



# *Lost In Time*

Origing of Mankind

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Adventure

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

## **Prologue**

A pack of felines had just attacked the grazing herd. They approached unnoticed. Hair color of predators merged with high grass, so they were almost invisible. About six years old male defied at first, he bowed his head to the ground into the defensive position, aiming at attacking predators. But when one of the attackers approached and unleashed the feral roar, male turned away and started to flee the very same second. Well, the entire herd ran away.

Suddenly, another feline flanked escaping animals from the left. It managed to confuse and separate some of them from the fleeing group. Like they were just waiting for it, beasts focused on one animal.

They were reaching it. One of carnivores caught the right leg of running animal with his paw. It ran so fast, that it stumbled and did a couple of somersaults. It hit the ground heavily and stayed there, motionless. In fact, it wasn't hurt, just extremely exhausted from the insane race for life. But this race was already lost for him. In another second, felines were at him and first of them bit into his neck.

The hunt was successful. The pack leader was breathing heavily. He didn't feel the excitement of hunt and taste of dying victim's blood anymore. Rapid run in the hot landscape exhausted him much more than before. Some young males were already glaring at him viciously. Soon, some of them would challenge him again. But somehow he felt this time it would be different. As he was aging, he was losing his strength.

One of his future rivals approached the prey cautiously, looking at the leader. He was waiting for his reaction. He bowed his head and bit into the meat.

"And here it comes," thought the old male.

He roared threateningly and bared his teeth. He couldn't ignore such attack at his position. He was ready.

The first clash was hard. The younger male bounced the opened mouth with his right paw and with sharp teeth he caught the rival's shoulder underneath. Blood splashed out of the deep wound. Both males turned, getting ready for another attack. The older one was considerably slower. The last contact waited for him. Now, he didn't rush so much. He saw, his rival was much stronger. So he let him attack first.

He dodged swishing paw with nails to turn and bite into his neck in another moment. The huge teeth tore the skin and muscle, until they found the way to carotid artery and opened it. When he felt warm, pulsing blood in his mouth, he bit again and squeezed jaw even more.

Paralyzed rival was shaking convulsively for a while, his moves were getting slower and at the end, he stopped.

The older male released motionless body and stepped aside. He raised his head and roared winningly. But he was too exhausted and, moreover, seriously injured. Furthermore, he knew what would follow next.

A dark growling came from behind his back.

Another challenge!

He turned slowly to face another attack. He was sure it would be the last one in his life. He showed his bared teeth.

Then, something unexpected happened. Already during the hunt it began to darken, but now the sky was pitch-black. Lightning cut the air. It hit the tree, only hundred yards from the ongoing duel. Almost simultaneously, the deafening thunder came. Then the lightning hit again. And next one. Dry grass was ignited from the hit tree and the wind spread fire through the land. It was swallowing the grass like a hungry beast and the fire became stronger every second. Finally it started to rain and heavy raindrops slowly put out flames.

The former pack leader roared again, in fear this time. The other members answered him in the same way. Suddenly, they all began to run away. The pack was escaping in one direction, their leader in another.

Lightning were gaining in intensity. Many of them were striking again and didn't go out. On contrary, others showed and started to create a light circle. It shone shortly and clearly and then went out. In another moment, also diabolical thunder stopped.

Silence fell over the land. Animals, frightened by unusual phenomenon, were escaping in panic as far from that place as possible. The storm ended as quickly as it started. Just a burnt circle remained after the light phenomenon. There was a man laying in the middle.

## **Chapter one**

After this passage through time, I remained laying on the ground, dazed. Despite having the experience of several time travels, I always needed a while to recover. I rubbed my eyes, trying to gently get the ashes of burnt area out. Then I opened them carefully. As usual, I was laying in the middle of burnt circle. I stood up slowly. Somehow, subconsciously, I expected to appear at the usual place. But one look at surrounding amazed me.

–Where the hell I am? – flashed through my mind.

I didn't know this place at all. Where are my hills, my forest? If I at least partially understood principle of Time Gate and time travelling, I could be anywhere and anytime on Earth. Even on the other planet. I better rejected this option immediately, because, to be honest, I couldn't accept such idea.

