

Mikaela Georgio

Urban Legend

The Fort of La Chartreuse

Translated from French to British English

Chapter I

The Monk and the Fortress

The Fort of La Chartreuse, once a haven of solitude and meditation, sheltered within the silence of its cloister the Carthusian monks. These men, devoted to an existence of retreat and silence, had established themselves in this place as in a sanctuary of contemplation and prayer. Their days were measured out in the peaceful rhythm of prayers, the profound study of sacred texts, and manual labour, severed from the tumult of the world beyond. The rigour of their life fostered deep introspection and an intimate communion with the divine.

However, the tranquillity of this monastery was disturbed when the winds of history brought with them the storms of European conflicts. The fort, strategically situated upon the heights commanding the city of Liège and surveying the winding roads of the neighbouring valleys, became a military prize of the first importance. In 1675, the territorial ambitions of Louis XIV made this region a theatre of military operations, thus marking the beginning of a new era for La Chartreuse.

The eighteenth century radically transformed the destiny of this place of peace: Europe, prey to incessant wars and political upheavals, saw the great powers of the age — France, Austria, and Prussia — contend for regional supremacy. The Duchy of Liège, though an ecclesiastical territory and in theory neutral, found itself at the heart of these geopolitical tensions.

It was in 1792, faced with mounting threats and often isolated by the lack of support from allies, that the local authorities were constrained to make a decision heavy with consequence: to transform this monastery into a fortress. This transformation was dictated by the necessity of defending against the increasingly audacious French incursions under the reign of the Sun King. Thus La Chartreuse, once a sanctuary of meditation, was transmuted into a bastion of war.

The works of metamorphosis upon the monastery began without delay. The peaceful cloisters, once enclaves of meditation, together with the contemplative gardens, were transformed to receive boisterous troops, weapons, and robust fortifications. Imposing walls rose from the earth, whilst the monastic cells, sanctuaries of solitude, were converted into austere barracks. The monks, shaken by the tumult of construction and the invasive reality of the military presence, found themselves constrained to forsake their life of contemplation and disperse to other monasteries.

Amongst them, Brother Adrien, whose piety and devotion were praised by all, lived through this transition with great difficulty. Torn between his religious commitment and his duty towards his community, he was confronted with a choice when the order to evacuate was pronounced.

Against all expectation, Adrien chose a singular path: to remain at the fort, to don the military uniform whilst preserving, beneath it, his monk's habit.

Born in a hamlet not far from Liège, Adrien's destiny had been traced from his tender childhood towards the monastic life, following an ancestral family line. Cradled by the legends of saints and martyrs, he had absorbed a profound spirituality and a steadfast commitment to his brethren. When he first donned the Carthusian habit, he resolutely pledged himself to the path of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Yet it was his capacity to find inner peace, in silence and solitude, that truly distinguished him.

The news of the sanctuary's transformation into a military bastion troubled him profoundly. He feared that the shadow of war and the tumult of soldiers might defile the sacred sanctuary of their faith. However, after long nights of prayer in the gardens, a revelation came to him during a nocturnal meditation: a divine calling to remain, to protect this holy place. He perceived this not as a command to take up arms, but to offer spiritual support, a light in the darkness of war, persuaded that his presence could envelop the fort in divine protection.

His soothing influence upon the soldiers was palpable; they drew comfort and courage from his words and his discreet presence. Over the years, Adrien transcended his mortal condition to become a legendary figure amongst the soldiers, venerated for his solitary nocturnal vigils.

When the hour of his death arrived, Adrien was interred according to his final wishes in a modest crypt imbued with holiness, situated in the depths of the fort. This place, chosen by him for his final rest, was enveloped in an aura of mystery, adorned with Christian symbols and quotations from the Scriptures carved into the cold stone. Upon his deathbed, wrapped in the simple cloth of his monk's habit, Adrien made a solemn oath, his eyes filled with an unwavering light: to continue watching over the fort, over its continuing transformation and its long-hidden secrets. He affirmed with conviction that his spirit would know no rest so long as the walls of La Chartreuse stood against the sky, like stone guardians of time past and future. This pledge, pronounced with the quiet strength of those who have consecrated their lives to causes greater than themselves, resonated through the silent vaults, sealing his destiny with that of the fort.

