

Chapter 5: Where It Is Darkest

Julmargo: The Truth of the Three

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To most people, sound is a mere ripple in the air. For me, in that split second, Julka's sound was a structure. I saw it before I heard it. I watched a shockwave erupt from her throat, a structure so dense that the air in the wagon shimmered like the haze over hot asphalt in July back in Wrocław.

That was the moment—we had to act. Julia opened her mouth.

When you're fifteen, you think you've seen enough movies and played enough games that nothing can surprise you. But this was something entirely new. It was as if I were discovering a hidden layer of reality, tucked beneath the boring, everyday skin of the world. The sound my sister made wasn't a scream. It was a bio-acoustic impulse that stirred every particle of my being. I felt my molecules enter a state of resonance—a strange warmth spreading through my veins and a lightness that didn't just whisper, but roared in my head: Move! I looked at my hands, at Gogo, at Julka...

energy was practically emanating from us.

Meanwhile, the Eterna Corp agents raised their weapons. I saw their fingers on the triggers; I saw the tension in their forearm muscles. And then, suddenly... they froze. They were our total opposites. We were pulsing with life; they became dead spots in the world's code. Stripped of all energy, it was as if Julka's sound had "blown the fuses" in their nervous systems.

"Run!" I shouted. "This is our only chance!"

We didn't wait. Gogo, still glowing with that matte, stony sheen, grabbed Julka by the arm—I could see that her "emission" had cost her more than she let on. We bolted toward the forest bordering the tracks. My legs moved on autopilot; I analyzed every root and every stone under my feet as an obstacle with a specific mass and vector.

As soon as we hit the cover of the thick spruce trees, we turned back to assess the situation. My heart hammered against my temples like a pneumatic drill. The agents were still standing by the wagon. They didn't move; they looked like mannequins abandoned on a movie set. But in my Structural Sight, something was shifting. The red points on their armor were beginning to pulse again.

At that same moment, I noticed Julia turning dangerously pale. Her breath was shallow, and her hands shook so violently she could barely stand. I could see it—her influence over the agents was melting away. The aura she had bound them with was tearing like an old fishing net.

I knew it was my turn. As the "smart one," the one who sees more, I had to make the decision that changed everything. I was still clutching Dad's black cube in my hand. It was cold, smooth, completely impenetrable... until now.

When I fixed my gaze on it—it trembled. It wasn't a simple shake. It was a vibration of such high frequency that my teeth actually ached. On one of the perfectly black faces, a string of white characters began to bloom. It scrolled fast, chaotically. In the first second, I saw only noise, but then my brain began to filter it. It was binary code, pure ones and zeros, mapping themselves into characters before my eyes, which in turn formed sentences.

"IN SILENCE THEY DO NOT SEE YOU. IN THE HOME YOU ARE SAFE."

What could that mean? Common sense told me our home in Nadodrze was nothing but a memory and a heap of rubble. But the cube didn't lie; I could feel it. Another phrase appeared, this time pulsing in red:

“THEY ONLY SEE ANOMALIES. THERE IS A SECOND HOME.”

I understood it in a heartbeat. Eterna Corp wasn't looking for three kids named Ignacy, Marcel, and Julia. They were looking for readings. Our powers were like flares fired into total darkness. The agents reacted to anomalies, but we became transparent to them the moment we went back to being "silent," ordinary humans.

“Julix, Gogo—run! Fast, follow me!” I shouted, pointing in the opposite direction of where they’d expect us to go. We ran back toward the... tracks, but several hundred meters further down, where the platform of a local station stood.

The agents by our freight wagon were still regaining consciousness, moving as if filmed in slow motion. Meanwhile, breathless and soaked, we crossed to the other side of the tracks. A passenger train was just pulling in—a sturdy, old-school regional train heading the other way. Back toward Wrocław.

We slipped inside just before the doors hissed shut. The wagon was nearly empty.

“Listen, you have to stop right now!” I whispered, sitting heavily onto the vinyl seat. “Take a deep breath. Julka, stop thinking about sounds. Gogo, relax your muscles—don't be a tank. We have to quiet our emotions... we have to be... normal again.”

“Why?” Gogo panted, wiping his grimy face.

“Because they’re tracking our trail. They sensed us more clearly when you used your powers and when I was 'reading' the cube. We’re like glowing dots on a map. But those dots vanish when we’re ordinary, when we aren't fighting. I don’t know how they found us in Nadodrze yet, but that doesn't matter now. We have to go home... to Widawa.”

“Widawa?” Julka arched an eyebrow. “To Grandma Tereska’s? Eterna will check there first!”

“No, they won’t,” I smiled faintly, feeling the data in my head click into a logical whole. “They think like a corporation. They’re looking for us in the Alps, in the Collective’s safe houses they probably already know about. They won’t expect us to head straight back to the nest, to a place that doesn't exist in any of the Triad’s official databases. 'A second home,' Julka. That’s what it said.”

We sat deep in the seats of the empty compartment. I grabbed my siblings' hands. Mine were cold, Gogo’s were hard as oak knots, and Julka’s were delicate and still vibrating slightly.

“Relax. We’re going back,” I added softly.

This train was our only chance. As students with IDs in our pockets

(which Julka had wisely grabbed from the cabinet by the door), we didn't stand out. The train moved with a quiet lurch. Through the grimy window, I spotted the agents on the platform moving slowly. They looked completely disoriented, pacing in circles and checking tablets that apparently showed nothing but background noise.

"I've had enough," Gogo suddenly whispered. It wasn't the voice of a "living kinetic." It was the voice of a twelve-year-old who had lost everything in a single night. He leaned into Julia, hiding his face in her damp coat. "Where are Mom and Dad? What's happening to us? Why us?"

None of us had the answer. For a while, the only sound in the compartment was the steady rhythm of wheels on rails—click-clack, click-clack. We stayed close together, wrapped in the smell of an old train and wet clothes. In this strange, forced normalcy, we felt safer than we had at any point in the last few hours. We fell asleep from exhaustion as the train passed through darkened villages on the border.

Three hours later, as dawn began to paint the sky gray, we reached Wrocław. We didn't get off at the Main Station—that would have been suicide. I chose a small stop: Wrocław Osobowice. We stepped out into a thick morning mist rising over the fields. It smelled of river silt from the Odra and woodsmoke from domestic chimneys.

“Listen,” I said, pulling out the cube, which was silent now, just a black hexahedron again. “We have to get to Widawa, to Grandma’s house on Sułowska Street. I don’t know what we’ll find there yet, but that was the message. We have to walk along the embankments so we don’t attract attention.”

We walked single file along the crown of the flood embankment by the Widawa River. The path was empty; only the distant hum of the waking city could be heard. We walked where it was darkest—toward our past, which was set to become our only refuge.