I searched the vicinity with trained eye. The countryside was mostly flat. All of that looked like wide valley of former harsh river. But where had this river disappeared, it remained a mystery. Today there was just a creek, meandering through the landscape and its flow was followed by green ribbon of lush vegetation. Apart from that, the country was mostly dry and looked like prairie. The valley was covered with tall grass, almost reaching my belt. Here and there were clumps of large shrubs and trees and some freestanding individuals of respectable size. Thick forest emerged as valley started to turn into hills. Light green, formed by deciduous trees was gradually turning into dark green coniferous forest. Above it, rocky snowy mountain peaks towered.

It was desolate and lifeless land. Later I found out that the opposite is true. Animals, frightened by unusual storm, ran off in fear. But I didn't know that at the moment.

Silence here was almost scary. Despite it was quite warm, I shivered. That was the result of increasing adrenaline in my blood. Looking up, I realized that I was not quite alone here. There were vulture-like birds flying in circles. Circles were gradually getting smaller, as they focused on the one spot, flying to the ground. After a while, they landed on the meadow on the two small dark piles. These lied on the black stripes of burnt grass. They immediately started to scramble for the carcass; their angry shrieks were heard up to me.

After the rain, air was relatively clean and fresh and a light gust of wind brought to me smell of roasted meat. According to the direction and intensity I learnt it spread from the spot, where carrion birds were bickering.

Slowly, searching the vicinity, I stepped towards them. As I was approaching to the carrions, smell of roasted meat was getting stronger. I already recognized rough shapes, but still didn't see them very clearly. They got lost under the flapping wings of large birds. In addition, their charred skin blended with the background, burnt grass.

I chased birds from the pile, closer to me. Shrieking angrily, they flew away, but only a few yards and surveyed me with hate.

"You won't feed on me," I shouted to them.

I didn't want to admit it, but I started to lose my nerves. Just because my former life of hunter hardened me, I managed to keep my temper.

I stepped to the lying torso and kneeled to survey it. At the first sight it looked like a deer, but instead of antlers it had sharp horns. The body was overall in bad condition. At first, intensive heat, created by ignition of dry grass, had burned its hair and skin to the ashes.

Tendons and leg muscles also shrunk in mortal spasm and it looked ghastly. Besides traces of the bird beaks, I discovered something much more serious. Couple of large wounds on the body, especially on the neck. I wouldn't like to meet a predator, which had caused them.

After I searched the first body, I headed to the second carcass. I tried to organize my thoughts. Vultures, scared by my arrival, shrieked in pleasure, sprang back to the body and continued on the feast. As before, it didn't go without bickering.

I started to search the second corpse, lying about twenty yards away from the first one. This creature had been more robust; it had quite different body structure. Short strong legs were ended with sharp curved claws. Leg muscles were huge. It was simply a predator in all respects. I had never seen such beast, now I was absolutely sure, I found myself if not in another time, at least far from my region.

The animal was surprisingly large. Undoubtedly it was feline, but it was much larger than all the bears, I had ever met in my life. Although fire covered all traces, I was sure it had killed the other beast. Predator was lying on the side and from this perspective I couldn't see any injuries it had to burn here for. But I didn't want to believe, that fire had just surprised it. He could just run a few yards and it would be out of the danger.

I came around and froze. Huge burnt head was full of sharp teeth. It looked like a monster from nightmares. If I kept my head cold until now, gazing at this, I almost lost it. Almost feral fear seized me. It paralyzed me for a while. In panic, I started to breathe heavily and look around disjointedly, but I wasn't able to think.

A long time ago, when I had been thrown through the Time Gate from the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century into the dark and bitter times of the Bronze Age I'd managed to survive. Thanks to my friend and later father-in-law Tork. But now I was alone and after everything I had seen, I found out, the Time Gate had transferred me deeply into the prehistoric ages. I had no idea, what could meet me here.

In my mind, a picture of Tork with his careful face appeared.

"What shall I do?" I thought hopelessly.

"Don't give up, my son," rang in my head like distant whisper, "let your brain work. And rely on your instincts of the hunter."

I pulled myself together and started to think soberly. If I met something like an animal I saw in front of me, I probably wouldn't stand a chance. The landscape was too open and unknown to me and if something had managed to catch up the deer – as I called the creature in my mind – it wouldn't had much trouble dealing with me. My only chance was to get to the

woods at higher altitudes. That was the environment I was familiar with. There, I had better chance for survival.

