paperwork. We don’t need to kill them all.” Samuel said.

“Stop a scientist from publishing his lifetime discoveries? You must be joking. They would rather die. Anyway, it’s too late now. The plan is all set. They already accomplished their use in the island, which was to find out the secrets of the island. Hell! They even outdid themselves by putting the island in captivity. Now it’s time to wipe them out, just like you did many times before.”

Samuel looked at his former brother and realized how much he had changed. *Is there a way to turn him back to the little boy who will never kill a bee?* He wondered.

“How about the Swan Station?” he finally asked, “Without those guys the island would escape.”

“It’s not entirely true.” Jacob said with confidence, “They only need one person to operate that station. So every ten years, I will bring someone from outside to take over the job. It will be enough for a long time. Plus, after building up my empire in the outside world, I will have as much resource as I need to keep that station running, and the island will spend the rest of his life inside there. Maybe it will be another million years, who knows?”

After a long while, Samuel said: “You know what.” He shook his head, “Sometimes I really don’t understand why some people still think of you as the good guy.”

“Well, because in this world, black and white are not as obvious as they appear.”

“Exactly.”

.....

September 22nd, 2004.

The island had been trapped in the Swan Station for 24 years.

He saved his energy as much as possible, because the connection between him and the heart was cut off by a time-space shield Amy created. He was nothing but a group of concentrated energy, like a highly evolved soul. If he lost all the energy of this group, he would die, and the whole island would be like a brain-dead patient, someone whose heart still beat but the soul was lost.

Somehow Amy had activated the Tisillium atoms on the surface of that 1-mile empty sphere. She made them absorb any energy inside the globe. Therefore, every time he tried to escape by using his energy, the Tisillium around him would absorb it immediately, thus the attempt always failed. He was afraid that he would lose all the energy, so after a few tries he just stopped struggling.

Where is Jacob? During the long time of being a prisoner, he kept wondering. *He is my protector. If my life is in danger, he should have used every possible way to rescue me.* Then he drew a conclusion, *Jacob*

must have done that already but failed. He and his fellow villagers must have wage a war against DI. They fought bravely fearlessly against the enemy, but every single one of them was mowed down in front of new weapon that wicked woman developed.

He was sad. If I were not contained in this cell, I could have been outside and protected the villagers from being slaughtered. Now Jacob and his followers must be all dead. It is my fault. Once I am outside, I will find their souls and give each of them a good next life.

That day he found a chance to escape. He took it.

For a moment the Tisillium was not absorbing his energy, he managed to gather a strong Electric-Magnetic field to counter the one Amy imposed on him. Just a little bit more energy, then he could create a tiny worm hole to pass himself through it.

Just in that critical moment, the Tisillium was activated again, instantly absorb his own EM field and the worm hole he didn't finish. Amy's EM field overpowered him and constricted him in the center. His attempt failed miserably, losing half of his remaining energy. Only then he really understood the meaning of "half-life".

Little that he knew, his prison break resulted in a worm-hole opening near a airplane not far away, and broke the poor thing into half.

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November 27, 2004.

Jacob was angry.

Charles Widmore declared independence on him. His Widmore Global Energy Corporation had become a 10 billion dollar business, all because of the gifts he gave him and his wife a long time ago. Jacob even asked the island a special favor of lengthening their lives for 10 years. *How dare he disobey my order now! I only ask him to help me become the President of the United States! That bastard must pay for his dishonesty and disloyalty.*

Just when he was planning on how to bankrupt Widmore Global, a strong flash blinded him. After he gained back his eyesight, he saw the sky was purple.

"What the hell is going on?" He wondered, "Why I didn't see this in my vision?" He still didn't know that the Swan Station was imploded by Desmond turning on the self-destruction switch.

A familiar voice came out from his back and made him jump like a cat being stepped on his tail.

"Hello, Jacob. Long time no see." It was the island.

"Oh, master..." He was too surprised to say anything else.

“It has been 24 years, right?” The island said, “I thought you were dead a long time ago when trying to rescue me. Now isn’t that a big surprise?” He approached him and looked him at the eyes in a strange way.

“Master... I ... I ...” Jacob was trembling with fear. He knew that his master was inspecting his soul. He couldn’t hide any secrets from him. It was all over.

“It’s really interesting that you never even tried to rescue me.” The island shook his head slowly, “Any your soul grew so dark.”

Jacob knelt down immediately, “Please, master. For the sake of my service of 1000 years, please don’t kill me.”