Centuries after his passing, the legend of Adrien the Protector had become intertwined with the very history of the Fort of La Chartreuse. Tumultuous and marked by diverse conflicts, the testimonies continued to evolve, nourished by the personal experiences of various witnesses. In the accounts, the silhouette of a monk is described with astonishing persistence. Observers claim to have seen it during the twilight glimmers and at dawn, wandering silently upon the ramparts once imposing, now decrepit from the ravages of time and battles. Certain witnesses have even claimed to feel a soothing hand placed upon their shoulder during their nocturnal rounds, as though an invisible presence watched over them in moments of imminent danger.

Chapter II

The Soldier and the Oath

The years passed, decades transformed into centuries, and the Fort of La Chartreuse continued to bear witness to the sundering of Europe. Each conflict added its stratum of pain and suffering to the ancient stones, each war carved its scars into the dark corridors and labyrinthine tunnels. Yet the legend of Adrien persisted, whispering to the soldiers who defended these walls that something older and more powerful than war watched over them.

Thus it was that at the heart of the First World War, the Fort of La Chartreuse stood once more as a bastion haunted by the crash of incessant conflicts. Above the fortifications, the skies were streaked by the lightning of cannons, casting fleeting gleams through the clouds of smoke and dust. The fort, once a symbol of security, had become a macabre theatre where military strategists planned desperate attacks and fierce defences. The soldiers who haunted its underground passages were often consumed by fatigue, fear, and uncertainty, their minds assailed by images of fallen comrades and the bloody battles raging mere kilometres away.

Émile, a young sergeant with a face marked by war despite his age, led his men through the labyrinthine tunnels of the fort to reinforce its defences. Their pale faces were illuminated by the flickering glow of lanterns as they busied themselves barricading passages and strengthening strategic positions. Sheltered in the damp depths of the fort, they had entrenched themselves to prevent enemy forces from capturing the strategic position.

Every dull thud from the surface, every vibration of the ground caused by the bombardments, kept them alert, ready to repel any attempt at infiltration. Émile, despite his young age, displayed a quiet firmness. He always found the words to encourage his men, his voice, though slightly trembling, carrying a contagious courage. He reminded them of the importance of holding fast, of resisting the enemy and defending their position at all costs. His words were a comfort in the storm of combat, offering his men a semblance of calm in the tumult of fire and noise. In this labyrinth of stone and sweat, Émile was a beacon of leadership. Each moment was a trial of their collective determination, a test of their capacity to endure the horror of war whilst maintaining their humanity.

Outside, enemy troops intensified their bombardment, determined to break the fort's resistance with a rain of devastating shells. The projectiles whistled through the air before falling with brutal force, shaking the fort's structures and causing cave-ins in certain segments of the tunnels. The defenders, caught between fear and the necessity of survival, sensed the enemy drawing nearer, each explosion bringing them ever closer to the inevitable confrontation.

In the darkness of the fort, Émile and his brothers in arms prepared to face a decisive offensive. The oppressive silence was punctuated by the distant rumble of artillery, and the damp air carried the metallic scent of fear and gunpowder. The men, huddled behind the ancient stone walls, exchanged resolute glances, knowing that the coming hours might well be their last.

Suddenly, the crash of enemy boots resounded in the corridors, shattering the precarious calm. The enemy soldiers, equipped with flamethrowers and grenades, advanced with brutal efficiency, their silhouettes outlined against the intermittent glow of the lamps. Émile fixed his gaze upon his men, giving them a nod that was meant to be reassuring.

— Hold fast, do not let them advance, he murmured, his voice betraying a determination tinged with anguish.