“Fine, what can I use?” I told to myself quietly.

Hunting bow, a quiver with almost thirty arrows, long curved dagger and hunting axe. Furthermore, on the belt I found a bag with necessary things – a thin bronze needle, a bobbin with thin yarn for sewing wounds, some alcohol for disinfecting, a roll of canvas, several slices of dried meat, a tinder and little waterskin.

“Well, not much, but at least something,” I told out loud, because the sound of human voice helped me in my loneliness.

“So, water first, night shelter next. Then I will see,” I said at last and looked into the distance.

In this heat, I could easily succumb to dehydration. Fluid loss could cause my weakening, which would mean death in this strange environment.

Sun was high above the horizon and I estimated I have had about four or five hours of daylight left. From my previous experience, I knew it’s not wise to look for the night shelter after sunset. Otherwise, this night could be my last one, as well. I calculated immediately that if I went to the creek to provide water, I would have had no time to get to the forest. Therefore, I had to spend the night here, in this open countryside, the best place would be one of high trees I had at hand. When I finally decided how to proceed, I was relieved a little. I had a plan and a goal.

I went to the first carrion and cut off beast’s horns with my axe. They were almost meter long and it could be used as stab weapon. Then I freed a few longer tendons that would be used as retaining rope. That certainly provoked storm of resentment of vultures which had to spring far meters away, waving their wings.

It made me angry. I pulled the bow down from my shoulder and draw the arrow out of the quiver. After all, I didn’t know when I would find some food again. I aimed shortly and shot at the chosen target.

Birds were less than seven meters far from me, so I couldn’t miss. I hit one’s heart. The arrow hit with such force, the bird was thrown back. The rest of flock silenced, at first, they probably didn’t understand, what had just happened. After they realized that I was a threat, they started to flee in panic. They spread wings and flew up clumsily.

“You see, vultures,” I shouted at them cheerily, “man comes on the scene!”

I got rid of bird's guts quickly. Then I tied a piece of tendon to his leg and slung it over my shoulder. It had size of hen. So I hoped it would taste like it, too. It was the right time, I had to go on.

As I expected, vegetation by the brook was very dense and I had trouble to get up to water. Of course, I could follow the stream and find the place, where animals used to drink. It would certainly be beaten, but places like this used to be visited by predators a lot. And I couldn't risk it. According to everything I had seen here, I was the being, less adapted to the environment in this world. It made me a prey automatically. What irony! In fact, I, the man originally from the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century, was crown of creation. But all my knowledge of the Earth, mathematics and universe were useless here. The only thing that counted was my primordial instincts, strengthened by life in Bronze Age. I just could hope that my equipment wouldn't leave me in the lurch.

When I struggled through thick vegetation, sometimes I had to hack the path with hatchet. I found an interesting bush. It had relatively thin flat trunk covered in thorns. When I cut into one of them to pave the way, the hatchet left just a superficial notch in it. Wood was very hard. After next ten minutes of exhausting work I managed to fell the trunk. I pulled it at the open area and the thorns off. Then it was time for the final phase.

I shortened the trunk on less than two meters. Its front side was a little thicker than the back and it suited me. With the dagger I created a shallow groove. There I had set a prong of horn I had collected from the burnt carrion. It was very sharp and spiral. I attached it to the new spear. I used tendons and also dared to sacrifice part of my yarn.

When I finally finished my work, I was satisfied. I created a truly menacing weapon. For the test, I hefted spear in my hand. Rough wood was heavier than I expected. On the other hand, the energy of thrown javelin concentrated at one point on the tip, would be devastating after impact. Considering I had no experiences with material like this, the weapon was balanced quite nicely. During the testing flight it flew straight forward and stubbed into the ground in right arc. Deadly weapon indeed. I didn't mean to throw it in longer distances, it should be rather used as stab weapon.

Work on spear delayed me, but I didn't regret it. I filled waterskin and stepped forward.

As a night shelter I chose one of lonely tree giants, standing in one-third of the road between me and deciduous forest.

