

# NATALIS SOL INVICTUS

## The Epic

**of the Birth Misadventures and the  
Great Rise of the Sun Son of God,  
referred to in:**

- **Thrace, Hellas and Rome – Dionysus, Bacchus, Mithras or Consus;**
- **Egypt – Khonsu, Heru or Horus;**
- **Phoenicia – Shiri or Siri;**
- **India – Shiva or Surya;**
- **Balkhara or Bactria – Siyâvush, the Shining Horseman;**
- **by Bulgarians – Siva Boga or Hursa;**
- **by Slavs – Khors, Rod, Božić, Dazhbog, Kolad, Yarilo, Svetovit, which means Vityaz (Warrior) of the Light**

*Historical Novel by Valentin Yordanov*



## **CHAPTER ONE**

FROM CONCEPTION TO BIRTH OF THE SON OF  
GOD. THE LEGEND OF AVITOHOL



### *1. The Young Deities of Musaeus and Khiona*

**The megalith palace of Hephaestus and his son, Musaeus, towering over one of the hills of the city of Pulpudeva. The start of the 7<sup>th</sup> millennium BC.**

The flame of the almost molten candle burns brightly. Well-sharpened duck feather of Musaeus races across the smooth parchment with a furious creak...

The door to his room opened with a sweep. Entered his young wife Khiona. The skirts of her linen peplos followed her with the finesse of her light steps. She hugged the man bent over the table. The ethereal caress of her breasts on the back of his neck and neck, her cool fingers on his hot shoulders, somehow the quick and intense thoughts associated with his creation, which were already descending with difficulty on the empty parchment.

‘What are you writing again, husband my?... Let me guess!... Is this not the oracle, intended for Hermes, after the noisy morning sacrifice?’

‘No, my goddess!’ He shouted, turned around, grabbed her and lifted her to his knees. ‘Stay still, let me see up close your beautiful little face! Ah you...’

The two remained like this, enveloped in a ghostly crimson halo, looked at each other insatiably and studied each other, as if they were seeing each other for the first time. Time stopped, even the candle went out, but they looked at each other and loved each other with eyes and hands, perhaps slightly helped by a magical moonbeam that entered the room through the narrow window.

‘I have already handed over the oracle to my uncle Hermes! Now I’m writing a very interesting epic!’ Musaeus shook his lush hair. ‘An epic about the birth and rise of Bacchus – the Hero of Satyrs and Thracians, the Savior of our world, so that short-memoryed descendants will not forget him!’

‘Probably is too important this work of yours, I know, but should our bed be empty on this warm spring night, my husband?!’

‘Oh, Khiona! Wise as always are your words! Give me your hand, take me to our marriage bed, covered with a shroud, variegated and starry, woven by my mother Kabeiro!’

‘Come, beloved Muzeus! Didn’t you predict that a son would be born to us! Every day my heart longs for our future child, for our bright son, doomed to works imperishable!’

‘Yes, divine! And as soon as he is born, we will call him Eumolpus – „The Good Singer“!’ Muzeus said dreamily, relaxing on the wide bed.

‘Shush!’ Khiona put a finger on his lips. ‘From this moment on, let us be silent, because the sacrament begins.’

The snow-white peplos descended from her shoulders to cover the couple in love. But the moonbeam also disappeared, obscured by some concerned cloud. Love and warm darkness enveloped the marriage bed with the variegated and starry shroud. Creation is an invisible and be quiet mystery...



## *2. Muzeus, the children and the epic of the birth of the Son of God*

### **Muzeus' castle, seven years later.**

In the spacious courtyard of the castle, a group of cheerful children was playing hide-and-seek between the buildings and the centuries-old oaks and sequoias. The clamor was suddenly interrupted by the deep voice of Muzeus:

‘Children, let's go to the dining room and sit at the big table!’

‘Are we going to eat, Dad?’ The curly-haired Eumolpus asked, looking up at the sky to see where the sun was. – ‘Is the day half over?’

‘Not yet, my wonderful son! Mom is cooking something delicious now, so we’ll be eating soon!’ Muzeus replied. ‘Because who doesn’t eat...?’

‘... He will be defeated by the bear!’ Apollo’s grandson Tamiris finished the Muzeus's riddle. ‘Bravo Tamiris, smart boy!’ Muzeus laughed.

‘If lunch isn’t ready, why do we need to go in the dining room?’ Eumolpus wondered. ‘We play so well!’

‘Because we will have an occupation, an exercise for your young minds! Games and Gymnastics tempers the body, but the mind also seeks its own! You don't want to become stupid guys, do you?’

‘No, Sir!’ Cried Astraeus, the eldest son of Silenus. ‘My grandfather Hermes says that a lazy mind is not a friend of a strong body!’

‘Your grandfather Hermes, has said it right, Astraeus! That is why I have decided: every day I will tell you a little bit of a long and very fascinating story – the story about the birth and growth of a glorious boy like you, for little Bacchus, the son of the Great Zeus.’

The group climbed the stairs to the dining room, and the children sat around the heavy oak table that almost filled the huge hall. On the table lay an open parchment book, the completed manuscript of the Muzeus dedicated to the Son of God.

‘Aren’t these the letters created by my grandfather, Hermes!’ Astraeus exclaimed. ‘Did you write them on the parchment, Master Muzeus?’

‘Yes, I did.’ Nodded affirmatively Muzeus. ‘Can you read them, Astraeus?’

‘I can, but not all of them!’ The boy blushed. ‘Dad had started teaching me, but he stopped! Some important work has been assigned to him!’

‘Yes, I know about this: your father, Silenus, now has to guard the Rose Gardens of Zeus! Unwanted intruders appeared there! That is why I will take up your training and upbringing firmly.

When we finish this curious epic, I will teach you to read and write the magic signs – the letters!’

‘Yes, I know. Your father, Silenus, is guarding the rose gardens of Zeus from some mischievous and uninvited guests! That is why I am taking over your training. When we cover this curious epic, I will teach you to read and write these magic symbols otherwise known as letters!’

‘Really...?! Then, at last, I will be able to understand what is written in Grandpa’s books!’ Astraeus rejoiced with sparkling eyes...

Satisfied with the conversation with his students, Muzeus looked at them with the eyes of an experienced teacher:

‘Okay, guys – jumpy goats! Is everyone here? I see Silenus’ sons Astraeus, Leneus, Maron, and Pholus. I see Tamiris, whom his grandfather Apollo brought yesterday. And, of course, my handsome Eumolpus... Well, let's open this curious book now and find out what an amazing story is hidden in it...’



### *3. Zeus and Yo: the conception of the Son of God*

So, I begin my wonderful story...

About one thousand four hundred years before our time, the Great Zeus decided to pay a visit to one of his personal domains, namely Southern or Upper Egypt. There he was known by the names of Amun and Osiris. Zeus had to traveled a long way: from Mount Olympus in Hellas to the city of Thebes, the capital of Upper Egypt. Through Greece, he planned to ride one of his favorite white horses, and along the way to meet the local inhabitants, among whom he had many

acquaintances and friends. And the distance from Lower to Upper Egypt would be passed by boat upstream of the mighty Nile River.

So Zeus crossed Thessaly, Boeotia and Attica, and entered the Peloponnese. There he intended to take a ship from the port of Argos, which would take him to the Nile Delta, in Alexandria of Egypt.

### **The outskirts of the city of Argos, Peloponnese: the Castle of Inachus. End of the 10<sup>th</sup> millennium BC.**

It was in the field near Argos that Zeus met the beautiful and kind maiden Yo, daughter of the river god Inachus and the nymph Melia. This happened during the summer solstice, the moment of nature's absolute culmination, when herbs and plants bloom and smell most strongly. After a while, this festive day was called Yanyov or Enyov Day, after one of the numerous names of this god – Janus or Yankul.

Zeus and Yo walked through the local hurst (forest), talking and laughing, intoxicated by natural aromas. She picked flowers, and he picked berries. They even bathed in the river, admiring each other. Imperceptibly the evening came. Yo wished to go home – to her parents, to her sister Mycenae and her brothers Argos, Phoroneus and Aegialeus. But Zeus wouldn't let her. He told her that no one – a god, a beast of prey, and not even the wind and the rain – would dare to harm her, while he is next to her. Indeed, who would irritate, let alone oppose the Great Zeus, the Thunderer and the Lightning Thrower?

The evening was quiet and warm, the sky clear, dotted with large stars, and the moon illuminated everything around. The two of them satiated their hunger with fragrant berries, wrapped themselves in Zeus' zeira (thick woolen cloak with white and red horizontal stripes) and fell asleep soundly.

In the morning, when Yo woke up, she found a small wreath (tiara) from the flower „Yellow Enyovche“ („Yellow Bedstraw“ or „Galium Verum“) next to her head. And although Zeus was gone, she did not feel any anxiety, but on the contrary, she realized that she had changed in some inexplicable, magical way. She felt great confidence and strength. Taking Zeus' wreath with her, Yo hurried happily home. She surrounded the still sleeping city of Argos. Easily climb the staircase carved into the sheer cliffs to the impregnable castle of her father Inachus, which looms over the city.

‘Where were you, daughter? We've been worried about you all night!’ Her mother Melia almost cried, standing in the meadow in front of the open portal of the castle. ‘I was just about to send a tracker to look for you!’

‘Sister, you have finally come home!’ Her curious sister Mycenae appeared out of the blue.

‘Oh, you have braided a beautiful yellow wreath!’

‘I didn't do it, Zeus gave it to me!’ Proudly replied Yo.

‘Zeus?’ Her mother turned pale. ‘Zeus gave you a wreath from the flower „Yellow

Enyovche“?! ... Come, daughter! Let's go home, sit under the vine, that I felt sick!’

As soon as the women entered the spacious courtyard of the castle, the guards pulled and slammed the two halves of the gate, covered entirely with bronze, on which the terrifying heads of the three Gorgons: Steno, Euryale, and Medusa were

depicted on the outside. The mother and her daughters went to sit on the walnut bench under the vine, whose young leaves and shoots cast a loose shadow. Melia anxiously asked Yo:

‘Do you know, Yo, to whom Zeus gives a wreath from the flower „Yellow Enyovche“? This wreath is a sign!’

‘A sign of what?’ Mycenae inquired in surprise.

‘I don’t know, mom, but I guess!’ Yo replied seriously.

‘You don’t know, but you guess...’ Melia repeated like an echo, looking deeply into her daughter's eyes. ‘Yes, I see, you have changed tonight! You’ve grown up! You are already a woman!’

‘Yes, mother, that’s right! I feel a great power in me!’

‘This power comes from the fetus of Zeus, which is already growing in you!’ Melia said sharply. ‘But you are engaged to Zeus’ son Ares!... Help us, Earthly Mother, and you, Heavenly Father!...’

‘I’m Ares’ fiancée, but where is he! He went to the end of the world, all the way to foggy Albion, to fight the Fomori – giant evil demons from Atlantis! He promised to take and imagine me to the Palace of the Gods on Olympus when he returned, but he is gone!’ ‘Oh, what news! You will have a child with the Great Zeus?!’ Mycenae laughed.

‘Hush, Mycenae! Shut up right now!’ Melia interrupted Mycenae’s speech.

‘Why should I be silent, mother?’ Mycenae whispered in embarrassment. ‘Isn't this joyful news? It is true that Io is engaged to Ares, but isn't Zeus the greatest of all gods? He will restrain his damned son, this a rude and a bully!’

‘Mother says otherwise: we must beware of the domineering Hera, who dreams of seeing her son Ares on the throne of Zeus!’ Yo answered instead of Melia.

‘Yes, Hera is domineering and mean!’ Melia said thoughtfully. ‘Years ago, she sent forever hungry Python to chase and bother Latona when she was pregnant by Zeus and carried Apollo and Artemis in her belly. Then Latona she hid all the way to the island of Delos to give birth to her twins in peace. Similar torments were experienced by Maya, the mother of Hermes...’ ‘If necessary, it is Apollo and Hermes who will help me, mother!’

‘You're smart, Yo!’ Melia was delighted. ‘Do you know who else can be your faithful ally against Hera?’

‘Who, mother’ Yo asked.

‘Yakhos, the son of Persephone! Yakhos grew up under the protection of the dark Hades! He is already a strong and handsome man! And he, like Apollo and Hermes, hates intensely Hera and Ares!’

‘How glad I am that you will have a baby!’ Mycenae hugged Yo, who reciprocated, grateful for her support.

‘Girls, you have to keep a big secret: not a word to anyone about our conversation! Did you understand me both?’ Melia looked at them sternly.

‘Yes, mother!’ the girls reassured her.

‘Nice! Now come to the garden, help me do something!’

Melia went to the garden in the other corner of the courtyard of the castle, and her daughters followed her.

Just at that moment, there was a loud knock at the gate. The chief guard opened the small window and shouted:

‘Who are you? Show yourself so that I can see you!’

Here I am: Zeus Cronidus is I and I come with good! But hurry up and open it, otherwise you will feel my wrath!

‘Here I am: Zeus Cronidus is I and I come with good! But hurry up and open it, otherwise you will feel my wrath!’

‘Mistress?’ The guard looked at Melia questioningly.

‘Open the gate!’ She nodded to him.

This is how, most unexpectedly, the radiant Zeus appeared in the castle of Inachus. And Yo like an arrow threw herself into his embrace.

‘I have come to take you with me to Egypt; A ship is waiting for me down at the pier!’ Zeus said to Yo, a wide smile not leaving his face.

‘Ah, Zeus!’ Yo looked at him with her starry eyes. ‘A little while ago I felt a desire to see you and you immediately appeared!’

‘And I want it: to be together! And from now on, we will never part!’ He stroked her high forehead.

‘Take her with you and keep her, Great Zeus!’ Melia bowed. ‘She is my good and dear daughter’

‘Melia! Your daughter is wonderful! But I have come for something else: to tell you that my son, who grows up in Joh, will inherit my dominion over the world!’

‘Although a ship is waiting for you below, isn’t it right that I treat you, Zeus, at least with a glass of our wine and a piece of our bread! After all, you have come to me as a distinguished guest, and even a son-in-law!’ Melia said and signaled to Mycenae, who ran to the kitchen. Yo ran after her, but to the upper floor of the house to get the most necessary things and clothes.

‘Your noble home is very respected and dear to me! But you, Mother Melia, will welcome me and feed me, as befits relatives, when Io and I return from Egypt!’

‘Good! But anyway, take this food for the road!’ Melia tied bread in her apron, a large piece of fresh cheese, and a sealed small amphora of red wine, brought from the agile Mycenae.

‘Thank you, Melia, for the food and for your kindness!’ Zeus smiled.

Yo came, carrying a bundle made of her clothes. Hugs and farewell followed, after which Zeus and Yo descended the stairs of the steep slope below the castle. Following them with their eyes, Melia and Mycenae wipe away their tears – out of happiness for Yo’s luck, but also out of sadness that they won’t see her soon...



#### *4. In Egypt. Seth's plot and insidious murder of Osiris*

##### **The holy lands of Egypt. Middle of summer, month of Epiphi.**

Almost five months elapsed, from Epiphi to Athyr, during which Zeus and Yo, that is, Osiris and Isis, lived happily in Upper Egypt. Osiris took his bride around his sacred land. Along the way, he showed her the huge mysterious labyrinth near Lake Moiris, the work of the Great Ra, who later served as a model for Daedalus in the construction of the labyrinth on the island of Crete, near Knossos. Seeing the scale of this architectural structure, Isis was left breathless: She listed twelve covered courtyards with tall stone sculptures and colonnades; one thousand five hundred above-ground premises and one thousand five hundred underground ones, and the intertwined passages between them are impossible to be remembered. On the underground entrance, which is also the exit of the labyrinth, a pyramid was erected with a side of 72 rastegs \*.

No less amazing and huge was the fortress with a hundred gates of the capital Thebes, built by Osiris in honor of his mother Nutus, known in Thrace and Hellas as Rhea. The most majestic in this city were two golden temples: of the divine celestial Zeus, called Osiris, and of his earthly incarnation, called Zeus-Amun. The temples of other gods were also remarkable, to which Osiris assigned honors and holidays and appointed priests to perform them...

In the middle of the month of Athir, on the occasion of the visit of the Ethiopian queen Aso to Lower Egypt, Osiris was invited by his brother Set to a ball organized in her honor in the palace in the lower Egyptian capital of On, the „City of the Sun“. Since Athir was the first cool month in Egypt, it was usually the time when most

diplomatic and governmental missions were made. In addition, the beginning of winter was a good occasion for celebrations, because Persephone, known here as Nephthys, the beloved wife of Set and queen of the country, solemnly arrived in Egypt from Hellas.

Although he suspected that his brother was plotting against him in order to usurp power over the world, Osiris decided to go to the ball, because he did not believe that his brother would dare to violate on the established order and law, and besides, he relied on the support of the prominent deities who would be present there. He took his favorite Isis with him for company. Yet, before leaving Thebes, Osiris secured himself by means of special messenger, through whom he ordered his daughter, the warrior goddess Anath, also known as Athena, to gather a small detachment and come quickly to Lower Egypt.

\* \* \*

At the festive evening in his palace, Set received Osiris and Isis respectfully, treating all his guests, even the lower deities, with respect. This strengthened Osiris' doubts, for Set usually behaved rudely, arrogantly, and cynically, without worrying about what would be said about him next. On the other hand, Osiris calmed down inwardly that Seth could at most arrange for him some peppery joke, sketch or anecdote, ridiculing the desire for dominance of his older brother. And probably his daughter Anat would burst into the hall at any moment, accompanied by a dozen team heroes. Osiris did not know that Annatus had become infatuated with gathering more troops, which delayed her mission.

\*      Royal rasteg = ὀργυιά (orgyiá) = sajén = fadum = fathom = 2,1336 m. or 7 feet. 72 rastegs = 504 feet = 153,62 m.

Anyway, the good wine, the exquisite dishes and the opulent atmosphere proved conducive to a festive mood among the elegantly dressed gods and goddesses. They danced to the trills of the virtuoso musicians and spoke about important topics. No one really suspected that the insidious Seth was getting ready to commit a heinous crime against his own brother, the great Osiris. Seth had seventy-two of his henchmen dress like guests. Most of them were deployed at key locations in the ballroom and palace and some were outside guarding the approaches to the palace. Seth had commissioned a talented joiner to fashion an exquisite trunk decorated with gold and precious stones. The craftsman made it to fit the body of Osiris, as instructed by Seth.

They brought the trunk inside the ballroom right at the time the party was at its peak. Its beauty was such that made everyone gasp at the sight of it. Some were struck by the glittering gemstones, others, by the symbols from the creation of the world that were carved into it.

‘What exceptional beauty?!’ Asso, the Queen of Ethiopia exclaimed.

‘Look at the double-headed axe that is fixed to the center of the lid! The handle is gold, the right head is made of rubies and the left, of sapphires!’ Nephthys, the wife of Seth noticed, knowing nothing of the preparation for this surprise.



‘Red rubies are the symbol of the Sun Father and the blue sapphire is the symbol of the earthwater mother!’ the wise Ea, healer of the gods, explained. ‘The union between the father and the mother gave rise to the divine race. That is why those who have arisen with their benevolent approval wear the labrys as sign of power!’

‘Where did this ark come from? It looks old...’ Isis noted curiously.

‘We found it by accident in the underground chambers beneath the great pyramid’ Seth responded nonchalantly.

‘What is the meaning of the runes carved in the lid?’ Queen Asso inquired.

‘These runes relay a message...’ Ea said and caressed the lid, his fingers skimming the carved runes. ‘This ark will fit one great man alone, the ruler of this world, At, and the netherworld, Duat!’ This is what the inscription reads. ‘Who is this mysterious great man?’ Asso inquired and looked around.

‘We can know only if we try to see who will fit!’ Seth laughingly suggested. ‘Men, open the lid of the arch!’