The fighting erupted with unprecedeted violence, the echoes of gunfire and explosions mingling in a terrifying cacophony. In this confined space, every corner might conceal an enemy, every shadow was a potential assailant. Émile, displaying exemplary bravery, led his men forward, repelling the waves of assault with cold precision. Yet the enemy soldiers, imperturbable, continued their advance, driven by the desire to break the fort's resistance.

As ammunition began to run low and the number of wounded increased, Émile and his companions found themselves cornered in an ancient underground chapel. With their backs to the old walls, covered with frescoes faded by time, they formed a final rampart. It was there, beneath the silent vaults bearing witness to prayers of old, that Émile faced the inevitable.

In a final burst of resistance, as flames began to lick at the entrances to their refuge, Émile and his men made a desperate pact. They swore to protect the fort, to continue watching over these walls even beyond death.

— May our courage never be forgotten! cried Émile, as he charged one last time, straight towards the enemy.

Struck during the confrontation, Émile collapsed away from the others, his back against the cold damp of the ancient walls. As the blood escaped from his wound and pain numbed his senses, a surreal vision materialised before his half-closed eyes.

Adrien the Protector, the mythical figure of the fort, emerged from the shadows, enveloped in an ethereal light. Clad in his monk's habit, he approached Émile, placing a comforting hand upon his fevered brow. His supernatural presence seemed to temper the air around them, pushing back the smoke and flames, creating a bubble of calm amidst the chaos.

— May peace be with you, brave warriors. Your valour shall remain engraved in the stones of this place, murmured Adrien, his voice resonating with a gentleness that transcended the tumult of battle.

Around Émile, his wounded and dying companions felt a wave of soothing warmth, as though Adrien's hands touched them too, breathing peace and tranquillity into this moment of despair. In their final moments, they understood that they would not die alone, that the legendary guardian of the fort watched over them, welcoming them into the eternal brotherhood of the protectors of La Chartreuse.

Thus, even in their final combat, the souls of the defenders were enveloped by the monk's protection, binding their destiny to the eternal legend of the Fort of La Chartreuse.

The fighting ended shortly afterwards, the tunnels resuming their funereal calm. The bodies of the brave lay in a deceptive peace, enveloped by shadow and silence, as though the fort itself had absorbed them. And there, in the depths of the Fort of La Chartreuse, the spirit of Émile and his companions continued to keep watch, a ghostly and protective presence, whispering in the ears of future generations the tales of their heroic sacrifice.

Together, Adrien and Émile, the monk and the soldier, separated by more than a century yet united in their devotion, weave the threads of an eternal legend that haunts the tunnels of La Chartreuse, resonating through the echoes of their battles and their silent prayers. Two guardians for one fort, two souls vowed to the protection of a sacred place become a bastion of war, watching together over the ancient stones where spirituality and sacrifice have been forever intertwined.

And in the silent nights, when the wind blows through the abandoned corridors, some still claim to hear the prayers of Adrien mingling with the final cries of courage from Émile, forming an eternal song of protection that shall never fade so long as the walls of La Chartreuse stand towards the sky.

Chapter III

The Exploration of La Chartreuse

On a grey and misty afternoon, typical of the region's autumns, the trio of urban explorers — Mia, Sofia, and Théo — made their way towards the Fort of La Chartreuse. Drawn by tales of paranormal phenomena and the tumultuous history of the site, they had chosen this emblematic location for its charged past. They hoped to capture signs of the beyond, encouraged by testimonies from other urban explorers who reported strange occurrences, such as sudden apparitions and inexplicable sounds emanating from the depths of the fort, fuelling rumours of curses and ghostly presences.

The car rolled slowly along the damp gravel path that wound through a thick layer of fog, lending each bend an air of mystery. Surrounded by luxuriant vegetation, the fort stood majestically, the trees around it ablaze with autumnal hues, the golds mingled with deep reds and ochres, creating a vivid and melancholy tableau. After weeks of preparation and anticipation, reinforced by the local legends they had gathered, their decision to brave the fort's secrets was well considered.