I knew that I would get there at least at the end of the day and then I would have no time to get ready for night. The tree was really huge, about twenty meters tall. Its trunk was almost two meters thick. There were a lot of cavities, probably made by birds, which represented grips



and footholds for a climber. It would be great advantage to me, because the lower branches were about six meters above the ground. I couldn't imagine how I would climb up without these helps. The tree crown was richly branched, there were smaller and smaller twigs, growing from the thicker branches, ended by tiny sharp-like leaves. I thought, it was because of the dry condition and this way the tree protected itself from intense sunshine in the dry area.

Shadows became longer. The day was quickly coming to an end. Sun approached to the horizon and then, suddenly, swung over hills and there was gloom. As the night came, country suddenly came alive. Sounds of night wild reached me from all sides. Even from the tree above me a loud scraping was heard, as small animals were crawling out of cavities. I wasn't usually afraid of night sounds, but these were different. More intensive and scarier, because I didn't know local fauna very well.

After a while, I stopped looking over my shoulder after every sound, because it tired me. I found a place, where one thick twig branched into several smaller ones and somehow they made a natural bed. I laid there as comfortable as I could.

I looked up to the sky. Above the hills on the left side, Moon started to rise slowly. There was almost full moon and its silvery light illuminated the landscape. Then I realized that it was noticeably colder. Compared to the daily heat, one could say that it was very cold. I pulled my buckskin tunic closer to the body and for the first time I regretted that I hadn't find the shelter on the ground and with fire. Now I couldn't do anything with that, perhaps tomorrow it would be better.

Gradually, my body adapted to the lower temperature and I began to doze off. I dared to think about my actual situation for a moment. Where the hell I was? When the Teacher asked me to travel through Time Gate into the half of twentieth century, I had no idea that I would ever get to the place like this. I was alone and helpless! But most of all, I missed a company of my loved ones. I didn't dare to think about my son and wife, because I wouldn't make it psychically.

I was thinking about Tork, my father-in-law from the Bronze Age, who was not only my savior, but also the second father to me. He had been teaching me how to make and use weapons, how to hunt, track animals and simply survive in the wild. I wished he was here right now.

Suddenly, something roared terribly. I got terrified so much, I almost fell from the tree. In the last second I caught the branch and with difficulty got my balance. Then the terrible roar sounded again. Next there was heard a clatter of hooves on the grass and some animal tried to run off. It failed. Only scream of pain drowned again by the horrible roaring told me that another

hunt had just ended. All the others noises suddenly silenced for a moment, to resound in the same intensity in the next moment. One animal had just died, but others still lived. There were heard tearing of fresh meat and cracking of bones. A bloody feast was just happening down there. I couldn't stand the growling of beasts, scrambling for meat. It was horrible. Although I had seen and heard a lot of things in my life, this was too much for me. I covered ears with my hands and closed eyes. I was about ten meter above the ground, thus relatively safe. My body and mind needed a rest. Tomorrow, another tough day was waiting for me. I found so-comfortable position and tried to relax. I stopped dealing with terrifying sounds of wild and my thoughts. The tension fell away from me and I fell asleep.

## **Chapter two**

*Tork had just been finishing skinning of a young deer. The work went smoothly; it looked like under the knife skin was separating from the body by itself.*

*It was a beautiful day. Sun was shining and bird chirping was heard in the air. I was on the little glade in the middle of the old forest.*

*"Peter! Don't stand there uselessly and hold this!" he yelled at me suddenly.*

*I stepped closer to him and caught the released part of skin. I stretched it slightly to make my friend's work easier.*

*"Tork," I spoke, "what is happening?"*

*He stopped working for a while and looked at me.*

*"Where did I get?" I wanted to know.*

*"Everything has a meaning," he answered uncertainly.*

*"What meaning? And why me?" I raised my voice a little. I wasn't in the mood for riddles. "The country is wild and I'm alone."*

*"Yes, that world is much tougher that it seems to be. But people are able to survive there, too. And there is also more in you than you think."*

*"What am I supposed to do? Where shall I go?" Despair started to capture me again.*

*"Find people and keep looking for the Time Gate. That is your way. You are connected to it."*

*"But how? How to do it?" I asked again, "I don't know, where the Time Gate is, even where shall I go. And I think it would be a miracle, if I survive."*

*Tork smiled.*

*“Peter... the first time, when you were thrown through the Time Gate from the twentieth century to my age, it was the same situation. At the time you had also no chance to survive, but you adapted and succeeded.”*

*He raised his hand and patted my shoulder friendly. Suddenly, his face frowned.*

*“Tork,” I started again.*

*“Peter,” he interrupted me in hurry, “time is out. Now you have to wake up, because they are coming...”*

I opened my eyes. For a while, I was remembering, where actually I am. Smell of predator hit my nose. In a second, I was on the alert. I heard scratching under me. I looked down and almost froze. From the darkness, two green eyes were looking at me. Predator was climbing the trunk, using its claws. That was the scratching sound that woke me up.