The lid was moved amid renewed gasps.

‘It is lined with soft wool covered with purple silk!’ Nephthys concluded, having stroked the lining.

‘This appears to be an invitation to a royal and invincible man!’ Asso said.

‘What are you waiting for, oh powerful gods, climb in and we shall see who the master of the

At and the Duat really is!’ one of the goddesses exclaimed.

In the empty field around the magnetic chest, at last one of the attendees – the six or seven cubit tall giant Lycurgus, the ruler of Thrace, finally stepped hesitantly. Loud laughter followed.

‘Forgive me, Lycurgus, but there is obviously no way you can fit inside!’ Seth noted.

‘He can, if he can bend over backwards!’ one of the gods jokingly concluded.

‘This is impossible! Lycurgus is too tall and too wide to fit inside the arch!’ the wise Ea concluded. ‘We are definitely looking for someone else!’

‘This young fellow looks like he enjoys his meals!’ someone else jokingly remarked. Lycurgus stepped back, self-conscious and a little embarrassed. Next to step up was Adonis, the favorite amongst most of the goddesses in attendance. He laid down inside the trunk bravely but it was immediately apparent that his slender frame was too small for a perfect fit. Someone gasped with dissatisfaction in the area where the goddesses had gathered.

At long last Asso, who acted as if she was struck with a sudden epiphany, but was actually part of the set-up and had rehearsed the scene with her ally, Seth, rested her gaze on Osiris. The others followed suit.

‘We are being so obtuse! Osiris is our leader and master, isn’t he?! Perhaps this peculiar ark was made to fit him and him alone?’

‘Osiris! Osiris! Osiris!’ the others chanted with a passion that was meant to compensate for their obtuseness.

‘Don’t go, my love!’ Isis whispered to Osiris. ‘I have a bad feeling about this!’

Dazed by the wine, Osiris stepped towards the arch. He hesitated for a second and took a look across the room. Anat was nowhere to be seen.

He thought: „Perhaps my dear daughter is already at the threshold of the palace! I will enter the cursed ark, and if something bad happens to me, it will save me! But even if she hasn't come yet, the hall is full of good gods; they wouldn't stand idly by if Seth dared to do anything bad to me at all—he's my brother, after all?! ... Besides, Morphos and Hypnos seem to overwhelm me, and I don't get drunk easily from wine?!“

Confused by these controversial thoughts, Osiris approached the ark and lied inside. It, of course, fit to size. This triggered applause and adulation. When Osiris attempted to sit up and thank everyone for their kindness, he saw Seth who, stooping over above him, placed a heavy hand on his chest. ‘Wait, brother, do not hurry to leave your cozy resting place! Having ruled over the world of At for some 450 years, it is time for you to do the same in Duat!’ Seth said and pulled out from the sleeve of Osiris, who was dazed by the wine, his perun, the fearsome weapon that produced lightning bolts. ‘What is this, brother Seth?’ Osiris asked, keeping cool yet realizing that his worst fears were materializing at this very moment. ‘If you dare to cause me any harm, to spill the divine blood, you will have no future. How do you think the divine community will react?!’

‘How will they react? Seth barked. ‘I will unleash upon them such horrors that they will be more than glad and willing to serve me! It is my turn, my brother, to rule this sinful world and yours to go up there to the celestial realms of Duat!’

‘And when news of your insidious actions reach Jazira, and the palace of Ra, our holy father? Then what?’ Osiris asked laying down his last ace.

‘Our father, Ra, is very old! Some say that he has been around for more than two thousand years! What judgement can he level on me when he was the one who, at the headsprings of the Tigris and the Euphrates slayed his own father, Aton, so he could sit on his throne? Moreover, wasn't it you who banished him for this very throne?... You can't fool me, brother. It is time to accept the fate you deserve!’ Seth said coldly.

At Seth's signal, his henchmen, released the heavy lid which they had been holding at the ready. While four of them held the lid down at each corner, two more nailed it shut quickly. Another, who had been standing to the side, holding a peculiar vessel with steam coming out of its spout, hastily but skillfully poured molten asphalt sealing the gap between the body and the lid of the ark.

The beautiful trunk turned out to be a coffin as, completely sealed from the outside, Osiris could not breathe and suffocated.

The smiles on the faces of the deities in attendance turned into grimaces of horror as they bore witness to these unexpected and tragic events and realized they were but pawns in a meticulously crafted sinister plan. What began as great panic in the seconds following the horrible death of their beloved leader quickly escalated into debilitating horror of the unfathomable depth of Seth wickedness which washed over the gods and goddesses in the ballroom. Still, there were a few who tried to save Osiris, but twenty of Seth's henchmen, wielding double-edged swords cut them off. Another thirty swiftly emerged from their hiding places, swords in hand, and formed a double column ready to start the slaughter at Seth's signal. The latter, as a kind host, had of course made sure all male deities were asked to check any weapons they carried at the door to the palace.

‘Brazen murderer!’ Isis cried unable to control herself. ‘Today you have placed upon yourself the mark of the darkest of all demons, an enemy of Divine blood and Eternal life! One day, your

Ba and your Ka will leave your hairy body and, having transcended into Sah, will ascend to the Celestial gates to ask permission to enter the double palace of Creation and the Celestial realms. But the keepers of the Celestial gates will not let you in! You will fall!... Soon, you will be called Satan, the master of all evil!’

Seth only glanced at Isis. His goal was accomplished, now it was time for containment. The reasonable thing would be to show mercy to the wife of his brother. The dark shadows on his face were replaced by a forced smile:

‘Noble guests, the soul of my brother, Osiris, will soon fly away to Duat! Henceforth, it will be my hand that will hold the helm of our earthly world, for better or worse! If you would be so kind, take this news to the kingdoms from which you came, and which you trend to for me, as good shepherds!’

‘Double-faced murderer!’ Isis cried and left hastily for the gates followed by a few goddesses. No one stood in their way.

‘I demand from you your full and complete obedience!’ Seth declared rising his voice as the vague smile left his face at the sight of the unruly goddesses his volcanic anger raged. ‘Any of you, who have failed to grasp the situation, will deal with me!’

As he finished his threat, Seth put on a leather glove and took out his new trophy, the perun of Zeus, a device that resembled a barbell with tridents sticking at each end. Seth held the perun by the hilt, pressed the connecting rod and a powerful spark violently tore the air between the prongs of the trident producing a loud crackling sound. Everyone in the room watched with intense attention.

Seth pointed the perun at one of the youths who, minutes ago had urged his companions to assist Osiris as he was being sealed inside his coffin. Instead of a spark, a harder push on the rod this time produced a blinding lightning that struck the young god. In an instant, the man burst into flames, burned to a crisp and fell to the ground like a tree on the colorful diamond-shaped tiles covering the floor. Agony, steam and smell of burnt flesh filled the room to complete the gruesome scene.

A clear message was sent to any would-be dissenter...

On Seth’s orders, his lackeys took out the coffin containing the body of Osiris and threw it the fastest-flowing branch of the delta, at Tanis. These events transpired on the 17<sup>th</sup> day of Athyr, the fourth month of the Sothic year.\*

\* November 13 – according to the modern Gregorian calendar.

### *5. Desperate efforts of Isis to bury with honors the remains of Osiris*

#### **Egypt: City of On and then Abydos until the 40<sup>th</sup> day since the murder.**

When Isis left Seth's palace accompanied by several young goddesses, they were followed by Nephthys, who was also very young, pigheaded and independent. Isis and Nephthys, in other words Yo and Persephone, had been childhood friends. They had grown up in Hellas as the princesses of two neighboring and closely allied kingdoms. Persephone's mother, Demeter, settled, cultivated and ruled the lands of Eleusis and Corinth, whereas Melia and Inachus ruled the Eastern Peloponnese to the south, where the famous cities of Argos and Mycenae were situated.

Nephthys wanted to console the weeping Isis. Her two companions tried to do the same. Nephthys invited the women in her winter villa near the capital, a place she usually retired to after fights with her boarish husband, Seth. She signaled her servants and they took them on two veiled palanquins, one was hers and the other belonged to Isis.

On the way there, in the distance, the villa looked like a white spot among tall and dense vegetation on top of a hill overlooking the right bank of the Nile. A long alley through a vivid garden took them to a large fountain with multiple water spouts. At the sight of their mistress, the servants scurried to open the heavy front door. As they entered, Nephthys whispered a few commands instructing them to heat water, to bring her soothing herbs and to take care of the palanquin carriers.

Soon after Isis had her herb drink, she stopped weeping and fell asleep. They carried her to her bed and Nephthys made sure she could get rested with no one bothering her. Nephthys invited the two kind goddesses Renut and Tamira to spend the night in the guest bedroom and ordered one of the servants to bring cold beer and another, to light the petrol lanterns as it was getting dark. The women then sat on the cushy sofas and tried to get a sense of what had just happened at Seth's palace.

'How are we supposed to go on now?' Tamira cried out. 'I fear that Seth may decide to go after my husband, who was loyal to Osiris. Or he just may decide to go after me and take me for his harem!'

'Nephthys, did you know he was planning this?' Renut asked her hostess.

'How can you ask me that? Had I suspected it, none of this would have happened! I would have warned my father, Osiris, through my dear friend Isis. She and I are inseparable, you know!' Nephthys snapped and handed her guests the large ceramic mugs filled with cold beer, which the servant had just brought up from the cellar.

‘Thank heavens she was able to go to sleep! A person could go crazy in situations like this!’ Tamira said.

‘I don’t think Seth will try to go after anyone else right now!’ Nephthys reassured Tamira. ‘He will try to convince everyone that Osiris was planning to ambush him and banish him to the underworld of Tartarus and this forced Seth to defend himself!’

‘So you think Seth will try to reason with the other gods and win their loyalty?’ Tamira asked hesitantly.

‘No doubt in my mind!’ Nephthys replied. ‘The Council of the Gods, headed by Geb, will have to approve the change and its new shepherd.’

‘It is true that, because of his lineage, Seth is the legal heir to the throne, but what will the Council think of the murder he committed?’ Renut wondered.

‘It is like I just said!’ Nephthys snapped. ‘One way for Seth to go is to present the death of Osiris as an accident. He, in self-defense, tried to capture Osiris inside the fancy ark but, by mistake, suffocated him.’

‘What about young Negral, who was horribly burnt by Seth using the perun of Osiris? Everyone witnessed this horrible murder and especially the apparent pleasure Seth took in killing him!’ ‘Indeed, this will be more difficult to justify.’ Nephthys agreed. ‘He will rely on the fear that is already washing over us. I think that if the Council were to interview witnesses, the fear of Seth and his money, will help him get away with it.’

‘That is true! Renut agreed. ‘What happens, though, if the Council decides to reject Seth as a pretender to the throne because the murder taints him as an heir despite his lineage?’

‘I am afraid to even consider this as a possible outcome!’ Nephthys admitted biting her lip. ‘Seth would be consumed by his evil inclinations, of which we only see random glimpses here and there! It will be utter chaos and the reaper will have his hands full! Then, my dear Tamira, your husband, and all other good men, will have to flee Egypt along with their families!’ ‘Surely the wise Geb cannot allow this to happen!’ Renut insisted.

‘My grandfather, Geb, is very old and feeble, but his voice still carries among Council members! Should anyone on the Council choose a path of confrontation with Seth, Geb will definitely make sure calmer heads prevail.’

‘Well, if Seth really demanded the throne, do you think Geb could deny him?’ Renut asked, finally allowing the question that had been burning inside her to get out.

‘It doesn’t appear so, no...’ Nephthys admitted. ‘If Seth is too aggressive and unreasonable, Geb and the Council will have no other recourse. They will have to approve him as the successor of Osiris! Still, I hope that Geb, with all his experience, will find some leverage to use against Seth, if he had to approve him; something to ensure there would be guard rails keeping the peace and keeping all deities on their best behavior, including Seth’s allies, in particular.’

‘Mistress, Anubis is here!’ one of the servants announced as she entered the room interrupting the conversation. Second later, the son of Nephthys was in the room.

As soon as Anubis entered the guest room it seemed to become brighter and more welcoming. He was albino. His skin was so white it was almost translucent. In the places where his flesh was bare, one could see blue veins and red arteries. His eyes

were red but not because he had gotten specks of sand in them, but because of the blood vessels inside. His skin never went dark from the sun but only freckled. In other words, his appearance was a little unnerving, especially standing amongst his fellow gods, whose complexions were made much darker by the hot Egyptian sun. Yet, he was beloved by everyone for his kindness and willingness to help those in need. Even the vicious Seth, who was afraid of no one and nothing, respected Anubis, probably because of how he looked, and did not dare raise a hand against him, even when Anubis was small and helpless. Because of his completion, Seth called him the „Living Mummy“. Mummies were white because their lifeless bodies were wrapped in linen strips which were painted white. This moniker even sparked rumor that Anubis was simultaneously dead and alive and that, although living, he could cross over to the world of the souls, which was known as Duat.

There was indeed a mystery about Anubis, a closely guarded secret for he was the lovechild of the incestuous relationship between Nephthys and her own father, Osiris. What is more, this transgression had occurred while Nephthys was married to Seth. She, of course, presented the child as the son of Seth and raised him in Seth's home.

In fact, the particular qualities that Anubis possessed came from the incest, which ran against the ancient matriarchal tradition. Marriages between relatives were allowed, but no closer than brothers and sisters, and only for attaining a higher rank in the divine hierarchy. Rank depended on the genealogical closeness to the Earth Mother and the Sun Father. Precedence was granted to the offspring of the first-born sisters. Therefore, the brothers in a family would compete for the heart of their oldest sister as a way to elevate themselves above their seniors. This rule existed in Thrace, Egypt, India and certain other old civilizations.

Anubis was bringing news. When he walked in the room, he took a quick glance at the guests and having made the decision he could speak openly in front of them, he said:

‘Where is Isis, mother? I was told that Seth's henchmen threw the ark with Osiris inside in the river at Tanis!’

‘Quick, let's wake her!’ Tamira exclaimed.

‘No, Tamira, not after all our efforts to calm her down!’ Renut disagreed.

‘Renut is right.’ Nephthys said. ‘We should let her sleep! We will search for the body of Osiris tomorrow and we will prepare it for burial!’

‘The beer is wonderful!’ Anubis noted, having gulped down the mug that was placed before him. ‘In this case, I'll be going back out, mother!’

‘Where are you going, son? Don't you want to sit with us for a while?’ ‘I am going to Benthesisikyme's place, she is waiting for me.’ ‘Who is she? Is she a good girl?’ Renut inquired.

‘Very good!’ Nephthys answered with a glowing smile. ‘She is the daughter of Nanar Sin, whom the northerners also call Poseidon.’

‘I know that girl, she is very pretty!’ Tamira added with visible interest.

‘May your children live long and happy lives! May these two wed and bring little bundles of joy to your family!’ Renut said.

‘Thank you, dear Renut and you, kind Tamira! Thank you for your help in this time of need!’ Nephthys replied. ‘It is getting late. Please accept my invitation to

spend the night here. Do not deny me this little pleasure. I have more than enough room here for you!’ ‘Thank you kindly. We will stay!’ Renut accepted with a smile.

‘It is late indeed!’ Tamira agreed. ‘Tomorrow morning, when Isis wakes up, we will go with you and help you find the ark!’

‘I appreciate it and value your support greatly, my dear friends!’ Nephthys said as she gave them a hug. ‘Let us get some sleep now. The girl waiting at the door will show you to your rooms and will help you settle for the night! If you need anything, just ask her!’

The noble women went their separate ways. A while later the lanterns were turned down and the darkness of the night embraced the small oasis surrounding the villa. The only sound than could be heard was the monotonous whisper of the flowing waters of the Nile.

\* \* \*

The morning of Athyr 18\* found Nephthys, Renut and Tamira together. They had breakfast and tee while they waited for Isis to wake up. They had decided to let her sleep in and in doing so allow the servants to make the necessary preparation for the expedition. To their surprise, she woke up early and found them in the guest room. The Isis they saw this morning was strikingly calm and serious, a complete turnaround from where she was yesterday.

‘Isis, dear, what have you done with your hair?’ Nephthys asked when she noticed a few strands of hair missing from the left side of her head.

‘I am mourning the death of my husband so I cut some of my hair!’ Isis replied with dry eyes.

‘Do you have a black dress I could borrow, Nephthys?’

‘I do not have black dresses, but I have black fabric.’

‘That will do. I will fashion something quickly.’

‘We will help!’ Tamira said. ‘I am good with the scissors and Renut is an excellent seamstress!’ ‘The most important thing, Isis, is that we have good news for you!’ Nephthys said and looked at Isis. ‘Last night my son, Anubis, told me that Seth’s minions had thrown the ark in the river along with the body of Osiris...’

‘Is that true? So Seth disregarded the ancient mummification tradition?!’ Isis exclaimed, her eyes widening. ‘Where did they release the Ark? Probably somewhere near the palace?’

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‘Yes, in the channel at Tanis!’

‘Let us hurry, then! If Seth will not mummify and bury his own brother, Osiris, I will. I have the right as his wife!’

‘I have already instructed my servants and our palanquins are probably already waiting for us’ Nephthys replied.

‘Let’s do the dress quickly and leave!’ Isis implored.

‘It would go faster in my craft room. Follow me!’ the hostess suggested and the goddesses followed her.

Less than an hour passed when the small procession left the villa. In the royal palanquin of Nephthys she and Isis settled, and in the royal palanquin of Isis – Tamira and Renut. Each palanquin was carried by four strong men-warriors, with short mahairas on the waist. Although few in number, these specially trained warriors were able to deal with daring and dangerous enemies and guaranteed the queens reliable protection. But the very royal signs of Osiris and Set, with which the palanquins of their wives were adorned, frightened the evil eyes and evil thoughts and intentions enough.

The group went down a road that was following the river and soon reached the city of On. The bustling crowds that filled the cities stood to the side to make way for the royal travelling party as soon as they saw it coming. On instructions by Nephthys, the carriers bypassed Seth’s palace and soon drew near to Tanis. Suddenly, a group of Seth’s soldiers carrying lances appeared around a bend and stood in their way. Their commander lowered his lance as a sign for them to stop but it pointed straight at the roof of the palanquin.

‘Halt! Turn around, you cannot pass through!’

‘How dare you stand in our way! Can’t you see the royal insignia of Seth and the queen on the royal palanquin?’ Menes, the leader of the carriers, scolded the officer as he gave a signal to the other carriers to put the palanquins down on the ground.

‘Who are you to speak to me in this tone?!’ the officer snapped back and drew his whip. Of course, that was as far as he could get because Menes attacked. A second later, the officer was lying on his back and his lance, which was now in the hands of Menes, was pointing at his chest. The rest of the carriers were now holding their makhaira pointed at the soldier’s throats. Any wrong move here would have resulted in instant death.

‘That’s enough, Menes!’ Nephthys interrupted the scene when she moved aside the drape of the palanquin.

‘But mistress, this puny dog pointed his lance at your palanquin!’

‘What did you and I talk about recently?’

‘... That blood is shed only when absolutely necessary!’ Menes said through his teeth and angrily drove the trophy spear into the ground next to his defeated opponent.

‘Good man, Menes! Now that you spared these wretched souls, you are one step higher on your celestial ladder!’

‘Yes, mistress. Your wish is my command!’ Menes said and signaled his men. They sheathed their makhairs and the soldiers breathed a sigh of relief.

‘Lord Menes’ the petrified officer said regaining his composure. ‘Thank you for sparing my life! It was my error that I did not recognize you wearing the clothes of a carrier! You are probably on a secret mission for our master, Seth?’

‘My orders are to protect mistress Nephthys so it is her you should be thankful to!’



