

The Snow King's Final Revelation

HE was here again. Alex noticed HIS ghostly silhouette in the mirror, just behind his back. As usual, HE was wearing exactly the same clothes as Alex was at that moment. Today, HE was looking very smart in HIS dark-grey suit and a perfectly matching tie. Alex should have felt flattered, for the man in the mirror was his identical twin but he only frowned and pressed his forehead against the cold surface of the mirror. He couldn't bear it anymore. His Fate was standing there, behind his back, waiting for his decision.

Alex Gregory was the hope of modern science. Despite his rather young age – thirty three – he had the reputation of a new Niels Bohr. A brilliant quantum physicist, a unique specialist in antimatter, he had a personal office in the Research Centre for Quantum Physics in Geneva, a very comfortable pay and a total autonomy in all he did. Several years ago, he revealed a tiny part of his theory of antimatter – just some insignificant hints, and it triggered such a buzz in the scientific world that the directors of the most renowned scientific institutions of the planet would willingly sell their souls to Devil to see Alex as part of their staff.

Alex leaned backwards, looked at his handsome but sad and exhausted face. Just after his glorious presentation, when his career took off so brightly and the world was about to offer him so many vertiginous opportunities, HE suddenly entered his life. Alex first saw HIM in a dream. HE was sitting in his office in the Research Centre and writing. Hidden at the back of the room, Alex was observing HIS pen strokes trying to guess what HE was putting on the paper. The double must have felt Alex's gaze upon him, for he put his pen aside and raised his eyes. In a split second, Alex realized that if their eyes met, it would mean the end and swiftly covered his face with his hands. He woke up in a cold sweat. It was the beginning of a long and exhausting hunt.

And yet, Alex was not a man to be easily intimidated. Anyone who saw him for the first time was instantly struck by his cold, impenetrable eyes, his determined and self-confident demeanour and especially by the unbreakable barrier that he raised, once and for all, between himself and his interlocutors. Because of his natural dignified composure as well as his clever handsome face, fellow scientists called him «The Snow King», of course, not directly. Alex was a strong-willed, self-sufficient, intimidating and overwhelmingly intuitive man. That's why he was dreadfully bored in this world that seemed to him unbearably shallow and materialistic, full of dull creatures whose thoughts and acts were so desperately transparent to him.

Moreover, his research on antimatter was just a ploy that enabled him to conceal the real issue he was working on. Actually, Alex Gregory was strongly determined to find scientific evidence of God's existence. He went even further: he had analysed all the finest characteristics of his own mind and after thorough reflection asked himself a bold question: wasn't he, Alex Gregory, with his boundless memory, almost supernatural insight, with his wit, his incredible giftedness in all the domains and with his exceptional physical beauty – wasn't he a divinity himself?

But the appearance of this enigmatic double pitilessly blew up all his logical constructions, for his twin's aura struck Alex with such an awe and admiration that for the first time in his life he became aware of his own limits. The double chased him everywhere: in dreams, in mirrors, even in the surface of water or shining objects and Alex's sixth sense cried in his ear that he, Alex, was just a speck of dust, a brainless idiot, a clumsy sorcerer's apprentice compared to this magnetic genius who quietly and steadily hunted him. Alex felt that his

twin was superior to him in every way, that HE had access to infinite knowledge, unlimited power, that HE had the keys to all the greatest mysteries of the Universe, and may be even more... That man exuded such a magnetic force that no one on this planet would be able to resist his appeal, and Alex would summon all his willpower to avoid being crushed by HIS hypnotic presence.

But there was another point that tortured Alex. With his usual lucidity, Alex quickly realized that he avoided his double's eyes not merely because he was afraid to disappear – as it was supposed to happen according to his own theory – but because he was horrified by the thought that he would meet the same icy, scornful and pitiless look that he himself so often shot at his fellow humans... For this superior being, he would certainly be just a miserable, ordinary mortal.

Today was the day of the trial. After months of this silent fight, Alex understood that he wasn't able to let this continue any longer. He already knew that he would be judged in exactly the same way as he judged the others, that he might have to support the contempt and disgust of his ruthless twin but in fact he didn't care anymore. This never-ending game had just sucked all the life out of him. He wanted to find peace.

Still standing in front of the mirror, Alex closed his eyes for the last time in his life. Then, slowly, he opened them and turned his head back to face his executioner.

The double was there, indeed. He was standing still, looking directly into Alex's eyes but instead of the profound despise that Alex had dreaded so much, his handsome intelligent face expressed such an infinite understanding, compassion and sympathy that Alex, shaken to the roots of his soul, fell down on his knees and, for the first time in his whole existence, burst into tears. He suddenly understood that all his stupid pride, his greed, his thirst for honours, his false superiority were so utterly useless and low compared to the simplicity and wisdom of a good and pure heart. "If I have a second chance, I will be like you! Teach me how to live!", he cried in despair stretching his arms towards the double. The twin nodded and smiled. In the next second, an enormous beam of light burst out of nowhere and both men disappeared...

The clock struck six. Alex Gregory's flat on planet Earth was empty. The city was slowly waking up. The doors of the Research Centre for Quantum Physics were to be opened in a few hours. The sun was lazily spreading its first rays over the Lake of Geneva and the humankind did not know yet that it was stepping into the post-materialistic era.