Tentatively I looked up into the tree crown. I immediately knew there was no way out. I had to face the beast. I grabbed my new spear firmly. I leaned against the thick branch to get support. I was ready.

As he was approaching, I heard his raspy breathing. His body was too heavy and even if he could climb the tree, it was clear that he was more adapted for moving on the ground. I waited, until he was about meter and half far from me.

Then the beast opened his mouth and roared. That sound made me stiff for a while. At the next moment, with all my strength, I stabbed the tip of spear into his mouth. The sharp end came through tissue of the throat and jabbed into flesh.

He didn't expect this. He paused for a while, to roar even more than before in the next second. In pain this time. He couldn't hold on the trunk and fell to the ground from about eight meters height. After he hit the ground, he remained to lie, motionless.

My heart was beating rapidly. Adrenaline flowed in my blood and euphoria seized me. I won.

I wasn't expecting another visit tonight, so I tried to calm down and get some sleep. I would look at the predator tomorrow, in the daylight.

The rest of the night I slept dreamlessly.

The first sun rays tickled my face. I opened my eyes. Meanwhile, a feast started under the tree. A pack of hyena-like animals was feeding. They were tearing large chunks of meat and took them away from the carcass where they were gnawing at it. All the time they were making annoying barky sounds. My old friends, the vultures, were here as well, circling in the sky.

I couldn't decide, should I leave my safe place on the tree, when so many predators gathered down there? Although they were interested in the food and I probably could walk around them in small distance without any problems, I wanted my spear back. Last night it had served me well.

So I decided to wait for a while. I pulled out a slice of dried meat and started to bite it slowly. It was tough and barely slid down my throat. I finally flushed it down with big gulps of water. Tearing and cracking sounds that had scared me last night, left me cold now. I was adapting.

Eating my breakfast, I was watching predators, feeding on dead body under the tree. They were canines, similar to hyenas as I remembered them, but a bit larger. They were brown and grey and blended in high grass very well. They were about one meter tall. They had short but strong muzzles, and mouth full of strong teeth. They were able to chew through the femur of larger animal they were eating now. I guessed their weight was about hundred kilograms.

It took about an hour until hyenas stuffed themselves and left the stage under my tree. Even during their early lunch, vultures began to join them. At first hyenas were chasing them away, but when their stomachs filled the meat, they ignored the vultures. Thus, the feast was going on after they left, just with different guests.

Now was my time. For the last time I checked vicinity from the height, then I started to creep down. Finally, I could survey the dead beast. As I expected, hyenas did their job and parts of predator's body were everywhere around me. I knew this wasn't the end. The smell of dead animal would attract others scavengers soon. But that time I wouldn't be here anymore.

I chased angry vultures away and leaned to the body. My spear was sticking from the mouth like a big exclamation mark. After closer examination of traces I managed to pull together, how the situation had ended. The spear tip had penetrated deep into the soft palate. The attacking animal had fallen from great pain down from the tree. Using his cat instincts, he had automatically rolled and landed on feet. Falling, the end of the spear hit the ground first and the beast had impaled on it with all its weight. The impact had to be terrible. At least according to the place, where hitting the ground, the spear had yanked out the proper tussock with a piece of soil. The handle resisted and blade driven by inertia smoothly broke through the cranial bone and crashed deep into the brain. The animal had to be dead before it felt the impact.

I grabbed the spear with my right hand and pulled. It didn't move, it was firmly stuck in the beast's skull. I leaned with my foot against the neck of the carcass and tried to pull it out with both hands. The result was the same. I was a little disappointed, but never mind. The spear had served its purpose. So I picked out the dagger from behind my belt and cut carefully tendons

and string, which I had used to fasten pike before. At least I released the handle. I took another peak I brought with me and made a new spear. It was high time. I had spent too much time in this place.