After this brief, but potentially dangerous skirmish, the royal party continued its journey to Tanis with no notable interruptions. They hoped it would be quick and easy to spot the shiny ark in the bright sun. In the places where the reeds were thicker and taller, the men would go in the water to search through the vegetation. They used poles they had fashioned from tree branches they had cut along the way. What Isis, Nephthys and their helpers did not know, was that the soldiers had doubled back and were following their every move from a distance. After the incident earlier, the officer ran to the palace and told Seth about it. The king ordered him to watch the queens' actions and report back.

The search for the ark continued until dark but failed to produce any positive results. The search party reached the sea but were forced to give up as darkness fell.

Exhausted, they went back to On where they separated. Renut and Tamira went to their respective homes and parents, whereas Nephthys and Isis, and their companions, went back to the villa where they would spend the night, rest and get ready to renew the search the next day.

\* \* \*

Early in the morning on 19 Athyr,\* Nephthys and Isis went out again to search for the body of Osiris hoping they would have better luck than the day before. The burial had to be performed no later than the 40<sup>th</sup> day of the death. This left them 38 days to complete their task, at least 10 of which were needed for the mummification process. That was the shortest time possible for a task of such nature.

This time they took only one palanquin, the one which belonged to Nephthys, and her four carriers. The carriers who served Isis also came to help recover and carry the ark. Two of them carried baskets for fruit and vegetables as the two goddesses wanted to visit the city market, which was on their way.

When they arrived at the market, it was already bustling with people. Like the day before, the crowds moved out of the way to let the royal palanquin through. Nephthys chose her purchases without even revealing herself from behind the drape. One of Isis's men paid for whatever food the Queen had chosen and the other two loaded in their baskets.

At one point, Isis touched Nephthys, who was busy shopping, and nodded towards two women wearing head scarves who were having a lively discussion next to a fresh fish pavilion. Nephthys went quiet and focused on their words.

'... I am telling you, this ark is very expensive, it is covered with gold, adamants, jade stones and sapphires. It shines like the sun!' one of the women said.

'This has to be the ark Seth used to lure poor Osiris?! That's what the rumors say!' the other replied.

'Well, turns out the ark did not sink but made it all the way to Byblos in the Levant where it was caught up in the roots of an old fig tree growing on the bank!

'And no one took the darned thing? They could have at least taken the jewelry out!'

'Nonsense! Who would dare lay their hands on the royal ark?! Do you have any idea what Seth would do to them?! He could roast and eat you just like that!'

'That's right. Seth is Satan, pure evil! I get scared just mentioning his name!' the second woman said before the two of them disappeared into the motley crowd.

This overheard conversation gave Nephthys and Isis a much needed starting point: the current had evidently taken the ark to the Levant. This called for a change of plans. However, they could not discuss the matter out in the open as the goddesses suspected that Seth's agents were already out spying. They would have to go back to the villa.

The group was heading back when intuitively Menes, who was one of the men carrying the palanquin noticed someone's presence behind his back. He turned his head sharply and saw someone, who had been following them, jump into the bushes by the side of the road.

„No way he is alone! I bet someone is backing him up at a greater distance“, the experienced Menes thought to himself. „I will warn the Queen when we get back!“ Menes remembered that this morning, when they were descending the hills on their way to town, he had caught someone with the corner of his eye but decided they were just a fellow traveler. „It was the same man“, he concluded.

\* November 15.

When they returned in the green oasis of the villa, it was just about noon and the was hot. Isis and Nephthys went to the guest room to discuss their trip to the Levant. Menes was called in to advise them because of his experience with long military expedition.

‘I propose we take two covered carts and four spare horses’ Nephthys told Isis. ‘It would be wise to use all your men and mine and also two female servants...’

‘Forgive me, Mistress!’ Menes interrupted. ‘You should know that a group of Seth's agents is following us. They look experienced.’

‘What are you saying, Menes? Are you sure?’

‘Positive! They have been on our tail since this morning – on the way from the villa to the city and back! I believe they came to the villa sometime last night so that they wouldn't miss us. They are keeping their distance so we wouldn't notice them!’

‘See!’ Isis burst out. ‘I felt something wasn't right at the market. That's why I asked you not to talk about our plans there but get back here instead.’

‘Does this mean that Seth does not want us to find the body of Osiris so that you wouldn't be able to bury him as the customs require?’ Nephthys asked.

‘Seth killed Osiris's body, but by preventing us from burying him according to the ancient rituals, he plans to kill his soul, too!’ Isis replied.

‘What do we do then?’ Nephthys asked with a great deal of anxiety in her voice.

‘Do not worry. I know what to do!’ Menes interjected. All of us will leave here taking the covered carts. We will take the road that follows the bank of the Nile and then we will follow the coast till we reach the border with the Levant. Seth's agents will have to follow us from a distance and we will act as we do not see or hear them. Once we cross into the Levant, my soldiers and I will ambush them...’

‘You want to kill them all, don't you?’ Nephthys asked judgmentally.

‘Is there any other option, Mistress? I let them go yesterday, as you insisted, and they scurried back to Seth and informed him that we were searching the reeds in the river. This revealed to Seth that we were looking for the ark and he instructed them to watch our every move...’

‘Menes is right!’ Isis concluded. ‘I, too, dislike bloodshed’ Nephthys agreed ‘But we cannot allow the ancient soul of Osiris to perish! How many human souls would it take even the scales against the noble and kind soul of the Great Osiris, the one who dreamed of turning the earth into a paradise, making it as close a copy as possible to the heavenly realm of the Great Ra!’

‘No, of course we cannot allow this! The soul of the Great Osiris has no equal in this world!’ Nephthys agreed.

‘... Let me finish laying out my plan’ Menes continued. ‘As soon as we are rid of Seth’s jackals we will make our way past the coastal cities of Sidon, Tyre, and Ugarit safely and we will arrive in Byblos. However, you, my Mistress, will have to exchange your royal attire to something more ordinary. While traveling in a foreign land, one must not attract the attention of the locals, especially the robbers.’

‘I like the plan so far!’ Isis said giving a look of approval to Menes. ‘We can change it if circumstances call for it!’

\* \* \*

It was almost noon when the group left the villa for the second time. Everything was meticulously arranged. The travelling party comprised the two goddesses, two loyal servants and eight warriors/guards. They hopped on two covered carts drawn by two horses each. Tied to the back of the second cart were four spare horses. The first cart carried the two goddesses, perched on comfortable seats, and the guards of Nephthys. Menes was driving. Travelling in the second cart were the servants and Isis’s guards. Their leader was driving. The necessities for the trip, including weapons, clothes, food, water and lanterns were packed in trunks.

They reached the Levant border in three days. In those days, the borders were not guarded. They were just a delineation of where Egypt ended and the Levant began. The Levant was not a unified state, instead its cities were ruled by independent kings, who also controlled the surrounding areas.

The empty and desolate borderland gave Menes plenty of opportunities for ambush to choose from. When the carts entered a small forest, his men stealthily got off and disappeared in the bush while the rest of the group kept going along the dirt road. Soon the carts crested a hill and stopped on the other side to wait for the men.

They emerged soon apparently pleased with the results of the skirmish, but said nothing in front of the women. They had been instructed to do so by Menes, who wanted to save the group from pointless discussions and emotional outbursts. What they did know, was that one of the young warriors got a superficial cut on the chest. Isis dressed the wound using malva, which fortunately grew by the side of the road, to stop the bleed.

‘Thank you, Isis!’ Menes said. ‘Your knowledge of the herbs and the skill with which you dressed the wound tell me that you are experienced in this!’

‘I learned this from my mother, Melia. My brothers were pretty wild growing up and she had to tend to their scrapes and wounds very often! Especially Phoroneus and Argos! They used to play soldiers shooting improvised arrows or rocks which they threw with their slings...’

‘What should we do now, Menes, according to your plan?’ Nephthys inquired. While we were waiting for you ditched our regular clothes and put on something more inconspicuous, as you requested.’

‘You were wise to do that because it saved us time. We will pretend we are a regular family, or better yet, two separate families’ he said and took a look at the people around him. I, as the eldest, will be the patriarch of one of the families and Isis’s officer, Hytos, will be the head of the other family. Our soldiers are young enough to pass for our sons!’ ‘Who will be your wives, Isis and I? Nephthys asked jokingly.

‘Yes, my Mistress, your servants will pretend to be the wives of Hytos! It is just a cover’ Menes blushed.

‘Fine, fine!’ Isis reassured him. ‘Two wives per officer is fine but doesn’t it seem suspicious that each family would have three sons, all of them strapping young fellows?’

‘It does, Mistress Isis! One of your guards could join us in our cart.’ Menes suggested.

\* \* \*

When they started moving again, the mood got better because now no one was following them. Two uneventful days later they reached their destination, the city of Byblos. Their luck turned. At the gate to the city they ran into a group of soldiers leaving the city in formation. Menes quickly turned to the side at the entrance to the bridge. However, the skill with which he did so attracted the attention of one of the officers leading the soldiers. He spurred his horse and approached Menes’s cart to take a better look at the driver. His polished helmet adorned with long white feathers glistened in the sun.

‘Who are you, where do you come from and why do you come to Byblos?’ the officer bellowed and expertly eyed the magnificent horses of the strangers.

‘We come from south, from Palestine.’ Menes replied calmly. Our houses were burnt down in a fire and we are looking for a place to settle!’

‘You did not say where you were from? The officer asked again, probing for discrepancies.

‘We come from a coastal village near Sidon.’

‘What village, how is it called?’

‘It was of several houses on the hill near Sidon. They called him „The Neighborhood“, but he is no longer there – he burned last week in the fire that broke out due to the great drought!’ ‘Centurion!’ The officer shouted, looking at the passing column. ‘I’m arresting these aliens! Take a bag of soldiers and take them to the commandant of the fortress! The commandant should lock the men in the dungeon!’

‘And where should I take the carts? There is no more room in the commandant’s yard?’ The centurion asked.

‘Take the carts, horses and women to my yard! There to take care of them!’

‘Yes, Master!’

‘Please, kind sir! Let us go our way, we are peace-loving folks!’ Nephthys tried to avoid the unfortunate turn of events while Menes kept quiet so as not to make matters worse.

The commander gave Nephthys, who had come to the front of the cart where Menes sat, a look of disdain intermixed with curiosity but chose to leave her plea unanswered. Was the beautiful goddess the reason for the arrest? On his way back to the front of the column, the commander shouted over one shoulder:

‘Carry out my order, centurion! And then quickly catch up with your military unit!’

Isis, who had seen the intentions of the wary commander, took from her luggage a leather purse filled with gold nuggets and hid it in her clothes. She gestured to the only soldier from her guard who was traveling in the first cart and the two rolled up the canvas covering the back of the cart and slithered out from the right side where the soldiers could not see them. As luck would have it, there was a thicket on their side of the road which gave them cover.

Soon the two carts pulled out noisily and headed toward the open gates of the city. The large column of soldiers moved out and disappeared in the distance. When they were far enough away so the shouts of the officers and the clomp of feet melted away, Isis and Ramis, which was the name of the soldier, got out from their hiding place and joined a group of locals. Some were workers going back in town weary from a day in the fields outside the city walls others were merchants bringing carts of goods from the nearby seaport. All of them were in a hurry to make it back before the gates were closed for the night.

\* \* \*

Isis and Ramis spent the night at one of the inns in town where they presented themselves as a mother and son. In the morning, they were among the first to leave the city once the gate was open. ‘What will happen to Mistress Nephthys, Menes and the rest?’ Ramis asked when they had fallen a sufficient distance behind the carts making their way to the seaport. ‘Shouldn’t we help them and get them free?’

‘We will, as soon as we find out where the loyalty of the king of Byblos lies, with Osiris or with Seth. If he is with the former master, Osiris, I will reveal myself to him and will beg him to release our people. If he, instead, has chosen to serve the new master, Seth, Nephthys will reveal herself to him.’

‘Got it!’ Ramis nodded, apparently relieved to hear that his comrades would be safe. ‘That is very wise of you, Mistress Isis!’

‘First things first, I want to search the coast down south, where they said they had seen the ark with Osiris! I want to make sure it is there! Once we do that, we’ll come back to the city and help our friends. After all, it is not likely that the king will decide see petitioners like us before lunch!’ ‘Excellent plan, Mistress!’ young Ramis agreed.

Isis and Ramis did not know that they were once again being followed by Seth's spies. Soldiers of the second regiment, sent after the first, had stopped by necessity in that small passing grove and accidentally came across the bodies of the soldiers of the first regiment, hastily covered with branches from Menes. The Set Spies, who also spent the night in the city, lurked from early dawn at the city gate. They easily

distinguished Isis by her height, posture and gait, although she wore local clothing. Now the eight men, disguised as workers, followed them about 50 or 60 rastegs \*. Unfortunately, the experienced Menes was not there, who would undoubtedly see these pursuers. They approached the pier and saw the sea. Men and carts continued along the starboard road, where the masts of anchored ships and boats swayed below. Isis and Ramis took the left road, which also descended down to the seashore. Their „company“ followed them, increasing the distance to about a 100 rastegs \*\*, and now they began to cover. No one else went that way.

The coast was tall, steep and open. The waves of the sea washed the rocks on the beach which was completely deserted. They kept good pace but slowed down a little when they approached a small promontory covered by a thick fig grove. When they reached the tip and crossed to the southern slope, Ramis, who was surveying the steeper sections of the coast between the fig trees spotted the ark in small cove.

‘It is here, Mistress, I saw it!’ he cried out with excitement. ‘It is really wedged between the roots of an old fig tree!’

‘Where, show me!’ Isis replied glowing.

‘No not come near, it is dangerous!’ the young man warned. ‘Let’s go through there!’ he said pointing to a less steep approach to the cove.

When they reached the water, they saw that the ark was sealed and intact although halfsubmerged. It was ensnared by several tree roots which the waves had exposed. Ramis got in the water with the intention to pull it out from the roots but Isis cried out.

‘Wait, Ramis, you won’t be able to do it alone. In fact, we won’t succeed even if I came and helped! The ark is probably waterlogged and very heavy now! We should come back with the rest of our group!’

‘You are right, Mistress!’ the young man agreed and got out of the water. It looks like the hardest job ahead of us would be to get it up the steep hill! Also, we will need the carts.’ ‘Let’s go back to Byblos and get our friends released! The ark is safe here, it would be hard to spot it from the sea unless you were looking to come here!’

They climbed the steep slope and hurried back to the city. Because of their lack of experience, they never noticed Seth’s agents who waited for them to leave before they climbed down the slope. As soon as they saw the ark, their commander sent one of the soldiers to the wharf. Four more men from their group were waiting there in their cart. The reason Seth had dispatched the second group of spies was exactly this. They were supposed to follow Isis and if she led them to the ark containing the body of Osiris, they were instructed to take it and bring it back to him in his palace in Egypt.

What had just transpired was exactly what Seth’s men were hoping for and they took advantage of the opportunity. If the situation was different, they would have had to fight Nephthys and Isis’s guards whilst doing everything possible not to cause harm to any of the goddesses. Realizing his good luck, the leader of the second group of spies wasted no time. While some of his men were tasked with pulling the ark out of the sea, the others brought the cart from the wharf. They loaded the precious cargo and doubled back on the coastal road leading to the wharf nearby. Six soldiers travelled in the cart, two in front and four in the back, and the remaining six rode the spare horses. Meanwhile back in the city, Isis had learned from the inn keeper that the king of Byblos, Adonis, did not like the new ruler of the world,

Seth. A gold nugget given to one of the city officials quickly got her audience with the king. When she entered the visiting room, the king looked down on her clothes but was impressed by the beauty of her face and her starry blue eyes.

\* Royal rasteg = ὀργυιά (orgyiá) = sajen = fadum = fathom = 2,1336 m. or 7 feet. 50 rastegs = 350 feet ~ 107 m. 60 rastegs = 420 feet = 128 m.

\*\* Royal rasteg = ὀργυιά (orgyiá) = sajen = fadum = fathom = 2,1336 m. or 7 feet. 100 rastegs = 700 feet = 213,36 m.

‘Who are you and why have you requested to see me?’ the king inquired.

‘I remember you, noble Adonis! You were at Seth’s palace when he brazenly murdered my husband, the Great Osiris!’ Isis whispered recognizing the king.

‘You are the beautiful Isis?!’ Adonis was embarrassed in his turn. ‘But apart from your beautiful face, which I may have seen at that sad ball, but unfortunately I did not remember, do you have any other proof of your personality?’

‘I am all that is, what has been and what will be, and the fruit (child) that I carry in me is the Sun!’ Isis said pathetically, in the style of a priestess initiated into the mysteries of the gods. ‘Here is my personal sign, given to me by Osiris! I never take it off my neck!’

Isis pulled a thick leather tie from her bosom; in her palm shone a large golden scarab covered with green enamel, and in the middle of it shone the red eye of the star Sothis above a pyramid depicted with bright blue lapis lazuli.

‘Oh, Mistress Isis, forgive my stupidity for not trusting you at once!’ The king of Byblos bowed low.

‘Rise, dear Adonis! I cannot be mad at you in such confusing times of lies and deceit? I came to beg you to release my travel companions from the royal dungeon where they were taken by mistake!’

‘Of course, I will do it for you right away! Who are they, if I may ask?’

‘My friend Nephthys and several men who are our guards!’

‘Nephthys, the wife of the wicked Seth?! Oh, dear lord! How is this possible? I have no desire to get involved in a conflict with Seth!’ the king gasped and sat down to make sense of the news. ‘Do not worry, Adonis! I promise you Seth will never find out! Neither I nor Nephthys will ever tell him about this!’

‘Thank you humbly, my mistress! I will send my secretary right away to free your friend!’ The king said and grabbed his bell but then changed his mind. ‘No, I will do this myself! I must offer my apology to magnificent Nephthys in person!’

‘Do not worry, Nephthys is very kind, she will understand!’ Isis said while the two were going down the winding stair case from the king's Tower. ‘This is not your fault, they were detained because of a young ambitious officer leading a group of soldiers whom we encountered last night at the bridge!’

‘Heavenly Lord! This is my son, Gladys, this cocky fool likes to play war a little bit too much!’ the king said angrily.

‘Your son is a fine young man, but only a little inexperienced. Do not judge him too harshly!’ Isis said magnanimously. ‘He meant well. In fact, now that I think about it, this might have been prompted by the unmatched beauty of my friend Nephthys!’

‘My Gladys likes Nephthys?! Oh, dear Lord!’ the king moaned. ‘The trouble this child has brought to my worried head!’

The two got in the main hall where the king prepared to meet the distinguished guests. Adonis dispatched his secretary after a brief instruction. Minutes later, servants buried the table under a mountain of dishes, fruits and wine and as soon they arranged everything and stepped back the secretary entered bringing the guests from the dungeon. Isis hugged Nephthys and Ramis joined his brothers in arms.

After the stormy apologies that the king of Byblos made to Queen Nephthys, the whole hungry company attacked and almost destroyed the food served. Everyone was in a hurry because Isis told them that she had established the location of the coffin. Everyone took their belongings, which the king took care to return to them. They went out into the courtyard and got on their wagons, which, together with the spare horses, were brought in due time to the entrance of the castle, loaded with fresh water, food and other necessities, kindly offered by the king. They said goodbye to the good host and left the fortress.

Very soon, the two cars arrived at the seashore and the group descended the steep slope. But what was the amazement of Isis and Ramis: the ark was missing. Obviously, this was another dastardly deed of Seth.

Broken by her next failure, Isis sat down on a tree stump and sobbed bitterly. She had no way of knowing that at the same moment a merchant ship, on which the ill-fated ark was loaded, sailed from a nearby port in a westward direction, towards the Nile Delta. Such a decision was made by the officer of the second Set Regiment, because he feared that if they went with their cars on the land road, they would be chased and attacked, and most likely they would not fulfill their task. The group of Isis and Nephthys set off by the most direct road – the coastal road. Menes and his men saddled the spare horses and galloped forward, hoping to catch up with the coffin thieves.