Once parked near the main entrance of the fort, the imposing silhouettes of the buildings emerged gradually from the mist, like ghosts of the past. With the engine extinguished, they remained for a moment in silence, absorbing the enigmatic atmosphere that the overcast sky and the air saturated with autumn humidity conferred upon the place. The old walls, stained with moss and scarred by time, stood before them. The iron doors, rusted and worn by the years, creaked slightly in the wind that crept through the gaps, adding a sinister melody to the already charged environment. The trio, equipped with their rucksacks containing torches, cameras, and various equipment, exchanged a final glance — a tacit confirmation. They were ready to plunge into the long-guarded secrets of La Chartreuse.

Approaching the main entrance of the Fort of La Chartreuse, where the great metal gates screamed under the weight of years as they pushed them open, they were led into the inner courtyard. They were greeted by a cold wind that whistled through the gutted structures, making the tall grasses that had conquered the cracked concrete dance. Their footsteps upon the scattered debris broke the oppressive silence of the fort.

Mia, passionate about history and the paranormal, had read disturbing accounts of ghost manifestations and inexplicable events that seemed to haunt the old walls of the fort. As for Sofia, a pragmatic sceptic yet curious, she had heard tales of phantom soldiers who still haunted the fort's tunnels, apparently condemned to relive their final moments again and again.

— It's mad to think that these legends might have a grain of truth, she murmured, casting an uneasy glance.

Théo, always game for adventure, tried to lighten the atmosphere.

— Well, I hope these ghosts like visitors. I hope they'll let us take a few photos before giving us a fright! he joked.

Mia, adjusting her head torch, replied with a teasing smile.

— Who knows, perhaps they just need a bit of company after all these years?

It was with a mixture of humour and apprehension that they advanced towards one of the abandoned structures. Each step led them further into this world suspended between history and legend, ready to discover what the shadows of the Fort of La Chartreuse had to reveal to them.

— Look at these walls! exclaimed Théo, admiring the frescoes and tags that covered every square centimetre of the façades. All these paintings tell a different story, a blend of beauty and decay.

Mia nodded, sensing the heavy energy that emanated from the graffiti.

— It's both fascinating and disturbing to see all these tagged walls, all these creations, inspired by this history-laden place that is the Fort of La Chartreuse.

Sofia, adjusting her camera, captured the details of the urban art that gave new life to this place abandoned for decades.

— Look at these walls, it's incredible! There isn't a corner without a piece! It's a proper open-air gallery here! she exclaimed, her voice trembling with excitement.

Indeed, the Fort of La Chartreuse revealed itself as an immense urban canvas. Every space covered with explosive tags in colour or captivating frescoes, from melancholy portraits to fantastic monsters — these graffiti lent a dreamlike air to this history-laden place.

— It really heightens the atmosphere, it's even more unsettling in the flesh, whispered Sofia, playing with her lens, scanning the walls of the fort.

Théo nodded whilst scrutinising the surroundings with equal fascination. His eyes lit up as he absorbed every detail of the works spread before him.

— It's superb! The colours, the technique... it's not just tags, it's proper art. He approached, his hands extended to brush the features of a face painted with palpable emotion, captivated by this enormous piece of graffiti.

— There's so much emotion in these lines. The artist has truly left a piece of their soul here. Each work tells a story, a silent conversation with those who stop to admire them. You can really feel the spirit of the place through these images. It's mad how art can bring life to a forsaken place, make it so vibrant, so touching.

His face full of admiration, he turned towards Mia and Sofia.

Chapter IV

The First Signs

The three friends resumed their walk, their gaze drawn towards another building whose half-open door creaked rhythmically, as though inviting them despite themselves to discover the secrets buried within.

— Do you hear that? whispered Théo, somewhat nervously. He stopped dead and pivoted slowly to examine the shadows that stretched along the walls.