I stepped towards the hills. I estimated I would get there until evening and find a suitable place to stay. On the way I kept searching countryside around me. If I thought it was a desert yesterday, today I knew I was wrong. Walking through it, I often came across herds of wild aurochs. They were made by something like smaller groups. I didn't have many experiences with these animals, so I avoided them. If somehow they considered me as a threat, they would have attacked me. And I probably wouldn't withstand in the face of these horny giants. Aurochs were large animals resembling to modern cattle. But their stature was at least one-third more massive and they had long dangerous horns.

But they would be worth it as a prey. – I thought, smiling. For the first time, since I got here, I was in a good mood.

Apart from the fact that I found myself at the time and place where I definitely didn't want to be, I had to admit that it was beautiful. It was sunny day and wasn't very warm yet. It was a breathtaking view of the number of animals, freely grazing along the prairie. As I had already said, there were herds of aurochs with huge horns, herds of six or seven wild horses, wild pigs and number of cervids. Survey of herds took me more time than I could afford to waste. I decided to not spend another night on the tree and find a safe place on the ground and make a fire. It would save me from night cold weather and also from uninvited visitors. And after all, I wanted to catch something and bake big tasty chunk of meat. Too bad, I had lost a vulture meat, which was dropped after my first contact with the beast. Now I would never know how it tasted.

In the nick of time, not far from me, a smaller group of wild pigs emerged. It was a sounder of about fifteen ones. Their grunting was heard all around, as they were digging food out of the ground. There were some adults, but around them a lot of pups were running joyfully. I stood downwind, but they ignored me. The scent of human didn't scare them. I decided to take down one of the young pigs and have a rich meal. I would need strength for another walk. This night I would stay in prairie and tomorrow I should reach borders of forest.

I put the bow from my shoulder and stepped to the pigs. They had just scattered among bushes. To save themselves from sun and also to dig worms and insects around roots.

I was not more than twenty steps far from them. Several animals already noticed me and looked at me curiously. Obviously they still didn't consider me a threat. On contrary, I began to realize that this adventure might not end well. Now, when I could see animals closer, I learnt they had robust bodies. Females had almost hundred and fifty kilograms and teeth in their mouth

weren't unnoticeable, too. I looked around the terrain again, looking for possible escape routes. About ten steps far from me, there were couple of bushes and one thicker tree. I guessed it wouldn't be problem to catch its bottom branches and climb up fast.

Fine, let's go. I nocked the arrow to bowstring. A young, several months old pig wandered off a few meters far from the herd. Now it was turned by side to me and tried to dig some root out. I raised the bow and tightened string. I aimed carefully. Pigs still didn't notice me very much.

I loosened the arrow. Swishing, it overcame the distance and stabbed the pup's left shoulder. The arrow quietly came through skin and tendons, until it hit the heart.

The animal froze. Then, making no sound, it fell down.

Gaze towards the rest of herd told me that I already had aroused their interest. All of them were watching me anxiously. Like they couldn't decide if I was dangerous or not.

I took a deep breath and shouted. They still hesitated, but when I screamed and stamped my feet, they turned at once and took flight.

"Meet the man!" I yelled at them as goodbye.

I quickly ripped out guts of the little pig. Scavengers would take care of it. Then I realized one important thing. I couldn't eat so much of meat all at once and it wouldn't be good decision to bring it with me. As the sun was rising in the sky, its rays sucked the strength out of me. I separated some best chunks of meat and somehow tied them together. Then I hanged them on the peak of my spear to carry them on my shoulder.

After that I could finally hit the road. My closest goal was to find suitable place to make fire so the dinner could be made. I chose remote bushes in the direction of my journey. There should be enough wood to feed fire.

Until I finally reached my destination, the second half of the day started. I had to admit, I was a little scared. Walking through the prairie with chunks of bloody smelling meat, I felt myself like butchery advertisement for predators.

Fortunately, I managed to get there without any problems. I quickly found place to sleep. There were enough thicker and thinner wood. Now I could only hope that natural animals' fear of fire would protect me and nothing would disturb my night rest.