However, there was no trace of them...

\* \* \*

The goddesses and their cohorts returned to Lower Egypt several days later empty-handed. Here, they were welcomed by a new horrible rumor – Seth had chopped Osiris's body into forty pieces and ordered his men to scatter them in the most remote areas of the country.

Thirteen days had passed since the murder of the Great Osiris. There were twenty-seven days left in which his wife, Isis, had to find the scattered pieces of his body, stitch them together and perform the mummification and burial ritual.

To this end, apart from her friends, Nephthys enlisted the help of her son, Anubis, and he recruited his friends. The helpers scattered across the country to look for the body of Osiris. Incredibly, they found success not without the kind help of locals, who tipped them as to where Seth's men had hidden or disposed of parts of the body of the god. However, this took an additional seven days, which left Isis only 20 days to mummify and bury Osiris according to the customs before the 40<sup>th</sup> day of his death, which fell on the 26<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Khoiak\* so that the soul of the mighty god could ascend to the Celestial domains.

When Isis and Nephthys began the mummification process, the young goddesses Tamira and Renut came to help, as they had done before when they went out to look for the remains of the body of Osiris. Renut's family dominated exceptional linen fabric for the mummification and Tamira's family contributed fine lumber for the construction of the coffin. The mumiyo, which they used as disinfectant and preservative, was made from petrol precipitations that filtered through the rock near



oil fields. Nephthys herself had discovered these special properties of the mumiyo. She pioneered its use for mummification and got excellent results. Because of that, the oil of the earth is now known as nepth.

There was a tomb long prepared for Osiris, carved deep into the rock below the Sphinx on the Saqqara plateau and lined inside with red and green marble. But Isis feared that this tomb would be desecrated by Set, so she chose to lay the mummy of Osiris in his temple in the city of Abydos. The four goddesses completed the mummification process very quickly, only in eight days. On the 29<sup>th</sup> day of the death of Osiris, the burial procession with the coffin left for Abydos, arriving there the same day. On the 30<sup>th</sup> day, the 16<sup>th</sup> of Khoiak\*\*, they buried Osiris according to the ritual. Those attending the service noticed that Isis's were cried out. The night before the burial, the goddess never left the side of her dead husband, Osiris, saying her goodbyes and taking advice from his Ba regarding the upcoming birth of their son and his fate.

In Egypt, Isis had to beware of the wicked Seth and in Hellas, the threat came from the powerhungry Hera. The question was, where could she go to give birth to the Son of God in peace and protect his life, honor and dignity? Also, how would Osiris' prophecy that that their son would inherit the earthly throne materialize?...

\* December 22.

\*\* December 12.

*6. The return of Isis to her native Peloponnese under the name of Yo. The Claim of Marriage by Ares, Son of Hera*

**Peloponnese: Argos, Mycenae and Corinth.**

In the city of Argos, Melia and Mycenae kept it a secret from everyone that Yo was pregnant with Zeus's child. Even the men in her own family, Inachus, Argos, Phoroneus and Aegialeus, were none the wiser. The two women were afraid that they may be overheard by one of the spies of the cunning and ruthless Hera, who, on top of everything else, had a knack for making men do her bidding for her. One morning, some merchant from Argos who brought back from Egypt eight ships' worth of large premium wheat, spread the news that Osiris, i.e. Zeus, was murdered by his brother, Seth, i.e. Hades, who, in a fit of spite, cut his body in pieces and scattered them all over Egypt.

Of course, the citizens of Argos did not believe the merchants' news and thought it was just an ugly rumor. Yet, the merchants swore up and down it was true. They insisted that despite the countless obstacles Seth threw in her way, Isis, with the help

of kind Egyptians, found the body parts, sewed them together, mummified the body and gave the Great Osiris a ceremonial burial in accordance with the traditions. The merchants also claimed that the whole of Egypt was swept by great grief and anxiety about the future.

Yo arrived at the Inachus's castle almost at the same time as the news. She was dressed as a wealthy Egyptian but her face was covered completely by a thick veil. She was accompanied by a young Egyptian god named Anubis, who was the son of Nephthys. He visited Hellas often and was also known by the name Yakhos, son of Persephone and grandson of Demeter. His favorite places in Hellas were Corinth and Eleusis where Demeter, Cora and their descendants were worshipped as the inventors and patrons of agriculture and plants.

Upon learning the news of the tragic death of Zeus, Melia discretely summoned her daughter, Mycenae to her room, where Yo and Yakhos were already waiting.

'My children, you should know that after the death of Zeus Yo is in great peril as she carries in her uterus Zeus's heir! She managed to slip out of Egypt but Hellas is not a safe place for her either!'

'Yes, mother, I remember what you told us about Hera and how her lackey Python harassed the pregnant Leto!' Mycenae said full of determination.

'What if that cunning woman sends someone after Yo?' Melia continued anxiously. 'A cruel assassin or some treacherous poison wielding witch? We have to find somewhere to hide Yo, but where? We cannot trust anyone in Argos as anyone here could be a spy for the almighty Hera!'

'Let us send someone we can trust to Delphi, to Apollo!' Yo suggested.

'We know for sure that the archer has invited to Delphi the builder of the gods Hermes, Toth of Egypt, the father of algebra and geometry, the architect of the pyramids and the temples.' Yakhos reassured the three women. 'Hermes drew for Apollo plans for his own temple near the cave of the oracle of Delphi, Pythia. It is designed to receive all those wishing to learn what fate holds in store for them, and to hold the generous tributes brought to the oracle.'

'Yakhos, you are on friendly terms with Apollo and Hermes, aren't you?' Melia glanced at him. 'After all, you are half-brothers, you share one and the same father!'

'Brotherhood does not always equal friendship but in our case it does. We are loyal to one another and always help each other!'

'So you can be our secret messenger! You need to relay to Apollo and Hermes our request. They should come here as soon as possible and take Yo away on Apollo's ship!'

'Sure, Apollo usually keeps his ship in the bay of Corinth, in the foothills of Mount Parnassus, near Delphi, so it is always handy.' Yakhos confirmed.

'Where would they take me, mother?' Yo asked.

'I know a place where Hera would be powerless: it is with the Thracians!' Melia said with a triumphant smile. 'They must take you to the bay of Thessalos, in the lands of the Haedones near Halkidiki.'

'Apollo knows the bay well, he travels there and back very often accompanied by the nine muses. They visit the Thracian islands Thassos, Lemnos, Imbros and Samothrace!'

'Is this where I am supposed to hide from Hera?' Yo continued.

‘Crossing the lands of the Haedones to the north, you will hide behind the innumerable peaks and ridges of the mountains of Pangaea, where the invincible Satrai and Kykones rule. But you will not go to them! Your goal is the ancient sanctuary of the goddess Gaia, the mother of all gods. Today it belongs to the three Moirai – the Goddesses of Fate, Klotho, Lachesis and Atropa. They are famous for being impeccable midwives and will help you give birth to your child – the son of Zeus. Besides, if you happen to be persecuted, they do not allow men there, only as an exception – if some god humbly asks them to predict the future for him. But this rarely happens, because the gods are afraid of fate, as well as of its servants, the Moirai.’

‘How do I find the sanctuary, mother?’

‘I cannot help you with that. You will have to figure it out on your own, maybe ask some of the locals. Tell no one who you really are because Hera will leave no stone unturned in order to find you! Once the Moirai agree to let you in, you will be safe. They are known for giving sanctuary and protection to women in trouble, especially pregnant women!’ ‘I will go with her, mother!’ Mycenae jumped to her feet. ‘Yo will need my help!’

‘You are right! Although it was not my wish for this to happen, both my daughters roaming remote and unknown lands!’

‘They won’t be alone!’ Objected Yakhos. ‘I, Apollo and Hermes will be with them all the time! Well, at least to the entrance to the sanctuary of the Moirai in the Pangaeon Mountains!’ Melia fell silent for a moment then opened one of the two large chests underneath the window sill and took out a set of men’s clothes.

‘Put this on, Yakhos! You should blend in as much as possible! If anyone asks you where you are going or why...’

‘I come here every year from Egypt, this is the land of my grandmother, Demeter, and my mother, Persephone.’ The young man interjected. ‘And every time I come back, I visit my brother, Apollo, at Delphi nearby!’

‘Excellent. You are the ideal messenger for this mission!’ Melia rejoiced.

\* \* \*

Immediately after the departure of Yakhos, Mycenae and Yo, listening to the instructions of their mother Melia, also changed their clothes and set out for the neighboring Peloponnesian city, designated by the old Inachus as the inheritance of his daughter Mycenae and named after her. The inhabitants of the city of Mycenae loved the princess – their patron. Melia decided that Io would be better protected there than in her hometown of Argos, because the witty Hera would look for her first in Argos.

Melia did not know that Hera had long since set in motion her plan: when Yo returned home from Egypt, she would be captured and taken to Olympus. There, Hera would accuse Yo of being a prodigal bride who brazenly seduced her father-in-law Zeus by breaking her marriage vow with Ares. In this way, Hera hoped to turn Yo into her captive. Thus, she could easily thwart the birth of the last son of Zeus, appointed by him as heir to the throne and being an obstacle to the accession of her son Ares. Hera already saw herself in the alluring role of Queen-mother and real ruler of the world, supposedly in the shadow of her son.

But who could be the local secret ally of Hera, ready to commit such a hellish betrayal?

Argos, the brother of Io and Mycenae, to whom their father Inachos had bequeathed his own city, changing its name from Inachos to Argos.

Hera bribed the greedy Argos with the promise to make him king of the wealthy city of Athens. For this he would be helped by Ares with his well-armed and trained soldiers. In fact, Hera aimed to expel the goddess Athena and her son Erechthonius from Hellas, placing Argos as her loyal vassal in the strategic city of Athens.

From his birth, Argos became famous for one defect: he had no hair on the back of his head, but a semblance of a face, on which, however, another pair of eyes shone. So the first-born son of Inachos and Melia saw both forward and backward, and peripherally – to the side. That is why they gave him the nickname Many-eyed, which in the more distant corners of Hellas the rumor refashioned into Hundred-eyed or Panoptes. In addition, it was said that even when he slept, he did not close all his eyes, watching everything around.

Of course, the vigilant Argos did not miss the arrival of Yo from Egypt. When she and her companion went upstairs to their mother's room, he found some work in the courtyard of the castle, watching the gate and hoping to get an opportunity to capture his sister, which opened up to him sooner than he expected.

First to leave the castle was Yo's Egyptian companion, dressed in local clothes and riding the nimble dore given to him by Melia. Yakhos took the shortest route, past the city of Mycenae, in the valley between the mountains of Arachneon and Cylene, and through the Isthmus of Corinth he had to cross Attica and Boeotia to reach Delphi.

After him came Yo and Mycenae, sent by their mother Melia. Argos calmly waited for his mother to come home and went after his sisters bravely, without hiding. They took the same convenient road from which they would turn to the nearby city of Mycenae.

'Girls, wait for me!' he shouted and tried to catch up.

'Argos! Why are you following us?' the young women turned.

'Why are you going out alone? Would you mind if I came with you?' Argos asked innocently.

'I have nothing better to do anyway!'

'Sure, we'll be safer with you, brother!' the kind-hearted Yo nodded.

'Since you have nothing better to do!' Mycenae agreed. 'We are going to my city! I haven't been to my place in a while!'

They followed the road until they reached Cow Hill, which is close to midway between the cities of Argos and Mycenae, overlooking the fork where the road to Mycenae started. Growing on the top of the hill was a large bushy apple tree. Mycenae was used to taking a rest in the shadow of the tree on her way to the city. They sat there to take a break. Argos took out a skin full of aged, thick wine from his sack. He pulled the plug, took a sip and smacked his lips loudly:

'This wine of mine is mighty sweet!'

'Let me drink, brother!' The thirsty Mycenae asked and held out her hand.

'Me too, brother!' Yo added.

The two sisters never suspected that unwittingly they were helping Argos execute his sneaky plan, which would result in them losing their freedom. For their brother

had added to the flavorful drink a sleep-inducing herb which could take a bull or a cow to the realms of Morpheus, let alone two young and naïve women.

‘That’s enough, sister!’ Argos said and snatched the skin from Mycenae who was not done drinking. ‘Leave some for Yo! She, too, is thirsty?’

‘I am sorry!’ the embarrassed Mycenae apologized and stretched on the grass under the tree.

‘Your wine is very sweet indeed!’

Yo gulped down what was left of the flavorful drink, smacked her lips and lay on the ground beside her sister. Argos felt the bag to make sure that the coiled length of rope he had put inside was still there and looked around. All he had to do now was to wait a while and his task would be accomplished.

When his sisters fell fast asleep, he pulled their relaxed bodies next to the trunk of the apple tree, rested their backs against it and tied them. Then he pulled a piece of Egyptian papyrus and a small piece of charcoal. He drew a rudimentary map of the area, marking the cities of Argos and Corinth, the road that connected them, the fork and the road to Mycenae, the hill and the large apple tree, next to which he placed a thick cross. Finally, he took out of his bag the homing pigeon Hera had given him to help complete his assignment. He rolled the papyrus, tied it to the leg of the pigeon and released the bird. Flapping its strong wings, the pigeon took to the skies like an arrow.

„When you capture Yo, release this pigeon! It will fly straight to his cage on the island of Aegina nearby. My son Ares will wait for it there. When the pigeon flies back to its cage, he will know that you have captured his bride, Yo. It will then take less than a day for Ares to come to you to Argolis and the location you have chosen to retrieve his woman!” the self-assured Hera had told him.

\* \* \*

At the same time that Argos was looking contentedly with four eyes at his prey, his sleeping sisters, Yakhos was entering the city of Corinth. Instead of crossing the bridge over the Corinth Canal, he had to stop by the famous blacksmith Sideros to shoe his mare, which suddenly began to limp with her left front leg. And, as they say: „All evil is for good!“ Would you not, entering the forge, Yakhos saw his dear brothers Hermes and Apollo near the whistling bellows and the hot hearth of Sideros.

‘What a glorious meeting! What are you looking for here?’ Yakhos shouted in amazement.

‘Sideros is making us large bronze braces to connect the stone blocks and smaller ones, for the wood supports and beams!’ Apollo replied with a smile. ‘As you may know, Hermes and I are building my temple at Delphi!’

‘I know, Apollo! Have you forgotten that last year I came to your construction site?’ Yakhos agreed. ‘Listen to me now: fate itself has gathered us together in this glorious forge, strewn with fiery sparks! I was going to Delphi, to you, for something important, but my mare was lame! So, I stopped at Sideros, and the two of you are miraculously here!’

‘Did something happen?’ Hermes asked and his expression turned serious.

‘Let’s go outside and I will tell you!’ Yakhos replied.

In the yard outside the forge Yakhos gave his brothers a quick outline of what had happened.

‘Let’s go get Yo! She will be completely safe with me in Delphi!’ Apollo said stroking gently the taunt strings of his bow, which was sticking above his shoulder.

‘No, Apollo! Hera has dispatched Ares to look for her and he always has with him a cohort of trained soldiers for whom bloodshed is nothing more than business as usual!’ Hermes pointed out. ‘Melia wants me to take Yo to a safe place: in Thrace, to the fearsome Pangaeon Mountains of the Satrae, in the Inaccessible Oracle-Divination of the Moirai, the Mistresses of Fate!’

‘She is right to require this from you, Melia is!’ Hermes concluded. ‘Here is what we do. Apollo, you take Yakhos, board your ship and set sail east through the Corinth canal to the Saronic Gulf. Drop anchor as soon as you are out of the canal and look for Yo and me! I will take Yakhos’s mare and bring the girl there!’

‘The mare needs to be reshod first!’ Yakhos reminded.

‘Very well. You go to the ship and I will ask Sideros! Remember, there is no time to waste.

Ares is close by; I can smell him!’ Hermes said and hurried back to the forge.

‘Come on, Yakhos, let’s go to the ship!’ Apollo urged.

‘Hope for tail winds, my brother!’ Yakhos said and looked to the skies.

‘Wind is not a factor in the narrow canal! Apollo replied. ‘We will count on our oars!’

After a while, a knock was heard in the courtyard of Sideros’ forge; Hermes flew out of the gate, bent low over the filly and sunk into the mountain gorge, enveloped by the crowns of hundred-year-old oaks. When he came out of the gorge, Hermes tamed the animal and they trotted. The filly needed a rest, but without stopping their course.

Out of habit, looking around, at the fork towards the city of Mycenae, Hermes noticed and recognized the tall and large-headed Argos, who was walking around the branchy tree at the top of the cone-shaped hill. Hermes also recognized Mycenae, the sister of Argos, by her characteristic red and puffy hair. She sat leaning against the stem and seemed to be asleep. From the road, looking from below, Hermes could not see that on the other side sat Yo in the same way, the one he was looking for.

Although he was in a hurry, the intuitive Hermes decided to stop by Argos, to ask him if he knew where his other sister Yo was. He jumped from the filly and dragged her up, along the steep slope of the hill. When he climbed, he was surprised to see Yo on the other side of the stem, but he was even more surprised that the two sisters were attached there.

„Was poor Argos helping Ares?” Hermes thought to himself. „Why would he? Unless the crafty Hera bought him off with a promise! I should be careful with this wild giant. I cannot allow him to surprise me!”

‘Hello, many-eyed Argos!’ Hermes shouted loudly to check how deep the two girls were sleeping. ‘What’s wrong with your sisters?’

‘They drank my wine and fell asleep!’ It’s strong for them!’ Argos replied uncomfortably, trying to remain calm, but the frequent blinking of all his eyes betrayed him.

‘And why did you tie them so tightly?’ Hermes shouted again, noticing with satisfaction that they were moving and peeling off their eyelids.

‘Just in case – don’t fall on their heads when they wake up!’ Argos wondered what to think of. ‘Well done, you are very caring!’ Hermes praised him, to lull his vigilance; apparently Argos was waiting for someone here to hand over his sisters to him for some reward, and now that someone, probably Ares, is coming here to pick them up.

‘Ah, what did I find here!’ Hermes stood next to a nearby bush and tossed behind him the bright green emerald he always carried with him, for good luck. ‘It’s dazzling! Come and see it!’ ‘What, where?’ The greedy Argos flinched.

‘Here it is! If you want, take it; I don’t need it!’ Hermes laughed.

‘But it’s an emerald! I have never seen such a big one!’ Argos wondered. ‘Is it for me?’ ‘Take it, it’s yours!’ Hermes encouraged him and told him. ‘I have from my father Zeus a whole jar of adamantine, rubies, sapphires and emeralds. I also have a pink chalcedony, the shape and size of a duck egg...’

Reassured by Hermes’ smile and gentle tone, and attracted by the magical green glow of the large emerald, Argos bent his huge body and stretched out his hand to take it. This brief moment awaited Hermes, who had imperceptibly pulled out half of his crooked sharp sword. He was a little startled, because when he leaned over Argos, the latter looked at him from the back of his head with his second pair of eyes. But too late. These eyes were terrified at the gleam of steel, and through it the shadow of death. The head separated from the body rolled down the slope, but there was no time for burial...

Grabbing his emerald, Hermes wiped the blood from his sword. Meanwhile, the girls, awakened and wondering why they were tied to the tree, talked:

‘Argos, you cheeky miscreant, why have you tied us down?’ Mycenae shouted.

‘Mother was right. Argos was bought by Hera. He was the traitor in our midst! Yo discerned the harsh truth.

‘The wine!’ Mycenae said. ‘He spiked it so he could tie us down!’

‘He is probably bringing my fiancé, Ares. He will give me to him. Oh, cruel fate!’ Yo cried.

‘When will I learn to be more careful!’

Imagine their surprise when Hermes appeared out of nowhere. They were simply dumbfounded.

