

Chapter 3: The frequency of escape

Julmargo: The Truth of the Three

Mateusz Palczewski – www.julmargo.com

Rain in Wrocław had always seemed romantic to me. Tonight, it was just wet, cold, and a total nightmare for keeping my balance on the roof of an office building on Dubois Street.

Only an hour ago, my life had revolved around a history exam and whether the boy from the junior class—the one half the school had a crush on—would finally text me back. Now? Now I was watching my two younger brothers leap across the chasm between buildings, while I had to make sure we weren't picked up by Eterna Corp drones.

"Marcel, are you sure it's this way?" I whispered.

My voice sounded strange. It had a metallic reverb to it, as if every syllable vibrated in the air long after I'd spoken. I could feel it in my throat—like I'd swallowed a tiny, living magnet that reacted to everything around me.

"Turn left behind the ventilator," Marmar muttered. His glasses were fogged up, but he wasn't looking through the lenses anyway. He was staring "past" reality. "I can see their network. They're trying to hem us in using a movement prediction algorithm. They think we'll run toward the main station."

"So where are we going?" Gogo, who had been running ahead like a battering ram, stopped so abruptly I nearly slammed into him. "If not the station, then where? We don't have a car, we don't have money, and Mom and Dad..."

Gogo trailed off. I saw him clench his fists. The skin on his knuckles was grey and hard, as if polished from granite. He was twelve years old, and moments ago, he had likely broken the ribs of a grown man in tactical armor. I saw pure terror in his eyes, mixed with a jagged surge of adrenaline.

"To the station," I said firmly. "But not by train."

"Julka, Marcel says they're waiting for us there!" Gogo nearly shouted at me.

I stepped toward him and placed my hands on his shoulders. Usually, he was the "big" one, despite his age, but now I could feel him trembling.

"Gogo, look at me."

As I locked eyes with him, I felt that strange energy in my voice begin to stabilize. This was my "filter." People had always trusted me, but now it wasn't just charm. It was a ripple. My words fell into resonance with his heartbeat, calming it down. Gogo suddenly let out a long breath, and his skin faded back to its normal color.

"We're going to the station because that's where the crowds are," I explained, glancing at Marmar. "Marcel, can you make sure the cameras don't see us?"

Marmar gave a crooked smile, which looked a bit ghostly against his pale face.

"I can do better. I can make every camera at the Main Station see us as three old men with canes. But I need access to a terminal."

"Fine. I'll handle the 'atmosphere,'" I said, though I didn't quite know what that meant yet. I felt, however, that my singing—this strange humming of mine—could influence how people perceived us. If I hummed "silence," no one would notice us.

We climbed down the fire escape into a dark alley. The Wrocław I knew—the city of dwarves, bridges, and students—had suddenly become a labyrinth of traps. Every passerby looked like an agent. Every black car was a threat.

"Julka?" Marmar stopped at the entrance to the tunnel under the

tracks. "That cube from Dad... it's started transmitting."

"What? Transmitting what?"

"Not sound," Marcel held up the black object. "It's transmitting structure. It's a map. But not a normal one. It's a map of... flows. It's showing a point in the Alps. A place called the 'House of Silence'."

"The Alps?" Gogo's eyes went wide. "We don't even have passports!"

"Gogo, look at us," I sighed, adjusting his hood. "Do you really think that with what we can do, passports are our biggest problem?"

We entered the station's main hall. It was late, but the crowd was still thick. The smell of coffee, wet coats, and cheap perfume hit my nose. I started to hum. It was a very low, monotonous sound, nearly drowned out by the roar of the terminal.

I felt it instantly. The people around us began to... lose focus when they looked our way. They brushed past us as if we were nothing more than shadows on the wall. It was incredible and terrifying at the same time. I felt every note draining my strength, as if the sound was feeding on my blood sugar.

"Marmar, hurry," I whispered, feeling a wave of dizziness.

Marcel walked up to a ticket machine. He didn't pull out a card or cash. He simply laid his hand on the screen. I saw his fingers tremble slightly. A high-pitched electronic whine rang in my ears, though no one else seemed to hear it.

"Done," he said after a few seconds. "We're in the system as technical crew for a freight train to Munich. It leaves from Platform Five in four minutes."

"A freighter? Are we riding with coal?" Gogo groaned.

"With luxury cars, genius," Marmar retorted, regaining his smug tone for a moment. "We'll have climate control and leather seats. Let's move."

As we stepped onto the platform, I spotted three men in grey suits out of the corner of my eye. They weren't running. They were walking calmly, scanning the crowd with tablets. One of them stopped and looked directly toward us.

My humming faltered for a second. My heart hammered against my ribs.

"Don't stop, Julka!" Marmar hissed, grabbing my hand.

The man narrowed his eyes. I could see his tablet flashing an error. A red message: ACOUSTIC ANOMALY. He took a step toward us, reaching for something inside his jacket.

"Gogo," I whispered through gritted teeth, never breaking the hum.

My youngest brother didn't need to be asked twice. He did something that looked like a simple stumble. He slammed his foot into the concrete platform. Not hard—just enough, as if he were stomping in impatience.

The effect was like a small bomb going off under the station. The floor tiles shattered, and a shockwave sent the man in the grey suit flying upward like a ragdoll. People started screaming; panic erupted.

"Jump in!" Marmar yelled, pointing to the opening doors of the last wagon of the train that had just started to move.

We scrambled inside at the last possible second. As the train gained speed, leaving behind Wrocław, our apartment, and our parents, I looked at my brothers. We were dirty, soaked, and scared to death.

"Julka?" Gogo sat on the floor of the wagon, staring at his hands, which still glowed with a faint metallic luster. "Do you think Mom

and Dad... do you think they really knew this would happen?"

I looked at the black cube in Marmar's hands.

"I think our parents knew a truth that we're only just beginning to learn. And I think that as long as we're together, that's the only thing that's real right now."

The train entered a tunnel, and I knew one thing: The Truth of the Three wasn't going to be a story about how we became heroes. It was going to be the story of how we survived in a world that wanted to delete us.