Fire was cracking cheerily and meat cut into thinner slices was baking slowly. I paid attention so it wasn't too close to direct flame and wasn't burned. After a short while, a mouthwatering smell started to spread. I didn't have anything to use as a side dish, any pepper or anything to season it, but hunger was the best sauce. I was really looking forward to this meal.

After another while of baking I gradually started to trim pieces of meat. It was quite hot and unbelievably tasty. The pig had young soft meat, but it wasn't dry either. On contrary, it was delicious and almost slid through my throat. I flushed it with sips of water. Oh God, that was something! After great meal, euphoria seized me. However, man is just an animal, too and some principles are universal. Full stomach was the best medicine not just for hunger, but for the mood as well.

Now I could afford to calculate my position. I was thinking about my actual life. When I was thrown through the Time Gate about two thousand years backwards, I was sure I was going to die. Fortunately, at the last moment, Tork, my later friend, had saved me. He was honest and open man. Typical man of his times. Strict and kind. He wasn't afraid of death, didn't matter if it was struggle with people or wild animals, which could threaten his family. He was also very caring and loved his family.

Then there was his daughter Ivone. Love that flared between us was intense and passionate. It had grown into truly beautiful relationship which we sealed in marriage and child.

When I remembered this moment, terrible sadness captured me. In my head I saw picture of my wife, playing with our son. My throat tightened like it was gripped by iron hoop. My eyes moistened and one lonely tear rolled down my cheek. I made every effort to control myself, for now I had to drive all these beautiful but painful memories out of my mind.

I needed to clear my head. Considering I had no place to go, I had to find some activity. As I was used to do before, I began to treat and clean my weapons. Then I prepared a pile of wood to keep fire all the night. I paid special attention to the pile of thin twigs and dry grass, so I was able, if necessary, to quickly expel bigger flames. During this activity I relaxed and felt although not well, but a little better. At last, I made a temporary bed from dry grass.

Lying on the back, I was watching rising stars. Meanwhile, it became quite dark and night filled with noise of wilderness. I wasn't as terrified as night before, but I was constantly on the alert.

In my mind, I came back to the past again. I nipped thoughts of my wife in the bud, because I didn't dare to think about her without sadness seized me again. But there was a man who was able to induce at least as strong emotions in me, just in opposite nature. The man I found myself here because of. His disgusting face filled entire my mind.

"Eduard Beck," I strained through my teeth, "If we ever meet again, I promise I will kill you!"

Beck was a heinous villain, who had discovered traces left by me in the past. He had immediately learnt there was a time travel and as fanatic Nazi, he saw his fate in it. According

to his own version, he was chosen to come back into the past and reverse history by Hitler's side. To create eternal Third Reich and lead it. He was insane.

He had managed to realize his plans. He spread the terror and suffering among the nations. Numerous people had died by his hand. When I and my friend had come to Beck's alternative time line, we managed to start uprising of subordinate nations, Beck's Third Reich had ceased to exist. The last task, as it seemed, was to prevent Beck in using the Time Gate and disrupt natural flow of time. When I embarked on this task, I had no idea that it would bring me here. I didn't know when and where I was and even where should I look for the Time Gate. It was impossible to search entire planet though. And then, the Time Gate might not be here at all. Had my presence here any sense, or it was just a mistake, when I thought I understood working of Time Gate and by accident found myself at the different place? I was confused, as questions started to mix.

I put another piece of wood in the fire, raw one this time to keep it longer and smoke would deter animals and insects. Then I fell on my bed, exhausted physically, but more psychically and fell asleep immediately.

*In my dream, I found myself in Shumava again. I was captured by Beck's people, as I tried to break into his command center. I was just woken up by bucket of water. I could barely raise my head. My whole body was covered in wounds, I almost didn't feel it. I had already stopped cursing myself for coming here. I focused at one goal – to survive.*

*Questioning was harsh, but I knew it would be worse. They couldn't be stopped by anything. I was resisting for now. Fear seized me, when I imagined these killers in Tork's time. Automatic guns and modern equipment would have allowed them to rule entire area in short time. What would follow, I couldn't and even didn't want to imagine.*

*Door opened and a man in stylish suit came in. It was astonishing that high society looking man like him was surrounded by such a bunch of murderers.*

*"Good evening, Mr. Brezovsky," said with broken Czech, "I am sorry, we don't treat you like a guest. But it mostly depends on you."*