‘Relax, Yo. Don’t worry, Mycenae! No harm will come to you. Let me get you out of these ropes...’ Hermes drew his sharp sword again and sliced through the ligatures. ‘... I need to get you out of here. Apollo is waiting for us aboard his fast ship in the Saronic Gulf! Kind Yakhos is with him!’

‘Yakhos ..., how did he find you so fast?’ Yo asked trying to process the news. ‘How is this possible?’

‘Is this some sort of a miracle?’ Mycenae asked trying to get the stiffness out of her arms. ‘We ran into each other at Corinth, at Sideros’s forge! Yakhos brought this wonderful mare there to be reshod. Apollo and I were already there because we needed Sideros to make us some bronze ties for the temple at Delphi we are building!’

‘How do we get to Saronikos?’ Yo inquired.



‘You girls will ride the mare and I will run beside you! They do not call me Hermes the Fleet foot for nothing?’ Hermes replied and added ‘We need to leave as fast as we can because Ares the tyrant is most likely on his way here!’ ‘Let’s go, then!’ Mycenae and Yo agreed.

They went down the heel but Hermes veered off slightly to spare the girls from having to see the beheaded body of Argos which lay behind a bush. Once they reached the flat, he helped them get into the saddle of the mare and then gave the horse a good slap. She darted forwards and Hermes ran beside them keeping pace effortlessly. Moments later they disappeared into the gorge that would lead them to Corinth.

At that exact moment, the sounds of hooves echoed in the other mountain gorge, which led to Argos. Seconds later Ares appeared riding a huge black steed. Following close behind was a group of about a hundred of his most ruthless warriors.

Ares was holding the piece of papyrus the homing pigeon had brought him. ‘Is this the road to Mycenae?’ he asked his local scout who was riding behind him.

‘Yes, Master, this is the road to City of Mycenae!’ the scout confirmed.

‘This is the till with the apple tree that was drawn on the map, isn’t it?’ Ares said.

‘That is right, Master!’ the scout nodded.

‘Where is that cursed fool, Argos, then? Where is my fiancé Yo?’ Ares growled and pointed toward the hill and his thugs all focused on it.

‘I don’t see them, Master?’ The scout shuddered.

‘Mordus, Kyl, go up there, look for them and report back!’ Ares barked as he turned his head back. ‘Yes, Master!’ the first two of the riders replied and spurred their horses.

‘No, not like this. Get off your horses and go up there on foot!’ Ares ordered. ‘I don’t want you to torture the animals like this!’

The soldiers went up the steep hill on foot, their weapons clashing and clanking. ‘There is no one here!’ one of them shouted.

‘There is something! Here, behind the bush!’ the other one shouted. ‘Only, his head is missing. Someone must have relieved him of it!’ ‘Describe the body!’ Ares barked.

‘A big, tall man..., wearing large pants tied at the waist by a nice leather belt...’

‘That is enough. You can come down now! This was our man, Argos!’ Ares said.

‘We will head for Mycenae City, with any luck that is where they are going, too!’

Ares and his men took the road to Mycenae but when they went around the hill the column stopped again. Gazing at them from a ditch beside the road with glazed-over eyes was the severed head of Argos. They all looked back at it in stunned silence.

‘Off to Mycenae! Ares ordered and pointed the way. ‘No one touches the head!’

While they were riding, Ares pondered his future actions: „My inside man, Argos, is dead. If I don’t catch up with the fleeing Yo on our way there, I won’t be allowed to Mycenae and search for her there. I could, of course, take the city with my 100 men if I catch them by surprise but that will turn the whole of Argolis against me, which I am not prepared for. If only my mother, Hera, had recruited someone inside the city of Mycenae. That would have been extremely helpful.”

\* \* \*

Meanwhile, Hermes, Yo and Mycenae had just reached Corinth. They passed by the city and followed the Corinth canal to the Saronicus Gulf, which was lined with centuries-old oak groves.

Soon they spotted Apollo's ship anchored close to shore. Apollo was busy tending to the sails but Yakhos, who was surveilling the beach, saw them. They pulled up the anchor and eight oars propelled the small ship which had its stern turned toward the shore as the water was deep enough for it.

Hermes took the rope Yakhos had thrown to him. Yo and Mycenae lowered the horse's blinds and had it jump on deck with them still in the saddle. Hermes jumped next. Apollo, who had just set the sails, pulled them up as he had concluded that his uncle, Poseidon, had granted them favorable winds to take them in their desired direction, north.

The oarsmen pulled their oars in because the gust of wind was strong enough to fill the sails and make the masts creak cheerfully. They headed for Thrace, the land of the free Satrae, who bowed down only to Cronus and his son, Zeus.

After a scary and eventful day, Yo and Mycenae got a well-deserved chance to rest. They enjoyed the smooth, quiet movement of Apollo's nimble ship. Sitting beside them were their loyal guards, Hermes, Apollo and Yakhos for whom protecting the life of the pregnant goddess Yo had become a great mission.

Will Hathor Isis or Sacred Cow Yo find refuge in freedom-loving Thrace to give birth to the Son of God, the child of Zeus and grandson of Cronus?



*7. Yo's escape to Thrace and her persecution from Ares. The Moirae provide her with a refuge on Peak Nissa in the Thracian mountains of Pan Gaia (the Rhodopes). The Birth of the Son of God*

**Thrace: Bay of Thessalos, Perun (Orbel) Mountain, peak Nyssa or Sutka in Pan Gaia Mountains (the Rhodopes).**

Seeing himself not busy with work, Apollo took out a chest from the storage cabin and opened it. It was full of arrowheads forged by the aforementioned Sideros. They were already made by the blacksmith and took them while the construction those brackets remained for later. These arrows were not of bronze, but of an extremely hard and tough metal, which Hermes, or Thoth, had brought from Egypt to the forge of Corinth. The wonderful metal was collected in the morning on the sands, where it was clearly visible. This star gift fell on burnt pieces from the sky, so he calls it or „heavenly adamas“, as well as „bone of Ra“. It was not easy to find and in quantity, and it was expensive. It was difficult to melt it – on a very strong and hot fire, but a blade made of it, it passed through bronze armor like a warm knife through oil.

Hermes, famous among other things as a master of arms, had prepared a whole bundle of straight wooden trunks. Now, together with Apollo, they had the necessary time to mount on the trunks the heavy and hard „adamas“ tips, and at the back end of the arrows they fastened crosses made of hard feathers, ensuring straight flight and accurate hitting.

Yakhos left his companions and went to sit on a water vat left on the broad stern, next to the ship's rudder. Sadness for sunny city of Eleusis came over him. At this time of the year, he spent about a month there, in the palace of his grandmother Demeter, where he took care of one of her gardens – the one with the citrus. Gazing with melancholy back at the expanse of the sea, he suddenly realized that there was something on the horizon behind them. He focused his vision, and it was very special. One of the features of Anubis, that is, Yakhos, was that he saw both day and night. He had the eyes of a predatory beast – a lion, a tiger, a leopard, a wolf, a hyena. Because of his special eyesight and white skin, it was believed that he could see and could pass into the other world, and his animal incarnation was the dog.

“Yes, this is a ship, a ship with black sails!” Yakhos established himself and shouted: ‘Brothers, come to the stern!’

‘What is it, Yakhos?’

‘We are followed by a ship with black sails!’ He pointed back into the distance.

‘How did you see it? There is only a black dot there!’ Apollo was surprised.

‘I believe him, Apollo!’ Hermes said seriously. ‘Yakhos’ sees much better than we do! And this ship belongs to the pig Ares!’

‘The Ship of the Pig Ares is heavy and cannot catch up with my light-winged speedboat!’ Apollo said proudly.

‘They can't reach us by water, but when we go down to the shore...’ Hermes thought. ‘These are young, tough men who will easily catch up with us!’

‘The young men of Ares carry many weapons. They are unlikely to go faster than us!’

‘From the three of us, yes, but from the girls!?’ Hermes looked at Yo and Mycenae, who were smiling discussing something; They didn't know about the black ship yet. ‘They are our burden and our responsibility! Besides, Yo is pregnant!’

‘Of course we will not give them to the monster Ares!’ Yakhos said passionately.

‘We will beat them, although there are only three of us!’ The archer Apollo threatened. ‘I agree with you, brothers, but there is only one way to succeed: by combining our strength, agility and combat experience with military cunning and tactics!’ Hermes said.

‘You are in tactics, and I am in accurate shooting!’ Apollo replied.

‘Good, that's right!’ Hermes agreed. ‘When we sail to the gulf of Thessalus and set foot in the land of the Haedones, I will tell you what to do and from where let's pass! I guessed how we would reduce the number of Ares satraps!’

Set to work: Hermes, Apollo, Yakhos, Yo, and Mycenae, as well as seven rowers from Apollo's crew; The eighth was on duty at the ship's helm. They collected the available weapons and distributed them among the men. Luggage was prepared for each individually: some food, leather bag with water, thick yamurluks, hats-googles. At that time, the Thracian mountains were covered with snow; over there a bitter winter was raging.

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They arrived at the Gulf of Thessalus just before nightfall. Apollo whispered to his helmsman how, using the evening breeze, to take the ship to a sheltered cove nearby, put away the sails and wait for him until his return.

The others grabbed their assigned cargo and quickly moved away from the shore, melting into the twilight and evening mist, even as the moon tried to break through the clouds. They were confidently led by Hermes, who knew perfectly well the local lands where he had grown up. Moreover, in his teenage years, his father Zeus gave him to the northwest from here the land of the region of Devol, where the young Hermes built his first house, assisted by several friends. Well rested on the ship and full of strength, the twelve fugitives – five deities and seven rowers – crossed the plain at night. At sunrise they began to climb the southeastern slope of Perun or Perin Mountain, renamed Orbel after a while.

Hermes deliberately avoided villages and neighborhoods, because he knew that, led by the tracks, Ares would harass the locals, asking them about Yo. They rested in uninhabited places; They topped up with water from the springs along the way. Food their stocks were small but nutritious: trout, yellow cheese and rusks, which they took from the well-stocked hold of the Apollo ship.

And indeed, Ares did not miss the track. He very wisely took with him Hiros, his guide to Argolis, because the latter was famous as an experienced hunter and tracker. Hyros remembered certain characteristic prints from the fugitives' shoes were already on the Thessalian coast and followed them without any problems, and when Ares' detachment reached the slope of Perrinus, the snow made his work even easier.

Before disembarking from his ship, Ares took off his heavy battle armor, leaving for himself only the thin but strong knitted armor. Now, taking on the role of a hunter of prey, he disguised himself as a terrible, ugly hornet – a zoomorphic uniform that he wore just in case on his ship. At the same time, that is, in the early afternoon, the Twelve reached the high, sharp and long ridges of Perrin, pure granite rocks, white in winter with snow. During the day the bright sun partially melted the snow, but at night the water and slush froze; thus the sharp granite pinnacles became icy, and on the ice he was accumulating more snow. The experienced Hermes warned them about this danger, since as the mountain path ran just along the sharp ridge of the ridge; Its width was somewhere two, and somewhere only one span. One careless step to the side and fly into the bottomless abyss.



It was precisely this circumstance that Hermes had in mind when choosing the route: both the most direct route to the oracle of the Moirae, and the most dangerous – for the heavily armed and unprepared soldiers of Ares.

And what was the guarantee for the satellites of Hermes? He had a solution to this problem as well: he took a long rope from Apollo's ship to bind the Twelve in a collective chain. If by chance someone slips and falls off the path, his comrades should pull him back up.

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However, before they catch the deadly path along the ridge of the first ridge, Hermes led his companions to the rock, where many years ago his father Zeus had chained Prometheus with thick bronze chains, because he had betrayed the secret of fire to the mortals. The latter was still standing there: above his rock there was another, like an eaves, which nevertheless protected it from the snows, storms and rains, and in summer – from the scorching sun.

Prometheus was the son of the Titan Yapetus and the oceanid Clymene. His brother was Atlant, whose daughter Maya gave birth to Zeus the swift-footed and witty son, Hermes. So the brothers Prometheus and Atlant were the connecting

genealogical link between the divine clans of the Titans Oceanus and Yapetus, and as the grandson of Atlant and son of Zeus, Hermes connected these two clans with a third: the clan of Cronus.

When they heard Prometheus' groans, even before they saw him, the Hermes's companions were startled. But Hermes calmed them down and took them to him, to a shelter under the rock. 'Hello, uncle!' Hermes said. 'This is my uncle, Prometheus, surely you have heard his tragic story?'

'Welcome, Hermes!' Prometheus replied. 'You too, young ladies and gentlemen! It has been a while since the last time I had visitors!'

'Uncle, I came to free you from this chain!' Hermes said and looked at Apollo. 'I said earlier that I wanted you to get a sledge hammer?'

'Zarion, fetch me the sledge hammer!' Apollo ordered one of his men.

'What are you doing, Hermes, you do not want to go against the will of the Almighty Zeus!'

Prometheus warned. 'There is going to be trouble!'

'Unfortunately, my father is dead. Soon it will be forty days since his death!' Hermes replied gloomily.

'What do you mean dead, he was at the peak of his powers!' Prometheus objected.

'His no good brother, Hades, got him killed with his evil trickery, uncle! I will tell you all about it later!'

Hermes raised the heavy hammer as far as he could lift it and smashed it with all his might against the wedge to the right of the elderly titan, which held the chain. The wedge broke and the chain fell from the body of the tortured Prometheus. He rose up and his bones cracked loudly but his eyes lit up as the sun.

'Thank you dear Hermes!' Prometheus hugged his nephew. 'I will never forget the kindness that you showed me!'

'I want you to know, uncle, I never agreed with my father and his decision to chain you to this rock. I only now, after his death, got the opportunity to remedy this horrible injustice!'

The two hugged each other again and Yo and Mycenae shed a few tears moved by Hermes's kindness and the pure joy visible on the face of Prometheus. Even the other men felt a certain dampness around the eyes.

'You are Yo, aren't you? The one that will give birth to the next ruler of the world?!' Prometheus suddenly said leaving Hermes's embrace. Prometheus could notice a faint halo around the young goddess, he had the gift to see it.'

'Yes, I am Yo, Zeus's beloved and I carry in my womb his heir!' Yo replied to her own surprise as she had never met Prometheus nor had he met her.'

'I know; I could see the glow! There is great power emanating from you!' the titan said and made a long pause. 'I can tell you what fate has in store for you. A good outcome won't come easy and it will take hard fight! I see a relentless hornet coming after you relentlessly and sharpening its sting...'

'Is that Ares you see, uncle?' Hermes inquired.

'That's the one! He is wearing a winged cape and has a horned mask on. He looks exactly like a hornet!'

'Help us, uncle! Let us know if other enemies are coming after us!' Hermes asked.

‘Of course I will help you! Not only because you freed me from the wretched chains, Hermes, but also because the world needs to be saved from the evil that Ares and Hades represent! The savior grows in her belly!’ Prometheus said pointing to Yo. ‘You have no other enemies but these will suffice!’

‘I will be grateful to you for the rest of my life if you show us the way?’ Yo begged. ‘We came to Thrace on the advice of my mother, Melia, but we are not completely sure we came to the right place?’

‘Smart lady, Melia! She has advised you well, the Sanctuary of the Moirai is the only safe place for you! I will tell you how to find it. Follow my instructions and you will accomplish your mission!’ Prometheus said and sat on a rock nearby.

‘No time for that, honorable Prometheus.’ Apollo said looking down the slope the twelve of them had just climbed; nothing to worry yet.

‘You do have time; Ares is far behind!’ Prometheus insisted. ‘You, however, have a point,

Apollo. I will be brief so you could preserve your lead!’

‘Apollo!’ Hermes agreed. ‘Let us hear what Prometheus has to say! It is important!’

‘Listen and remember my words!’ Prometheus started. ‘In the days following the winter solstice a meaningful event will take place. Yo the Cow will give birth to the Son of God! For this reason, the three mountains, Perin, Rila and Pangaeon, which surround the hollow you see below, will be given the name Kau-Kaz or the „Cow’s womb“. Kau is the Cow Yo, and her womb – Kaz – is the hollow. Down there, further to the east towards Pangaeon, there are two nameless peaks almost mirror images of one another. The taller one is where you will find The Oracle-Sanctuary of the three Moirai, Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos. You will give birth to your son there, Yo. A little boy but destined to do great things. The women I mentioned will help you with this...’ ‘But why?!’ the scared Yo interrupted Prometheus’s tale. ‘Isn’t it too early for him to come into the world? In a few days it will be six months since he was conceived?’

‘This may be the case, dear Yo, but that is what I see! I see you as a happy young mother holding your baby in your arms. He is small, but healthy! Trust the Moirai. Only they can make sense of the jumbled weave of faith!’ Prometheus reassured her and went on... ‘In the Kaz valley, which is the concave symbol of the mother’s womb, rises the peak, which is the convex phallic symbol. This peak shall henceforth be named Nyssa and Sutis or Sutka. That last one will be the name of your starry transformation, dear Yo, also known as Isis, for the star of Sotis. Every morning on the eastern horizon, you, celestial mother, will give birth to the Son of God, the sun. The name of the mount where your little son will be born, Nyssa, will be a part of his name as well, Dio-Nysus, or the God of Nyssa. A thousand years later, when the cult of Dionysus will have spread to the rest of the civilized world, Egyptians, Ethiopians, Levantians, and Indians will give this name to their mountains and all of them will insist that the son of god traces his origins to their lands. Furthermore, the word baccha and mithra, which also mean uterus, will form another name of the mother of god and suckling mother, Bacchae, and two more glorious names for her son, Bacchus and Mithras.’

‘Tell us, Prometheus, about the road ahead!’ Hermes reminded the elderly titan.



‘You, the male retinue, will escort the two goddesses only to the sanctuary of the Moirae. On the way there you will slaughter most of the people of Ares, and I will help you. And there, while he is lurking and waiting for Yo to come out of the cave, you will finish off the others. Then go home! Yo will do it yourself... And you, Yo, will descend north on the rounded peaks of the spacious Pangaea. When you descend into the northern valley inhabited by the Thracians-Bessi and reach the Hebros River, springing from Rila – the highest part of the Kau-Kaz, do not try to cross it, because now it is deep, and along it go down to the east to the country of the Amazons! There you will get dirty through the shallow strait, which in your honor will be called the Cow Strait or the Bosphorus. Then you will wander for a long time in Anatolia, where the deadly Gorgons live, on whose heads snakes curl instead of hair! Beware of them! And also from the terrible griffins and from the one-eyed arimaspias; and you will meet them on your way! At last you will reach the Holy Land of Egypt and in the Nile Delta you will find peace at last...’

‘In Egypt? I barely made it out of there and just escaped the clutches of the paranoid Hades?’ ‘I know, Yo! But back then your son was inside you. A week from now he would be born! Leto, the mother of this strapping fellow, Apollo, will hide the child at her refuge in the delta and will take care of him. Toth and Anubis will help her.’ Prometheus looked at them inquisitively and they nodded in agreement. You will present yourself to Seth and you will tell him that you were never pregnant with Zeus’s child and that people were just spreading rumors about a nonexistent son...’

‘Thank you, noble Prometheus, that you showed me my future!’ Yo said and bowed.

‘Hermes, do you happen to have a spare white cape, like yours?’ Prometheus asked.

‘I do, uncle!’ Hermes replied. ‘I carry a spare one with me in case it gets too cold and the women want to use it as a blanket! They have warm clothes so I think you can have it. Here you are! I see that your clothes have rotted on your back during all those years of captivity. I think that a blizzard is coming!’

‘Thank you, dear boy!’ Prometheus said and gave him another hug.

‘We must go!’ Apollo urged again.

‘Very well. Let’s go!’ Hermes agreed. ‘I will lead the way and Yakhos and Apollo will follow with their bows at the ready! The rest of you, tie yourselves to one another and make sure the girls are in the middle! Understood?’ ‘Yes!’ they all replied.