— There's something here... or someone who doesn't want us to be here. It's creepy, I really feel... like we're being watched. His gaze darted anxiously along the tagged walls, trying to locate the source of this unease.

— I feel as though these frescoes are following us, as if they were alive. A mixture of fascination and fear overwhelmed him. He who was passionate about urban exploration felt torn between his passion and the dread of an invisible threat.

Mia shivered in turn, gripping her torch ever more tightly. A sensation of intense cold ran down her spine. Mia had always possessed this special gift inherited from her family, a capacity she shared only with her closest friends. Here, it was activating fully, as though the energies of the fort were trying to speak to her.

— I sense... there are spirits here, she murmured, her trembling voice betraying her growing unease. I feel the same as Théo, as though the walls themselves wanted to speak to us, or warn us.

She closed her eyes for a moment, taking a deep breath to calm the inner turmoil provoked by her extrasensory perceptions.

Beside her, Sofia was slowly capturing the environment with her camera, her lens sweeping the zones where the shadows seemed to move of their own accord. Mia reopened her eyes, scrutinising the darkness with heightened acuity.

— Originally, this place was one of meditation and prayer, before becoming a battlefield throughout all these wars. I can still feel all that chaos... all that suffering that occurred in this place, said Mia, shivering again, as though wrapped in an energy left by centuries of conflict, whilst scrutinising the surroundings with renewed intensity.

— I cannot help but think that all these souls are still here, as though trapped, stuck with their final moments of terror. I have a bad feeling, as though we're not wanted here, which added further to the fort's already tense atmosphere.

Théo nodded, the tension visible on his face as he swept his gaze over the dilapidated structures surrounding them.

— I understand what you're feeling. It's charged with history, these walls must have seen quite a lot of hardship. What you're sensing is the echo of all that, he replied softly.

— We must stay together and remain vigilant. If it becomes too intense, we leave, alright? His voice mingled caution with determination, affirming his role as protector within the group.

Sofia, whilst continuing to photograph, turned towards Mia, her expression serious.

— Mia, your intuitions have often been right. If you sense there's danger here, then we really must be careful.

The trio progressed slowly into the interior of the fort. It was a veritable labyrinth of narrow corridors from which emanated an oppressive atmosphere. Approaching the entrance to the tunnels, beneath the trembling glow of their torches, the sight of a staircase that seemed to plunge into the dark depths of the building made them pause, their beams of light fixed upon the obscure entrance.

— Look at this... it seems to descend directly into the bowels of the earth, whispered Mia.

— Oh no, I don't like this at all. Did you feel that cold? Sofia said to them, stepping back.

— It's just the air from the tunnels, nothing more... At least, I hope so, said Théo with an uncertain voice.

— There's something truly intimidating here, don't you think? It's almost an invitation to plunge even deeper... Do you feel that vibration too?

— Mia, your ghost stories are seriously starting to get to me. And frankly, the idea of going down there doesn't appeal to me at all! retorted Sofia, shaking her head.

— If we don't go down, we might miss something incredible. That's why we're here, isn't it? To explore and discover secrets. But I admit, even I'm a bit nervous thinking about what we might find down there, Théo told them.

They hesitated for a moment, faced with this staircase that seemed to swallow light and sound, like the gateway to another world forgotten for ages. Mia noticed a glint on the ground and approached. There, she identified a military medal, an object charged with memories that seemed to be a bridge to a forgotten past. Suddenly, a flash struck her — a rapid vision of a young soldier crossed her mind. Intrigued and somewhat

frightened, Mia showed the medal to her friends and shared the vision that had seized her.

Théo, curious, crouched down to pick it up carefully. When he touched the metal, an icy wind rushed down the staircase. The torches flickered as though an invisible presence was draining them. Théo, his eyes wide open, raised the medal towards the light and read with difficulty a name engraved upon it: "Émile".

— Perhaps it's the fellow from your vision, Mia, said Théo, the metal vibrating slightly in his hand, as though charged with a mysterious energy.