“I won’t kill you.” The island said.

Just when Jacob felt a little relief, he heard the island continued, “But someone else will, very soon.”

“You can’t do this to me!” Jacob exclaimed, “I had served you for such a long time!”

“You did this to yourself, Jacob.” The island said, “I can forgive you for not rescuing me, but I cannot stand your dark soul. How many innocent people have you killed? Uh? Over a hundred, or more?”

“They all deserved to die.” Jacob tried to defend himself, “They were not supposed to step in this island at the first place.”

“How did they find the island?”

Jacob replied, “You can ask them yourself.” He was thinking since the DI guys were all dead, nobody would tell.

“I don’t have to ask. You brought them here.” The island said, “Still trying to prove me wrong (that you don’t deserve to die)? Aren’t you?”

“You are wrong.”

“Am I? I know they come; they fight; they destroy, but they shouldn’t have ended that way (all dead by toxic gas). Do you have any idea how badly I wanna kill you right here, right now?”

“Yes ... Master ...” Jacob couldn’t say anything more. He bowed down his head on the ground, trembling like a leaf under autumn wind.

“One of these days, very soon, someone will come up to you with a knife.” The island said, “And you would do nothing, say nothing but three words ‘what about you’.”

“What about you?” Jacob didn’t understand, “What does that mean? What about me, master, what about me?”

Island silently watched him with a profound pity.

.....

Everything happened in the island, happened for a reason.

...

While holding Ben's neck, Alex said: "Listen to me, you bastard! I know that you're already planning to kill John again, and I want you to know that if you so much as touch him, I will hunt you down and destroy you. You will listen to every word John Locke says, and you will follow his every order. Do you understand?"

Ben: "Yes, I will. I'll follow him." He whimpered.

The island let go of Ben and disappeared.

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Samuel threw away the white stone. "It's an inside joke." He said.

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"That was how Jacob ran things." Ben said, "There might be a better way."

...

"You are a great number one" Ben said.

"You are a great number two." Hurley replied.

They both smiled.

The End.

Epilogue

May 29th, 2010. New York City.

Philip Wang had been the loyal "Lost" fans for 6 years. He enjoyed almost every episode. They taught him a lot of things. The show made him laugh, made him cry, and made him think. That night was the finale of the whole show. He couldn't wait any longer.

It was a very touching ending, not bad, but unsatisfactory. There were still so many questions that were not answered. A lot of things were left out. He was frustrated.

For two days he kept thinking about the final episodes, thinking about how they should have been. In the end, he suddenly realized, it was up to himself to interpret the whole thing.

In the past, Philip had written some Chinese Sci-Fi novels, some travel journals, but he never tried an English Sci-Fi novel with such a large scale. He didn't know if he could really do the job.

Fortunately, the previous experience of writing really helped. He started to write whatever that came to his mind. He didn't care about grammar or the correct way to say things. All he was thinking about was how to tell the story, match the timelines and answer the questions.

In the process, he found himself more and more attached to the writing, cared more about the characters, and the stories came out one after another almost naturally. Sometimes he didn't even need to change much. It was a big surprise to him. Like suddenly he discovered that he had a gift, a talent that he never realized he possessed. He stayed in Starbucks for long hours, and wrote the stories day and night. He would cry and laugh with the characters. The writing was as rewarding as watching the show itself.

His mother was not happy with him though. She would ask, "When are you gonna finish the novel? You clients are waiting for you to fix their computers."

"Two more days, mom. It will finish in two more days." He said, while typing like crazy in front of the notebook.

"I don't really understand you. Why you suddenly became a writer and typing all the time?" She said, "You need to go out and earn some money for the rent. Nothing is more important than that."

"I know, mom." Philip said, "But somehow I felt that this is the most important thing I have ever done in my life, just like Desmond pushing buttons."

"Desmond who?"

"Never mind."

"Are you going to send this novel to publishers?" His mom asked, "Maybe you can sell it."

"Sorry, but it has too many copyright infringement. I cannot sell it for money." He said, "But if some publisher like the way I write novels, he can sign a contract with me, so I can get some profit for the next book."

"So you are writing this book for free?"

"Yes, mom. It's all free. They can distribute this novel as long as they don't steal the content for something else."

"I don't really understand it. You have 5 customers waiting for you to fix their problems and giving you some money, and you delay them all, just to write a book for free?"

"Yes, mom, because it was absolutely the right thing to do." Philip said it with confidence, "It was all worth it."