‘Start moving but be careful!’ Hermes said briskly and stepped onto the narrow path, feeling for the rock beneath the snow.

Soon they disappeared in the white mist of a large cloud that appeared suddenly as if sent by the celestial father to give them a place to hide.

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Prometheus, sensing the approaching Ares, put on the white cape and hid in the recess under the ledge. The pursuers came and passed right above his hiding place blinded by the fast-moving billows. Ares pressed ahead giving out quiet but sharp orders. His soldiers followed in single file. As soon as the clanking of the weapons

faded in the distance, Prometheus got out of his hiding place and followed them, unseen thanks to the white snow. He wasn't even close to them yet when he heard a desperate scream, a poor soul fell in the snowy abyss.

'What's wrong with you, idiots?' the angry voice of Ares echoed.

'Eaneas slipped and fell!' someone reported guiltily.

'We should take it slow, Master!' one of his lieutenants suggested.

'It can't be slower, grandmothers like that!' Ares shouted. 'Here, in Perin, we have to catch them! If they get into the boundless depths of Pangaea, go look for them!'

The soldiers did not care for these orders but followed their leader and Prometheus followed them, closely, blending in with his surroundings wrapped in the white cape. He did not request the cape to deal with the cold. He had become friends with the mountain chill a long time ago. He wanted the cape in order to hide in the mists. Prometheus wanted to kill some of Ares's soldiers in order to make it easier for the twelve fugitives.

Soon, the titan caught up with the last soldier in the column, who had fallen behind because he had to carry a long, heavy spear. At one point, the soldier turned around but was unable to defend himself. All he saw was a huge white shadow descending upon him. Prometheus pushed him into the abyss easily but before the soldier fell, he made sure to take his spear from him. The cry of this poor soldier was even louder but none of the pursuers had the courage to stop the column and turn around, because their master had made it abundantly clear that speed was of the essence. Prometheus hunkered down and waited for the soldiers to put some distance between them. Soon, he caught up with two more of Ares's thugs who never saw him coming. This time he used the long spear he had just acquired. He did not use it to stab them, as that would have left bloody trails in the snow. Instead, he just slapped them from the side with it, but the force of his blows was enough to send them flying to their certain deaths. No one noticed his presence because at that very moment another of one of Ares's soldiers slipped, and then another still, this time close to the head of the column. Ares slowed down and even stopped but not because of the frequent mishaps behind him. He had discerned through the billowing mist and snow, an outcrop of dark rocks, possibly the crest of the ridge. He was worried the ones he followed could use the terrain to set up an ambush. While he was debating what to do, he felt something hit his leather helmet, the antlered "hornet" head. Fortunately for him, the bow that shot this arrow was not powerful enough and it bounced off the thick leather of the helmet. A second impact followed. This time powerful enough to knock him on his back. Thankfully for him the path was wider here so he didn't fall. Ares shrieked in pain. The heavier second arrow penetrated the leather armor on his chest and its tip went through the chainmail shirt underneath, sinking into his flesh... The first arrow came from the bow of Yakhos, the second, from Apollo's.

'Down on the ground! Everybody, take cover! They are shooting at us!' Ares barked, starting to panic.

Before his men had time to react, two more arrows hissed by. The first one hit Hyros in the eye as he walked behind Ares, and the second pierced the chest of one of his assistant sticking out of his back. Both of them died instantly. The rest of the soldiers lay on the ground.

At the same time, covered by the rocks Apollo and Yakhos hurried forward to catch up with the rest of their group. They had accomplished their goal, slowing down Ares for their pursuers would not dare raise their heads for a while, making sure the archers were gone.

The group waited for them in an area of relative flat ground which connected the ridge they just traversed to an even taller one, with an even sharper crest and an even narrower path running along it.

‘What happened?’ Hermes asked pleased they were unharmed.

‘We killed at least two of them for sure!’ Apollo replied. ‘These new arrows tipped with celestial adamas are something else!’

‘Apollo hit Ares!’ Yakhos told his comrades.

‘And ...?’ Hermes said and looked at Apollo intensely.

‘I think I only wounded him, although my arrow was supposed to go through, as happened with the soldier walking behind him!’ Apollo reported.

‘No, no, he killed him!’ Yakhos argued. ‘My arrow bounced off his helmet but yours struck him in his chest! He fell to the ground and screamed!’

‘Exactly because he fell on his back I do not think my arrow went in deep enough. In contrast, with the man I struck walking behind him, he remained standing when my second arrow hit and collapsed to the ground a moment later!’

‘Apollo is correct!’ Hermes said. ‘Ares would have been dead now if it weren’t for the lightweight chainmail shirt he wears under his armor, it, too is made from the same type of adamas! I personally made it for him in the Albion when we fought the giants of Atlantis!’

‘Mystery solved!’ Apollo said and brushed a lock of golden hair. ‘The arrow went through the armor but was stoppe4d by the chainmail shirt. Only the tip punctured the skin of Hera’s son, but the impact from the heavy arrow knocked him on his back!’

‘Let’s go, gang, we need to go up! Keep the same formation!’ Hermes ordered interrupting the conversation.

Meanwhile, as he managed to pull the arrow sticking out of his chainmail shirt and armor, Ares sensed that the danger was over and stood up to lead his men.

‘Stop, Master! Let me lead the way to the rocks!’ the soldier lying next to his dead lieutenant suggested.

‘Very well, Gorgios, you go! Those rats must have fled, but just in case, go low!’

As soon as it was confirmed that the assailants had left their perch among the rocks, Ares jumped to his feet, barked a few orders and the pursuers started forward as fast as they could. Before long, they reached the flat area and studies the tracks left by the group of twelve moving in front of them. Evidently, the latter had gone up, in single file, and were advancing along the crest of the next ridge. This time Ares called two archers to the head of the column as he expected that they would draw fire again if the circumstances allowed for it.

Climbing up, they passed beyond the cloud line. Here, where the sun shone brightly, the air was crystal clear and the eye could see much farther, a spectacular panorama revealed before them – blindingly white peaks and ridges pierced here and there by black granite rocks poking through the ice and snow cover.

Ares raised his hand to shield his eyes and looked up at the trail snaking its way up the ridge. Out there in the distance, visible as mere dots creeping up, he could

see the ones he pursued. „Why can't I catch up with them, why does everything have to be so difficult?" he thought to himself. 'Oooh!' a cry came from the rear of the column followed by the sound of crumbling rock and ice.

'Careful, you old hags. At least now you can see what is going on!' The vexed Ares shouted and then pointed up. 'There are our targets! Let's go get them!'

'Yeah, catch them, and eat them!' someone joked.

'Poor Quasimedas is feeling peckish!' Another one added.

'You can't eat the gods, but the mortals are good eating, especially the young ones!' a third soldier noted turning to the second one who spoke out. 'I bet you wouldn't say no to a freshly roasted shoulder, Therekidos, juicy and tasty-smelling?'

'No, I am not a bloody cannibal like you, Potatos, or your pal Quasimedas.' The second soldier replied jokingly.

'Stop yammering, you are holding the entire column back! We have fallen behind!' Ares snarled.

'We are on them like blood hounds, Master! Don't you worry!' Quasimedas insisted. Ares stopped the column abruptly. Out in front and above, apparently at the top of the ridge, he could see several large and pointy rocks. 'Maybe that is where the next ambush will be set?' Zeleos, one of the two archers, whispered.

'We'll find out soon enough!' his comrade, Stanikos, replied and ran his fingers on his quiver. 'We are like fish in a barrel now!'

'Quasimedas and Potatos!' Ares shouted. 'Advance carefully past the archers and see if there is anyone up among those rocks! Go low!'

'Right away, Master!' Quasimedas replied and started moving up hugging the ground as best as he could.

'Here I go, Master!' Potatos said and moved up but stood straight. 'I don't think they will try anything funny now that we have full visibility...'

He likely intended to add other boastful words, but an arrow hissed and sunk in his neck, poking through on the other side. This was Yakhos's handiwork. Using his eagle vision, he aimed his arrow at Potatos's Adam's apple and hit the bullseye. A second arrow tore through the arrow almost simultaneously, shot from Apollo's bow. It sank almost all the way to the fletchings in

Quasimedas's skull, its tip probably going through his throat and chest.

The attack was so sudden and fast that Ares and his men managed to take cover only after the first two arrows had struck their targets. The archers Zeleos and Stanikos draw their bows back from the prone position but they couldn't see anyone among the rocks above. Zeleos, who got frustrated, took a knee to get a better view of the target which proved a fatal mistake. A shadow flashed among the rocks, an arrow buzzed and Yakhos's arrow pierced the overconfident shooter. His comrade, Stanikos, let his arrow go in the direction of the shadow but hit nothing. How is a fellow supposed to hit an enemy that appears for only a brief moment, shoots and takes cover again? Stanikos's arrow struck a rock and fell to the ground impotently.

A higher-pitch buzz filled the air. That is what Ares feared the most and his fear was for his own life. Apollo's bow was more powerful and his arrows were heavy and flew true. Fortunately for the former, the buzzing arrow flew past him and moments later the giant Morganis collapsed to the ground because he couldn't stand lying on the ground helplessly and had poked his head up. He was likely under the mistaken impression that the distance between him and the rocky outcrop was great

enough for him to be safe, after all, he stood more than 200 rastegs \* from his enemies.

This was no problem for Apollo's double bow, which his brother, the blacksmith of the gods, Hephaestus, had built for him using the same hard metal, the Celestial Adamas, an exclusive material accessible only to a handful of gods.

'Stay down! Nobody move!' Ares shouted to his men and turned to his archer. 'Did you see him, Stanikos?'

'I saw no one this time!' Stanikos said embarrassed by his lack of results.

'He is probably shooting from a gap between the rocks?' Ares suggested.

'They have the high ground, Master! They can see us but we cannot see them from below!' Stanikos explained.

'We will lie here and wait for them to make their retreat!' Ares said although he was infuriated by his helplessness. 'No one can rise up and mount an attack against such good archers. Even if we had our shields, they would be no good to us!' 'Alas that is the truth, Master!' Stanikos agreed.

As their enemies fell asleep down amongst the snowdrifts because they had no viable targets, Apollo and Yakhos left their position in the cover of the rocks. They retreated quietly, taking great care not to disturb any rocks that would betray their movement. The rest of their companions had probably built a significant lead and they had to catch up now.

\* Royal rasteg = ὀργυιά (orgyíá) = sajén = fadum = fathom = 2,1336 m. or 7 feet. 200 rastegs = 1 400 feet ~ 417 m.

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After another long and dangerous ridge, the Twelve overcame God's peak – the leader of Perin Mountain – and began to descend slowly, along the hills leading to the next ridges – on the Rila Mountain. Meanwhile, when they returned to the belt of clouds and mountain mists, Apollo and Yakhos staged a third successful ambush, in which they managed to kill five more Ares fighters. The thick white fog also helped Prometheus, who was active in the rearguard, who managed to bring down three enemies into the abyss, and two others fell on their own, without anyone's foreign interference.

The group made a short rest in Yundol – „The Valley of the Heifer [Yo]“, that is, „The Valley of the Young Cow Isis“, on a bend between the high peaks of the giant massif Rila...

When they descended into the Caucasus plain, Ares' men numbered seventy-seven – still too many for the Twelve to resist. In addition, the lead of the latter was rapidly melting; Although heavily armed, the pursuers were young and strong.

Soon the Twelve reached the arched stone bridge over the full-flowing Nekhtenitsa River, Nekhta for short, winding in the middle of the valley. This bridge was the only one. Hermes decided to let Yo and Mycenae go in order to take a new lead, pointing out to them the well-visible peak on which was the sanctuary with the oracle of the Moirai. He climbed onto the bridge and looked around at all the supporters.

'Men, we are about to fight an unequal battle here, on this bridge!' Hermes began his word of encouragement. 'You have heard what Prometheus predicted! If Yo gets

to the top of the Moirae, the Son of God will be born there, who will bring peace and glory to our civilization! Our mission turned out to be dangerous, and possibly deadly... Tell me, will we fulfill our duty as protectors of the Mother Goddess Yo?!

‘Yes, Hermes! Yes! Yes! Yes! It is our sacred duty!’ Yakhos, Apollo and his oarsmen shouted.

‘Excellent!’ Hermes glowed almost tasting the upcoming battle. ‘Let us show these vultures what real battle looks like! I am aching to hear the childish cries and to see the horror in the eyes of the coward Ares who thinks of himself as the greatest warrior who ever lived!’

Having seen the approaching pursuers who were still only black dots against the white canvass of the snow, Hermes arranged the defensive positions and inspected his men’s weapons, giving them final instructions. Apollo and Yakhos took their positions in the rear on either side of the bridge from where they would provide cover fire. Four of the oarsmen, who were armed only with swords, formed the first defensive line on the opposite side of the road. The other three oarsmen, who carried both swords and spears, stood on the bridge itself forming a second line. Hermes, who was their commander, stood several paces behind them.

When Ares, gasping for air, reached the approach to the bridge, he quietly instructed his lieutenant.

‘Listen to me carefully, Rethilos! Hermes is my half-brother. We are of the same father. Although, as the circumstances dictate, he is now my enemy, none of you mortals is ever to lay a finger on him!’

‘Understood, Master!’ Rethilos replied.

‘While I battle Hermes, you will stay here and will not make any moves! You will engage the enemy only after he is dead or wounded, or I am dead. Only then will you rush and slaughter the enemy!’

‘Understood, Master!’

Ares stepped forward and entered the bridge.

‘Brother Hermes’ Ares began to negotiate. ‘Yo, my betrothed fled from me and you are helping her! Yo and I were engaged to one another and exchanged rings!’

‘I know, brother Ares! But this engagement was struck against Yo’s will by your mother, Hera, and Yo’s father, Inachus!’ Hermes replied. ‘Yo does not wish to be your wife! She sought protection from me, Apollo and Yakhos and we will fulfil our duty!’

‘Be reasonable, Hermes! Give up! You stand no chance against me and my soldiers!’ Ares tries again to reason. ‘Do this for me in the name of our shared history of battle in the Albion, when we fought as brothers and shared victory and defeat as brothers!’

‘We had a common goal then, to push back on the aggression of the giants of Atlantis! Now, the issue is moral and personal and it involves the honor of the goddess Yo!’ Hermes countered.

‘Tell me honestly, brother Ares, if our father Zeus was still alive, would you have pursued Yo like a pitiful wife beater?’

‘Draw your sword, Hermes! We have nothing more to say to each other!’ Ares replied angrily and drew his heavy sword out of its sheathe.

Hermes responded by drawing his curved sword forged from adamas, invincible and as shiny as polished silver. Ares winced at the sight of this horrific weapon but

it was too late now, the die was cast. He raised his sword and dropped it down on his enemy with all his might but Hermes parried effortlessly. Then it was Hermes's turn to attack. He wished not to hurt his enemy but to destroy his sword. To everyone's surprise, Ares's bronze blade broke in half as a result of the impact of Hermes's sweeping blow.

Ares's men looked at one another in disbelief while those on Hermes's side cried out with joy. Now, taking advantage of the shock, Hermes stabbed Ares in the chest, but lightly, just stopping short of penetrating the chainmail shirt of his opponent. At the same time, he extended his foot forward to trip him as he pushed him forward. Ares fell on his back and Hermes stooped over him.

'Do you yield, brother?' he said with a smile on his face.

Ares, red in the face with helplessness and anger, said nothing. At that moment his lieutenant, Rethilos, fulfilled his leader's previous order and gave his soldiers the signal to attack. Rethilos's experienced lancers bypassed the gods Hermes and Ares and momentarily swept with their long weapons Apollo's oarsmen... and paid the price for their actions, struck down by the arrows of Apollo and Yakhos. As the first four to set foot on the bridge collapsed to the ground, the ones following them paused for a second surprised and stunned.

'Charge! Quickly, quickly!' Rethilos shouted. 'Two archers are no match for seventy strong men! Charge! Charge!'

The attackers charged the bridge but, hissing through the air, the unseen messengers of death found them. Although the bridge was blocked by piles of dead bodies, armor and spears sticking in all directions, about a dozen made it through to the other side. Apollo and Yakhos dropped their bows and, along with the small group of the remaining oarsmen, met the attackers with their swords.

Now, to the equal surprise of both sides, another surprise followed. Suddenly, the titan Prometheus appeared from the attackers' rear. He knocked them aside with his massive body and powerful arms, turned toward them and stood on the bridge keeping Ares's men at a distance with a long spear.

'Throw your spears at him! Kill him!' Rethilos shouted, realizing that no mortal could prevail in hand-to-hand combat against the titan who was taller, stronger and had a reach advantage. The wise Prometheus had a counter prepared for such an eventuality. He stood on the apex of the arch of the bridge, right on top of the keystone, a wily smile on his face. He stomped his feet rhythmically, as if dancing rachenitsa to entertain his audience. Prometheus knew that this type of construction, normally extremely sturdy, would fall apart almost instantly when subjected to vibration.

Hermes knew immediately what the old titan was up to. He left his captive, Ares, and slid past the soldiers and Prometheus to join his companions. Moments before dozens of spears would tear through the air, Prometheus jumped high and dropped the entire weight of his large body on the keystone. The bridge collapsed and with it, the deep icy waters of Nechthenitsa river swallowed Prometheus and Ares and the dead bodies of the soldiers. The spears hit nothing but empty ether. On the other bank the battle continued. Six defenders against ten attackers, neither side gaining the upper hand. The scales were tipped in favor of the defenders when Hermes ran to the scene from the site of the collapsed bridge. He engaged the enemy from the rear, stabbing as he ran one of the soldiers right through his armor. From this moment on, Apollo, Yakhos and Hermes turned the tide of battle and eventually

dispatched their enemies. Unfortunately, two more of the selfless oarsmen lost their lives.

The important thing was that the remnants of Ares's contingent, some thirty-six soldiers who did not get a chance to fight, were cut off by the wide icy river. They did, however, manage to pull their master, Ares, from the rapids because, luckily for him, he had fallen into the water close to the bank and clung on to the stooping branches of a willow tree. They found him because they heard his desperate screams induced by the cold water. Prometheus was nowhere to be found...

\*       \*       \*

Being safe, the surviving five protectors – three gods and two mortals – made their way to the sacred summit of the Moirai. At first they walked along the road, but at a turn, past a huge ancient oak, they stopped and caught a barely noticeable path winding to the top.

From a distance it was evident that the summit of the Moirai really had the sacred form of a cone – of a womb and a phallus in one – as Prometheus had told them. An almost perfect cone, created by nature, covered with a mixed forest – broad-leaf and coniferous, now covered with the white veil of snow. He and his slightly shorter twin touched the sky; were almost as high as the leader of Perin Mountain.

They had just begun to climb the steep slope when Yakhos signaled them to remain quiet. Apparently, in addition to excellent eyesight, he was also endowed with incredible hearing. The group „froze“.

‘I can hear our girls!’ Yakhos said.

‘Where?’ Hermes asked as he surveilled the terrain.

‘A little way up and to the right of where we are!’ Yakhos pointed.

They headed in that direction and soon everyone could hear Mycenae shouting.

‘Help! Help!’

They advanced a little further and heard her voice more clearly.

‘Help! Save us from this beast!’

The men looked at each other in amazement, because they associated the word „beast“ with Ares. But Ares could not have been here before them. Then who could this „beast“ be?

They went out on a relatively flat meadow and found out what was happening. Yo and Mycenae were in the crown of a branchy oak, around the trunk of which a huge gray wolf circled with its tongue sticking out. Apollo quickly removed the drawn bow from his shoulder, and with the other hand placed an arrow on the bowstring, but Yakhos stopped him:

‘Please, Apollo! Do not kill this amazing creature!’