*"What do you want?" I asked, trying to stretch time. I didn't mean to tell him anything, but brutal torturing wasn't enjoyable.*

*"What do I want?" rhetorical question. "You managed to time travel. Twice, according to our information. I just want you to show me how, that's all.*

*"Why would I do it?" I asked openly, "If I tell, you'll kill me."*



*Originally, that was intention, I won't deny. But your attitude convinced me. I am offering you something different."*

*He paused significantly.*

*"According to our information, you are one-third Aryan. Join me. Join my side. I am offering an opportunity to participate in something big. I am talking about nothing less than ruling the world."*

*He looked like he was getting into trance. His face was pale and numb, as if he was flying in his imagination. After a while I understood what he was talking about. It was so incredibly monstrous that I almost died of disgust. This man, if you could call him that way, was a monster. Monster within human race, offering me eternal life and youth if I joined him. If I forgot everything what I believed and what my parents had taught me. No, I couldn't do it. I would never do it.*

*"You are a maniac!" I said, "You want to murder masses. That's insane! Even your body is a fake. You are supposed to be an old man, after what you are saying..."*

*"Don't judge me by my appearance, my friend. What you can see, is a combination of money and the latest genetic researches. It's beautiful, isn't it? Eternal youth. But something is missing. The power! Absolute power over millions of people. Yes, that's what I want. You say I was a maniac. And what happened to you, Mr. Brezovsky? Respectable businessman with successful company and promising future. Now you are a savage and a murderer. What's the difference – to kill five, ten or thousands of people? We are the same. Come on, join me, you won't regret."*

*To forget Ivone? To waive friends? To betray Tork, Eric and the rest? No, I couldn't do that. And I certainly couldn't entrust the power over millions of innocent lives to this monster. I'd rather be dead. I spat in disgust.*

*The scene suddenly changed. By side of my Germanic comrades, I was watching approaching Roman army. We were hiding on the hill above the valley and waited, until they would get within striking distance of the bow. Meanwhile, Roman commander had approached about hundred and thirty steps far from us. It wasn't a long distance, despite the object was moving. As I noticed, he was running forward in fairly constant rate, so it was easy to estimate his position. It wasn't needful to kill Severus, or even to hit him. It was enough to get arrow somewhere close to him and panic would arouse. Of course, hit would've been better. With my finger I checked direction and strength of wind. I nocked arrow on the string and pulled slightly. I took shooting position and kept watching the target. I wasn't thinking about Severus as a man anymore. Now he was just an object.*

*- Steady hand, sharp eye - I repeated in my mind.*

*Tork had taught me these spells to stable and balance heart rhythm during the shooting at distant aim.*

*- Steady hand... - I repeated for the last time.*

*The commander almost came within range. I was watching him fixedly. About hundred and ten meters were between us.*

*- One, two, three, four, five... -*

*I counted and checked, how far he meantime shifted. Again.*

*One, two, three...*

*Fine, it's time. I bent the bow and headed carefully. I slightly angled the bow to the left and shot out.*

### **Chapter three**

I jerked and woke up. It was just a dream. It was made by my memories and fears from the past. As many people after waking up, I quickly forgot, what I was dreaming about. Just scraps remained and they didn't fit into each other in any way. So I left it behind.

The sun had risen just a while before and sky was clear and cloudless. Another hot day was waiting for me. I made a fire again and warmed up yesterday's meat.

After a brief but hearty breakfast, I reassessed the planned route. I had to change direction to come closer to the creek again and added water supplies. I assumed there wouldn't be such problem with water in the hills, not so big like here, in open flatland, where this stream probably represented the only source of water.

As I was approaching to hills, I was gradually recognizing that there wasn't continuous deciduous forest as I had thought before. It was rather hillside overgrown by sparse shrubs. Soil probably wasn't very fertile here and drought also wasn't good for vegetation. There were also several tall trees, standing alone and sticking out above the shrubs. In addition, I saw also groves and little clusters of trees. As I was able to tell from here, it was mostly birches, but there were oaks and hornbeams as well.

Suddenly I felt worried. Something was happening. Wind brought to me screams and female crying. There must be a human somewhere! Or couple of them. And they are definitely in danger. Then high rasping voice was heard which was in a moment drowned by a cry. I nocked arrow on the string and stepped that way.