‘Yakhos, I know you are a dog, but do you plan to discourage this predator from devouring its prey by barking at him?!’ Apollo asked half-jokingly but restrained himself from making throwing any more barbs at him for Hermes's sake.

‘Let Yakhos try his hand, Apollo!’ Hermes nodded. ‘The girls are pretty safe up there anyway!’ ‘Alright, I got it!’ Apollo conceded with obvious displeasure and lowered his bow. Only seconds earlier he was salivating at the thought that he could add the head of this magnificent beast to his collection of hunting trophies.



Stopping the circles of the tree, the wolf stood staring at the approaching Yachos. Speaking something to him in a melodious voice, Yachos stopped two steps away from him. They stared at each other with curiosity. Yachos raised his left hand and reached out slowly; This caused a growl. However, the man spoke again and the growl stopped. His hand lightly caressed the forehead of the predatory animal, descended on the back of the head and behind the ears... The wolf squatted on its hind legs and left himself to the caresses of Yachos.

Everyone looked as if stunned: the men at the end of the meadow, but also the women in the tree. This Yachos really had wonderful skills. And he quickly whispered in the wolf's ear, pointing to the valley. As if in response to his words, the predator barked loudly, like a dog, jumped and ran down between the trees.

‘What did you say to him, Yakhos?’ Apollo said, astonished by what he saw.

‘I whispered to him that a very bad and well-fed man named Rhaetius was coming from below...’ The men began to laugh, interrupting Yakhos, but he continued imperturbably. – ‘... I told him to stalk Rhaetius somewhere alone and crunch him!’

‘But is that really what you told him?’ Apollo asked, choking with laughter.

‘Laugh, Apollo, but this wolf understands me! It is very special! I think that in him we have gained an ally!’ Yakhos answered quite seriously.

While Apollo and Yakhos were talking about the wolf encounter, Hermes helped Mycenae and Yo climb down from the tree and shouted:

‘Yakhos, Apollo, we're leaving! Ares and his men must have found a ford to cross the river, and soon they will be breathing down our necks! Our battle is not over yet!’

The seven quickly went up among the snow-covered pines. They were silent and walked with concentration, trying not to slip and roll down. After a while, they reached high steep cliffs. They walked past them, but found that they were encircling the peak inaccessibly and as if there was no passage in them...

After all, there was a passage, they found it on the other – the east side of the peak, when, out of breath and tired, they began to despair. In this narrow passage between two high rocks were roughly carved steps, testifying to human presence. But at the very beginning there was an upright slab with a restraining hand carved on it: „Stop here, if life is dear to you!“ This sign was usually placed on the approaches to sacred places forbidden to mere mortals.

They were climbing the makeshift staircase, led by Hermes, but after only a few steps they were startled by a hoarse voice:

‘Stop right now!’

‘Who is talking?’ Hermes raised his head upwards, not seeing anyone. ‘And who asks?’ The voice answered.

‘I am Hermes, son of Zeus and grandson of Cronus!’ Hermes introduced himself proudly. ‘And your voice seems to be familiar to me?’

A snowy bush at the top of the ladder moved, and a large man jumped out of it, dressed in shaggy bear skin, wearing a bear mask on his head. The man went down a few steps and pulled up the bear's head. His huge head was revealed, from which disheveled chestnut curly locks descended. His blue eyes were shining.

‘Welcome, father!’

‘Silenus, what are you doing here?’ Hermes exclaimed.

‘And you, father, what are you looking for here?’ Silenus laughed.

‘This is my first-born!’ Hermes said turning to his companions. ‘He was supposed to be in the lands of the Haedons tending to Zeus’s Rose Gardens!’

‘When the weather warms up, Dad! Now what should I keep on the roses? Look, in the spring, as soon as they bloom, they really need a guard!’

‘Son, I am taking Yo, the last wife of Zeus, to Moirai, and I am also taking her sister Mycenae! Yo needs shelter, protection and special care...’

‘I know everything, Hermes!’ An elderly woman appeared from behind Hermes’ broad back.

‘I’m Klotho, Big Moira!’

‘They’re coming behind us...’ Hermes tried to continue.

‘Didn’t you hear: I know everything! Opposite you is the Great Moira!’ She repeated bruisedly.

‘I’m sorry, Klotho! But I can hardly perceive what he told me! You really know everything!’ Hermes apologized.

‘All right, all right! I’m used to people not believing me... If it had not been for Prometheus to guide you to us, and to help you, would you not have been dead by now?’ ‘You say it right!’ Hermes answered politely.

‘Now open your ears and do whatever I tell you!’ The soothsayer oracle ordered imperiously.

‘Tell me, Klotho!’ Hermes answered even more resignedly.

‘First, go upstairs to us; No one should be left downstairs... You should know, Hermes, that I see your intention, but this plan, if you carry it out, will end in a bitter end!’ The Moira shouted nervously.

‘I won’t contradict you anymore, not even in my mind! I’m sorry, Klotto, but that’s my nature! From now on, you guide our actions!’ He apologized again.

‘Men, prepare your weapons! Silenus and his peoples will put you in convenient places, and he who does not have a bow will receive! Ares and his gang will be here in a moment. Shake them from above, without going down to them! Did you hear me?!’ She cried again.

‘We heard, we heard!’ Everyone answered her, climbing the snow steps; Yo and Mycenae were already upstairs, in the arms of two younger women, probably Middle and Little Moira.

‘We’ll take care of the girls!’ Klotho continued. ‘And the boys, after you kill the dirty dogs, we will treat you to hot food and you will immediately leave our holy home... You will take the road along the river, it will lead you to the sea, from there along the seashore you will reach the bay of Thessalus, with your ship!’

‘Yes madam! Thank you for granting us asylum!’ Bowed Hermes, who was the last to climb on the flat plateau with the Great Moira and his son Silenus.

‘And I thank you for protecting Yo, the young mother in whose womb the Bright Son of God grows! Hermes, Apollo and Yakhos, sons of Zeus: you have fulfilled your father’s covenant and your duty to our world! So thank you!’ Klotho bowed in turn.

The women went back to the cave under the very top, and the men distributed among themselves the most suitable weapons for everyone. A Silenus leader led a detachment of twelve healthy and well-trained men. They were dressed in long Thracian zeirs made of white aba, painted with geometric motifs located in transverse belts. They wore shaggy foxskin hats on their heads, and their feet were

shod in deerskin boots. Apollo and Yakhos had bows and enough arrows in their quivers. The two oarsmen of Apollo received good bows, and the young men of Silenus had.

‘Have one of my bows, father!’ Silenus offered, handing his father a bow and a quiver full of long arrows. ‘It is a bit on the large side, but give it a try!’

‘It will do, son, thank you!’ Hermes replied tugging at the strings.

‘Let me show you your positions!’ Silenus offered and led his guests. His own men were already in their respective spots.

‘Apollo and Yakhos should get the best spots!’ Hermes advised his son.

‘Very well, Dad! I guess that the two of them are the most accurate with the bow!’ Silenus agreed and spoke to the fighters. ‘As soon as you take your seats, don't move, as if the forest is sleeping in its winter sleep! Wait for more enemies to enter the pass! Wait patiently for me to give the signal, which is the cuckoo's cuckoo... And not a single arrow will fly out before my croaking... And now keep complete silence...’

There was silence, such silence that the young men heard how the few snowflakes that had appeared fell, and others began to fly over rarely. The nature of Pangaea seemed to foresee that blood was about to be shed around the holy place of the Moirai, and decided to cover the bloody spots with white snowflakes, the precipitation of which it intended to intensify.

Then there were quiet footsteps stepping cautiously, but in this silence the crunching of the snow echoed deafeningly. On the clearing between the rocks, led by the tracks in the snow, came Ares' scout, a small and flexible man. In an instant he froze, listened, and slowly looked at the rocks and bushes above him. As if there was nothing suspicious. It seems that the few surviving fugitives have moved on. But even if they had shown the courage to ambush here, their two archers would not be able to stop three dozen brave and ugly fighters, who in just a little while would be up there and „see the bill“ for them.

The scout waved his hand invitingly. Suddenly, there were many fast and heavy steps. The avalanche of daring attackers rushed recklessly upwards with drawn swords. The defenders, who have already identified their victims, stretched the bowstrings of their bows. But the „cuckoo bird“ did not crow.

The leading attackers, who had overcome half of the steps, rushed upwards, anticipating felling and victory. The entire space on the stairs and between the rocks was filled with armed men. Here are the most agile ones already in front of the rock gorge – the „door“ of the sanctuary.

‘Coo-Coo, Coo-Coo, Coo-Coo!’ the sound was loud and crisp; The man who made it, Silenus, grabbed the bow he had prepared earlier and drew it back.

Almost simultaneously with the first „Coo-Coo“, seventeen arrows rang out: twelve shot by Silenus' men and five more by the fugitives who arrived at the sanctuary. A moment later, Silenus' arrow screamed.

Eighteen arrows – eighteen mowed down enemies! Nevertheless, one of the assailants managed to reach the entrance of the sanctuary, but his helmet and his head were broken by the gigantic mace of Silenus, who, seeing that the intruder had crept in, threw down his bow and struck him with his mace.

The rest of the attackers panicked to run down, but in the narrow and slippery steps they created an unimaginable chaos of pushing and rolling bodies. And in this

melee, the attackers were easy targets for the archers on the rock. Another volley and the attack ended ingloriously.

There was silence, but not a beautiful winter silence, but a terrible, ugly, mortal one. The snowcovered earth was stained with blood, and it was as if nature had taken care to hide it: the snow had intensified.

Suddenly, from under one of the piles of dead bodies, a completely alive chubby assailant crawled out, who ran mad and hid among the trees. The defenders had relaxed their bows and no one was able to react.

‘That is the cursed Rethilos, Ares’s lieutenant!’ Yakhos announced squinting his eyes in his direction.

‘Let’s get him, Silenus?’ one of Silenus’s men suggested.

‘No one goes down there!’ Silenus replied. ‘You heard the priestess!’

‘He is alone, that miserable bastard! What is there to think about!’ the young man insisted. ‘Like I said, no one goes down there!’ Silenus repeated angrily. ‘The priestess must have seen death and I in particular have no desire to have to face any one of your grieving mothers!’ ‘I feel like Ares is hiding somewhere here!’ Hermes said in an attempt to cool down the passionate young man’s desire to spill the blood of the enemy. ‘I did not see him among the attackers!’

‘He sent his warriors to certain death and he himself is hiding in the forest, the coward!’ Apollo laughed.

Imagine their surprise when Rethilos himself emerged from the trees walking backwards slowly, his back turned to them. He took several steps back and entered the clearing. He held his sword with both hands and seemed to be getting ready to defend himself from someone... A growl echoed and the giant grey wolf followed him to the clearing. It was the same animal that forced Yo and Mycenae to climb into the oak tree and later had a „talk” with Yakhos.

‘Is that my friend?’ Yakhos exclaimed.

‘This is Siyâvush! The guardian of the sanctuary!’ Silenus explained. ‘He is alright with us but he sniffs out the strangers from a distance and never shows them any mercy! The priestesses say he is the incarnation of some sort of a deity sent here to protect them!’

The defenders fell silent and prepared to witness the imminent gladiatorial fight between wolf and men, although they had their suspicions as to the outcome. Indeed, his weapons did not help

Rethilos. Siyâvush’s attack was too sudden and the swiping blow attempted by Rethilos was too anemic and crude... The wolf grabbed him by the neck and disappeared with him in the falling snow, which was getting thicker by the minute.

‘Well, the battle is over and all our attackers are dead!’ Silenus announced. ‘Men, stay here and watch the entrance. You, dear guests, follow me. We will give you food and warm you up. You can spend the night here and rest! Tomorrow morning, as Clotho, you will follow the river until you reach the sea!’

\* \* \*

Silenus took his five guests to the cave, Hermes, Apollo, Yakhos and the two oarsmen, who were tired from the adventures and the hardships they had to endure. The entrance was narrow, the first room was small, but the second was spacious. In

holes and crevices in the walls there were oil lanterns which lit up the interior. Light was also coming from the hearth, whose smoke somehow disappeared. It was quite warm inside and they had to take off their wool cloaks, which had gotten damp and heavy.

Yo lay on a wide plank bed that the Moirai had covered with thick and fluffy goat furs. Sitting next to her were Mycenae, Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos, arms folded in front and engaged in a lively conversation.

‘Men, take a seat at the big round table!’ Clotho called out. ‘Lachesis and Atropos will bring you each a bowl of hot bean soup; some roasted boar meat, if we have any left. Worry not, you will get some juicy chops fit for the brave heroes you are!’

‘Thank you, Clotho, we were just getting a little peckish!’ Hermes smiled and rubbed his hands. ‘Enjoy your meals! Then we’ll talk and you’ll get a good night’s sleep!’

‘What about Ares? We did not see him among the attackers?’ Apollo inquired.

‘Don’t worry about him!’ Clotho chuckled. ‘he is curled up underneath a juniper shrub, shaking and quivering from the cold! He will be frozen stiff soon and will barely make it through the night!’

‘Serves him right!’ Hermes said. ‘But I am worried about my uncle. When he brought the bridge down he fell in the icy cold Nechthenitsa river along with it and...’

‘Prometheus is fine!’ Clotho replied. ‘Well, it got a bit chilly for him in the water but the river spewed him back to dry land at the second bend downstream from the site of the collapsed bridge, right in front of the home of a lonely widow, a very kind soul. He is there now, dry, well fed and warm, cuddled in bed with her!’

‘Now that’s more like it!’ the men rejoiced.

‘How tall is she if she’s able to cuddle my giant uncle?’ Hermes remarked curiously.

‘As I see her, she is even bigger than him!’ Clotho said after she shut her eyes for a moment.

‘She belongs to the Nephilim race!’

The guests, helped by their host, Silenus, focused on their food for a while and soon the food was devoured and their hunger, quenched. Rubbing his belly, Silenus sat back on his bear fur coat in front of the fire. Hermes, Apollo and Yakhos went to check on the women and sat on the edge of the large bed built from thick, rough-sawn beech planks.

‘You three, go and light a candle for your kind father, over there at the altar!’ Clotho said. ‘Today is the fortieth day of the death of your father and my husband, Zeus!’ Yo noted and wiped her tears with her hand.

‘Oh, God, his soul is ascending to the heavens now...’ Hermes remembered. ‘On the 26<sup>th</sup> day of Khoiak\*, which is today!’ Yo added.

‘And today of all days we were granted refuge in your sanctuary, Great Moirai!’ Hermes exclaimed. ‘Interesting how the stars and the planets, and fate acting through them, guide our deeds!’

‘That is right, Hermes!’ Clotho said taking a long and peculiar look at him. ‘You are a smart man, but you are yet to experience the enlightenment of your spirit! You

have a lot to give to this hard and crude world! Your name, as the name of your uncle, Prometheus, will become a beacon for the enlightened minds!’

‘Thank you, Clotho, for your kind words, although I am not sure what they mean exactly! I sense that good things will enter my heart and mind!’ Hermes replied gently.

‘Now back to business: let’s discuss what you came for!’ Clotho continued. ‘At midnight on the second day from today, the star of Sirius will emit a large burst of energy which the planets, aligned in the hierarchy of the “Celestial Ladder”, will focus and reflect to earth. In this unique cosmic moment the Son of God, Kolad, will be born! Some will call him Dionysus, others Bacchus or Mithras, others yet Horus or Hursa and also Surya, Siva or Shiva! The heavens will grant him the qualities and skills needed for the making of a strong, noble and just king! He will fix the errors of the past and will take us on the right path! His law will be obeyed for many millennia to come!

But all of this will not start to make itself evident until about thirty years from now... Our task now is to help Yo give birth to her child. We, the Moirai, will deliver the baby and will help care for him in his infancy...

‘What are we to do for Yo?’ Hermes asked thoughtfully.

‘We will do anything for the lovely Yo!’ Yakhos added. ‘She was always there for us when we needed her and now it is our term to take care of her!’

‘Your words are true, Yakhos! You and Hermes are smart, kind and decent young men!’ Clotho said. ‘... About 20 days from now, you and Apollo need to be in Byblos, where you will take Yo, her baby and Mycenae aboard your ship and will sail with them to Egypt, to see Leto... Apollo knows how to find his mother. She lives on the floating island of Hemis in the Heracleiote canal of the Nile delta, the last one from the west!’

‘Interesting, my uncle, Prometheus, said the same thing!’ Hermes exclaimed.

‘Yes, he did say that my mother, Leto, will raise the child in secret!’ Apollo confirmed.

‘What will happen to Ares?’ Hermes asked.

‘Ares will continue to follow Yo, not because he wants to, but out of fear from his mother,

Hera!’ Clotho noted. ‘besides, we will slow him down and he will leave here only after Yo has crossed the Bosphorus!’

‘Still, wouldn’t it be safer to just go with Yo!’ Hermes insisted.

‘No!’ Clotho snapped. ‘You, Apollo and Yakhos are distinguished men, people will recognize everywhere you go. You will attract the attention of Seth’s spies and agents, who are still up and about in the Levant and Anatolia! Disguised in plain clothes, Yo and Mycenae will sneak into Byblos where you will pick them up!’

‘Understood!’ Hermes finally agreed. ‘We shall do as you say!’

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‘Finally!’ Clotho grunted. ‘Oh, Hermes, I am so tired of arguing with you!’

‘Forgive me! He apologized to the old woman. ‘I often wonder why I am so stubborn!’ ‘It is because of your planet, Mercury! Stubbornness, an inquisitive mindset, curiosity, a drive to know, industriousness, this is all you, Hermes!’ she concluded. ‘Go join Silenus who is already snoring by the fire. Use those goat skins as blankets and pay a visit to good old Morpheus!’

\* \* \*

Hermes, Yakhos, Apollo and the two oarsmen left the next day and Yo, Mycenae, the Moirai, Silenus and the guards of the sanctuary saw them off saying heartfelt goodbyes.

Klotho and Lachesis, who once again observed the starry heaven, called Yo and Mycenae.

‘Last night we looked at the stars again!’ Clotho said.

‘The birth will take place at midnight on the 28<sup>th</sup> to the 29<sup>th</sup> day of Khoiak.\*’ Lachesis added.

‘I am scared!’ Yo quietly admitted.

‘Every new mother is scared!’ Clotho replied.

‘Nothing to be afraid, my dear!’ Lachesis smiled. ‘We have delivered many babies here, all of them healthy, to the joy of their mothers! Most of them are grown up now!’

‘We will prepare everything today and tomorrow. We have brand new linen cloth, plenty of herbs we collected and dried during the summer...’ Clotho said.

‘We will boil some and let the infusions cool off...’ Lachesis went on.

‘The infusion is an antiseptic wound treatment but we use it for post-natal care.’ Clotho explained.

‘See, Yo, you have come to the right place!’ Mycenae rejoiced.

‘Once the baby is out, we will bathe him and swaddle him. Our little sister, Atropos, who will collect some of your waters, will conduct a ritual for us to see more clearly what destiny has in store for the infant!’ Lachesis explained. ‘It will tell us how to best breastfeed him and care for him!’ Clotho said. A mother means everything to a baby - warmth, nourishment, guardian, teacher and friend!’

‘So my son will be born healthy and will grow up to be a handsome man?’ Yo inquired apparently needing some words of encouragement.

‘Yes, he will be healthy, although very small, because he will be seven months premature!’ Clotho replied. ‘You, however, will be an excellent mother and you will love him!... And he will become a truly handsome and strong man! He will; be kind, just and noble. He will lend a helping hand to anyone, god or mortal!... I see him defeating Hades and regaining his father’s throne!... I see him as the king, judge, law-maker, benefactor, great shepherd and civilization builder for all the people of the world. He will be the most beloved ruler!’ ‘Oh, this is so wonderful!’ Yo cried.

‘You are wonderful, too! Atropos said and gave her a hug. ‘You will know it one day by the love of the people around you!’

That day and the next day passed as quickly as a dream. The Moirai inspected and cleaned the cave, washed all the cauldrons, chops, bowls, knives and other household items, using clean spring water from the underground river of the lower level, which was heated on a large cauldron on the hearth. They had enough dry wood, collected in the forest from autumn and stored in a side tunnel of the cave.

Silenus and his comrades were no longer allowed into the inner hall. They ate in the smaller outer hall, where the rest shift slept while the other vigilantly performed its security service. Here came the important night of the Great Mystery – the Birth of God Son. As the Moirai had predicted, the labor pains began before midnight. The men in the outer hall heard Yo's sharp bulls, Kloteau's soothing and admonitive words, the bustle of the women, and after a while, the baby's first cry.

\* On the night of December 24/25.

The miracle happened! The first minutes of 29 Khoiak!\* were running!

Silenus cautiously unfolded the sheepskin covering the narrow entrance to the inner hall. He peeked to see the baby, but was instantly reprimanded and chased away by Lachesis, which noticed him. Gradually, the bustle and voices subsided: the cave fell into a deep sleep...

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In the following days, the young mother Yo was trained by the Moirai in the intricacies of baby care: breastfeeding, bathing, swaddling and, of course, communicating with the eye and living speech. Born in the first days of the seventh month of pregnancy, the baby was so small that at first it could not even suckle. So Yo gently squeezed a drop of milk into her puppy's mouth, which she shoved into his tiny mouth. Thus, the baby first learned to suck Yo's „milk“ puppy, and after three days he began to suckle from her breasts.

Thus, in just nine days in the conditions of the warm and clean cave, the divine child visibly strengthened and grew larger. Next to him, Yo was beaming with happiness, giving him all her love.

Hearing the joyful female noise from inside, as well as the loud „cooing“ of the baby, Silenus and his comrades finally felt calm. Life went on in its predestined order...



\* December 25.

*8. Yo and Mycenae on their way to the Thracian Bosphorus. The ambush of Hera and Murzeleya. The wolf Siyâvush and the deer Fallow save the Son of God: The Legend of Avitohol*

On the tenth day, the women came out of the cave, but not to show the baby to the men. Yo and Mycenae were equipped and ready to go. The baby „cooed“ from a basket, wrapped in linen and woolen diapers, so that only his eyes were visible, glowing with curiosity and full of impressions.

They embraced, said goodbye, and then the two young women with sacks on their backs and one with a basket descended the wooded slope and disappeared between the snow-covered trees. A little further down they had to catch and follow the path along the river coming out of one of the lower exits of the cave. This river meandered between the peaks of the mountainous land of Pangea, and after descending to the north, into the plain of Rhombus, it flowed into the larger river Kabeiros, Khebros or Hebros. The latter would lead them to the shallow channel through which to passed into the land of the goddess Anat – Anatolia...

After sending the young goddesses, the Moirai returned to the cave. Exhausted, Klotho lay down on the broad pomegranate and almost immediately drifted off into a sweet slumber. And Lachesis and Atropa walked quietly to put order in the big hall. Suddenly, Klotho woke up. She looked anxious.

‘What is wrong?’ Lachesis asked.

‘The field of Akasha has changed, another evil is approaching!’ Clotto stared intently at the rock wall.

‘What do you see?’ Atropos asked.

‘That’s the thing. It is all hazy, the images merge!’ Clotho replied anxiously.

‘Someone could be blocking you?’ Lachesis suggested.

‘Good thinking, Lachesis! I thought it was because I was too tired from not getting enough sleep over the past couple of days!...’ Then Clotho jumped to her feet and looked at her younger sister ‘Atropos!’

‘Yes, sister!’ she said.

‘You will make it! Take out and drink a dose of your special decoction for „separation from the body“!’ Clotho ordered her. ‘Right now, sister!’ Atropos replied.

The young Moirae hastily took out from her medicinal chest of drawers a small green vial red bands on the neck made up of swastikas. She poured some in a clay mug, grabbed a pot of hot water and added some of it in the mug. She then shook the mug it and drank every last drop of its content.

Lachesis approached Atropos quietly, hugged her, led her to the plank bed and sat her next to the sleeping Clotho. Moments later the potion had already done its work. Atropos „separated from her body” stretched her arms and legs, her eyes turned in their sockets and she started speaking in a strange and unnatural voice:

‘I see them!’ she said.

‘Who do you see?’ Clotho asked.

‘Two wicked women. One is tall and queen-like and the other is short, twisted and wears colored bands in her bushy hair!’ the voice coming out of the young woman said.

‘Those are Hera and the poison-wielding witch Murzeleya! She is the one who is blocking my visions!’ Clotho exclaimed angrily. ‘Where are these women?’

‘Down at the river Khebros, at the confluence with our river, Bistritsa!’ the voice replied. ‘They have set an ambush there. They want to capture Yo and kill her child!’

‘You dirty Murzeleya! You will pay dearly today! Clotho promised. ‘I will rip your soul out and will turn it into a goblin!’

‘Armed men stand beside them! The shaky voice coming from Atropos continued.

‘How many men?’ Clotho inquired.

‘I count eight wretched souls!’ the voice replied.

‘Lachesis, hurry!’ Clotho looked at her sister. ‘We must take her outside!’

They wrapped their arms around Atropos and led her out of the cave. The men who were not on guard duty approached to see what was going on.

‘Atropos, you must summon Siyâvush! Come on, dear! Call the wolf! He runs like the wind, he will catch up to Yo and Mycenae and will keep them safe for a while! The rest of us, and our men, will follow him!’ Clotho explained. ‘Do you understand, Atropos?’

‘A-u-u-u! A-u-u-u!’ The young woman howled, raising her head up toward the sky. Even her face seemed to elongate as if turning into a wolf snout. ‘A-u-u-u! A-u-u-u!’ The men looked around, and Silenus ran to the gate of the sanctuary:

‘Here is Siyâvush, he came! Come big wolf, come to us, up here!’

Siyâvush went upstairs and came out on the flat meadow in front of the cave. However, he did not go to Silenus, but surrounded the entire male group. He went straight to Atropos, the one who had called him and fell in love with her! As big as you were, almost knocked it down! And Lachesis, who had just brought Yo's blanket

from the cave, gave it to Siyavush, who smelled it in order to „catch“ the trace of the Lechusa goddess. At that moment, Atropos stroked the wolf with her hand on the wide back, bringing her head close to his, holding it like this for a few moments. Then the two, as if on a common command, looked up and began to howl in a mixed wolf duet... After several long and winding trills, Siyâvush licked the right hand of his mistress Atropos, and with the speed of spirit he found himself at the gate and disappeared. He apparently understood very well where he had to go and what to do...

‘Silenus!’ Big Moira said nervously.

‘Yes, Clotho?’ he said and came near.

‘Yo and Mycenae are in danger! Hera is waiting for them below, at the big bend of Khebroso! Our two friends haven't made it there yet, so we sent Siyâvush after them! But he will not protect them alone, because there are eight armed men with Hera, and some of them carry bows!’

‘So we get our own bows?’ Silenus suggested.

‘Isn't that what I said?... Can you do the job with only eight of your men?’

‘Fully! We will put a big fart on them!’

‘Good! So you leave with eight people! Let the other four remain to guard the sanctuary and Atropos, who is now exhausted... Set off at once; me and Lachesis are coming for you, I just need to get something from the chest of drawers!’

‘Sure, Clotho! The nine of us will follow the wolf's trail, and the two of you will follow us!’ Silenus summarized and called his men. ‘Come on, young guys! Run, squad, along the wolf's side!’

The nine laughed after the swift-footed Silenus, who had apparently inherited this quality from his father Hermes, although he did not have winged sandals like him. After the flying heroes, a snowstorm swept away...

‘Come, Lachesis, let's bring poor Atropos inside!’ Clotho said. ‘By the time we get back, she'll have recovered!’

They laid their little sister on the soft goats of the pomegranate, wrapped her up and she fell asleep instantly and unawakened. Clotho opened the chest of drawers; She took from a small drawer a large, bluish, rhomboid crystal suspended from a sturdy leather strap. She tied it around her neck, hiding it in her bosom. She also took out another strange object - two golden baguettes, which she wrapped in a linen handkerchief and put in her bag.

‘Ready?’ Clotho looked at Lachesis.

‘Yes, sister!’ Lachesis replied. ‘I got some food for the road.’

‘Very well! Let's go because that damn Murzeleya is strong! I alone can stop her black magic!’

‘Let's hurry then!’ Lachesis agreed.

The two Moirai waved to the young men at the gate and quickly descended the snowy slope. Indeed, the feather left by the nine young men was an excellent and easy guide for them. I hope the sky stays bright and the snow doesn't fall...

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At that time, Yo and Mycenae, following the mountain river Bistritsa, reached the place of its confluence with the river Khebroso, which, coming out into the plain, became wide and fullflowing. The two young women went to the shore and bent

down to wash their hands, although the water was cold. To do this, they had to break the thin crust of coastal ice; The fast current did not allow this ice to increase and cover the entire river. At that moment, Yo heard an unpleasant voice behind her, the voice of Hera, who had come out with her men from behind a tuft of low trees and bushes.

‘Let's see you at last, you deceitful bride!’ Hera shouted triumphantly.

‘What do you want, Hera?’ Yo turned, turning pale, looking with fear at the basket on the shore; It's good that the baby was sleeping and didn't make a sound.

‘What do I want?’ Hera blushed with rage. ‘Didn't you say „mother“ to me when I got you engaged to my son Ares?’ ... And now: „What do you want, Hera?’’

‘This is past-gone!’ Yo replied proudly. ‘I can't be the fiancée of your son Ares, who didn't pay attention to me for a whole year, because he runs mad from battle to battle, where he has fun killing the unfortunate mortals...’

‘Enough of sweet talk!’ Hera was furious. ‘Tell me, Yo, what are you hiding in that clean basket?!’

‘I don't hide anything!’ Yo kept her composure, though she noticed that one of the armed men was slowly and quietly sneaking along the shore. ‘My sister and I are bringing food for the trip.’ ‘Food?’ Hera laughed. ‘Speaking of which, I think I felt hungry! Treat me, Yo, with something delicious from your basket!’

Realizing that there was no way to escape the cunning Hera, at that moment Yo made a difficult decision. She lifted the basket supposedly to take it to Hera, but slipping deliberately to the very water, where she had just washed her hands, dropped the basket into the river, the current of which immediately grabbed her and dragged her.

‘Ah, I dropped it!’ Yo pretended. ‘Our food went away, so we couldn't see it!’

The sneaking soldier ran over his head, but too late, the basket sailed hundreds of cubits away, carried quickly by the deep whirlpool waters. The man stood with Yo and Mycenae, waiting for an order from Hera, who had been frozen, amazed by what had happened.

In this brief pause of her astonishment and hesitation, a swift shadow appeared, so swift that it was invisible. Everyone present by the river could see Siyâvush only when he stopped his movement to bite the thick neck of the unfortunate soldier. The crunching of bones was heard. The unfortunate man's comrades took off their bows and set up arrows, but in vain – the wolf disappeared as mysteriously as he had just appeared.

‘Catch these women right away!’ Hera ordered imperiously.

Three soldiers went to the shore, but another force intervened. There was a whistle of arrows and those who collapsed in the white drifts. Then, on a nearby sand dune, Silenus and his men appeared menacingly with re-drawn bows.

‘Who are you?’ Hera Silenus asked.

‘I am Silenus, son of Hermes and grandson of Zeus!’ He introduced himself and added. ‘My archers are good! I do not advise you to once again invite death, which stands impatient on the tips of our arrows... It will be best for you to go back to where you came from, because you are not wanted in luminous Thrace!’

Hera realized that she would not achieve her goal by force, so she looked at her companion Murzeleya. The latter immediately guessed what was required of her.

Her eyes dimmed, and that black gaze stared into the eyes of the proud Silenus, who did not pose that magic would be used against him. Murzeleya threw her head

to the right, as if pulling something from the eyes or from the soul of Silenus, then shifted her gaze to the left and thus repeated these movements several times, like a loom weaver leading a fiber with a shuttle... ‘Why are you looking at me, ugly witch!’ He shouted. ‘Now I will come to draw you a good heroic fight!’

Silenus tried to raise his leg, but felt that he was petrified. He wanted to say something to his comrades, but there were no more sounds coming out of his mouth, only wheezing. Frightened, Silenus' fighters began to look around and wonder what to do, and why not hide from the witch's black eyes...

Unexpectedly, however, another voice rang – the melodious voice of Lachesis, who, together with Klotho, had arrived on the Kebros River, shortly after Silenus' group. Lachesis possessed the Voice, which had the property, by means of a special timbre, to harmonize space, clearing it of bad vibrations. Thus Lachesis freed Silenus from the invisible grip of Murzeleya.

The latter, unpleasantly surprised, now shifted her heavy gaze to Lachesis, who had not ceased to sing, not knowing that she was only distracting her, and, moreover, that she could do nothing to her while she was singing.

At the same moment, Clotho, who managed to approach Hera and Murzeleya unnoticed, took the blue crystal out of her bosom, dropped it freely on her outer garment, and pulled the golden baguettes out of the bag. Grabbing the baguettes with both hands, she placed them in front of the crystal. They swirled freely to and fro, but, led by Cloteau's thought, they headed for the witch. A thin blue beam flowed from the crystal through the baguettes and sank into Murzeleya's head. The witch groaned and lost her breath instantly.

‘I warned you, poisonous witch, not to wander around the Thracian sacred places!’ Clotho shouted triumphantly. ‘Here, the thread of your black destiny has been broken! Your dark deeds have brought you there: now your soul is dead, and what is left of it will turn into a wandering goblin in the Hell, under the Dome of Heaven!’

‘Ouch!’ Hera screamed in pain, as Clotho, intoxicated by her tirade, had inadvertently directed the burning invisible beam at her.’

‘And I will spare you, greedy and stupid woman!’ Clotho turned to Hera, taking off and putting away the baguettes.

‘How dare you touch me! Didn't you see that I am Hera, the wife of Zeus!’

‘Shut up before I change my mind!’ Clotho looked at her with contempt. ‘Do you know that your fateful thread passes very close, hey-thin, past the thread of a dung worm! How much does it take for it to happen to you such a reincarnation?!’

‘Let's go back to Olympus! Immediately!’ The frightened Hera shouted to her subordinates.

She and her soldiers ran over their heads, imagining with horror what could happen to them... The danger in Hera's face was removed, but the basket with the baby, which the murky waters of Khepros carried down, was missing. The desperate Yo ran along the shore, crying, and Clotho shouted after her:

‘Don't be afraid, Yo! The basket is nearby, in a swampy sleeve, and the child has nothing!’

However, Yo did not hear Clotho's call, although the others shouted after her. She continued, stumbling often, to run along the shore.

‘Leave it alone! Soon he will see him and calm down!’ Clotho told them.

‘However, let’s follow her so that she does not enter the icy water alone and drown!’ Mycenae pleaded.

The group hurried after the worried mother. Soon they saw her on the shore, breaking her arms; they also saw the basket in the middle of a branch as wide as a lake, as Clotho had predicted.

Mycenae rushed to her sister and embraced.

‘I’ll go in and take out the basket!’ The Noble Silenus suggested.

‘Impossible!’ Clotho said sharply. ‘Immersion in icy waters is tantamount to death! Another would be to be near our cave, where we would put you wet, icy and blue by the burning hearth; there to coat you with a warm anti-frost decoction and wrap you in freshly skinned sheepskin...’ ‘And when you drink a jug of mulled wine, you are ready to be saved!’ Lachesis added to her. ‘Yes, but no!’ Clotho continued and threatened. ‘The cave is far away and no one dared to set foot in the Kheebros River.’

‘There must always be some other way?’ Lachesis thought.

‘What other way?’ Silenus scratched his head under the sheep’s hat.

The interlocutors, staring at the basket floating in the roadstead, did not notice that behind them sat the brave Siyâvush, who had just followed them quietly and inconspicuously along the shore, but now listened attentively and seemed to think with them. They felt it only when he jerked and slipped among the nearby trees. Had Siyâvush found the solution?

As the wolf entered the forest, there he was, coming out of it. He stood staring at him and snuck in again, like an African boomerang. A moment later, a huge fallow deer jumped out of the trees and ran bleating across the meadow, and after him floated the ubiquitous Siyâvush. The two of them played as if on a chase!

The deer tried to turn into the forest, but the wolf blocked his way. Then the fallow deer lowered his head, his wide horns resting on the snow. He was a strong and dangerous opponent, but not for the experienced Siyâvush. With only three jumps, the wolf bypassed the deer’s weapon and got hold of the neck of the strong herbivorous male.

‘End of it!’ Silenus exclaimed emotionally.

However, the expected deer death did not take place; The wolf turned its victim to the river and dragged it to the nearby water, but without breaking its spine.

‘What does Siyâvush do?’ Silenus was surprised, and so were the others.

As if to answer them, the wolf lightly bit one of the hind legs of the deer, but not hard, but just enough for the latter to feel the tips of its sharp teeth. With no other way out, the fallow deer jumped into the icy water and floated like a boat. He tried to turn towards the shore, but the wolf bared his teeth and growled. Thus, the current carried the deer right to the coveted basket, held by the coastal ice in the middle of the wide sleeve.

‘Look at him, Siyâvush?’ Silenus scratched himself this time with both hands.

‘A smart animal!’ Mycenae beamed, hugging Yo; The latter trembled and prayed in her mind that the deer would save her child.

‘Siyâvush is not an ordinary wolf! He is the incarnation of the god Zeus himself, the father of this child!’ Clotho announced; causing the tormented Yo to sob.

However, the deer did nothing. Then the wolf bared his ugly teeth and began to howl threateningly, as if he were saying to him: „Pick up the basket, otherwise you know what awaits you!“

Several painful moments followed. And then the incredible happened! Though they all watched intently to see what was going to happen, none of them saw or understood how the basket ended up hanging on the branched ends of the right deer antler! Indeed, they saw that at one point the deer turned its branched head, but how did it manage to hang the basket on its right horn? Feeling now the favor of his terrible rival Siyâvush, the fallow deer swam quickly to the rescue shore, where the wolf was impatiently waiting for him, running nervously. Not yet ashore, Yo grabbed from his horn basket, she took her little son from her and hugged him on her chest under her pillow to keep him warm.

Everyone rejoiced at the wise Siyâvush, shouted words of gratitude to him, and he retired to a nearby dune, from where he watched them with smart and, as it seemed to them – laughing and playful eyes.

Only Clotho paid attention to the poor fallow deer, who stood frozen and shivering on the shore and did not run away. She pulled her inseparable soft linen bohcha out of her bag, unfolded it and threw it on the back of the frozen animal. Her hands deftly rubbed his fur through the fabric, warming it and soaking up the water in it. Then she pulled the soaked bohcha and patted the animal, which gladly trotted towards the forest...

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The mysterious salvation of the Son of God from the wolf Siyâvush and the fallow deer was deeply imprinted in the minds of eyewitnesses. For years after that, they told the experienced miracle to acquaintances and strangers. Thus was born the parable or legend of Abu-to-hol (in later times – Avitohol), or „The Father of Old [Antiquity]“.

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Two days later, walking southeast, Yo and Mycenae found themselves in a warmer climate. The snow and cold disappeared, thanks to which they managed to cross the Khebro River at a bend, where the riverbed widened, forming a shallow ford.

On the third day, the brave young goddesses also crossed the shallow strait through which the freshwater Euxine Pontus drained through the Propontis and the Dardanus Sea – into the Thracian Sea. Since then, the place where the Cow Yo set foot in Anatolia has been named „The Cow“ in her honor, and the whole strait – the Bosphorus, or „Cow“.