They exchanged a glance, the tension of the unknown mingled with an electrifying curiosity. Yet determined to continue, they secured a rope to the banister before beginning their descent into the depths of the fort, a torch illuminating their path so as not to lose their way, their footsteps resonating in the thick silence, amplifying the feeling that the darkness was drawing them towards the secrets buried below.

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Chapters V - VII

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Chapter V

The Terror of the Depths

Suddenly, a cold gust surged from nowhere, enveloping them in an icy breath. Théo shivered violently, his teeth chattering.

— Wait, stop! Do you feel that? asked Théo, his voice trembling with panic, the medal still in his hand.

— That's not just a gust of wind. There's something strange here, as though an invisible presence were trying to reach me!

The medal in his hand vibrated, emanating a subtle warmth that spread along his arm. A gentle yet insistent pressure seemed to weigh upon his mind, as though someone were attempting to communicate through the veil of reality.

— Something is happening with this medal. I'm certain of it — it's connected to the spirit of the fort or to the soldier who wore it, he murmured, his voice slightly trembling.

Mia and Sofia stared at him, with a mixture of curiosity and concern at this bizarre phenomenon. Théo, panicked by this invisible thing that seemed intent on seizing him, dropped the medal and suddenly, without a word, turned and began to run back up the steps they had descended with such caution just moments before. His torch, still in his trembling hand, cast wild shadows upon the stone walls as he fled at full speed.

— Mia, what on earth was that? Théo's just bolted, running flat out, whispered Sofia, her voice shaken by stress and shock.

— I don't know, but we must go and find him. He can't leave us struggling here on our own. One could sense that Mia was determined to keep the group together, even though her heart was pounding furiously.

With due caution, they began to climb back up the steps, their footsteps resonating and reminding them of their fragility in this place laden with history and mysteries. Back on the surface, Sofia and Mia were enveloped by the soft grey light of day, a reassuring contrast after the suffocating darkness of the tunnels. Yet this impression of safety lasted but a moment.

A few paces away, near the entrance to the fort, Théo was huddled up, his arms clasping his knees, his eyes lost in the void with an intensity that chilled the blood.

— Théo? called Sofia very gently, concern piercing her voice.

As for Mia, she approached cautiously, her heart beating wildly as she gazed upon her friend, clearly in crisis. Théo remained there, motionless,

his gaze absorbed by the grey clouds, as though perceiving something invisible to the others. His face was livid, his eyes wide open in raw terror. Mia and Sofia knelt beside him, trying to catch his gaze.

— Théo, speak to us. What gave you such a fright? insisted Sofia, gently placing her hand upon his shoulder.

Suddenly, Théo started, as though returning from another world. He slowly turned his head towards them, his wide eyes betraying an intense fear. His voice was but a broken murmur, vibrating with dread:

— I... I felt it... It was there, with us, whispered Théo, his trembling voice revealing an increasingly palpable fear.

— It was as though that medal had awakened something... something ancient and immensely powerful. He paused, gasping, as though the air around them were growing heavier, colder. He shivered visibly, his wide eyes catching the faint gleam of his torch.

— I felt its hands... its icy hands upon me. As though they were trying to drag me back, into the darkness, where even light dares not venture, he said, each word laden with tangible terror.

An oppressive silence fell upon them, broken only by their breathing. The air around them vibrated with sinister energy. The awakening of the entity had disrupted an ancient equilibrium, releasing forces that even time had preferred to forget. Sofia and Mia exchanged a panicked glance, wondering whether the terror they saw in Théo came from the manifestation of the soldier Émile, whom she had seen in her vision, or whether it was the work of another spirit, perhaps malevolent, acting from the depths of the Fort of La Chartreuse.

After a moment, Théo recovered a semblance of calm, his gaze quickening with determination. He rose slowly, his hands still trembling slightly, the shadow of fear persisting in his eyes.

— I must go back down. I have to do something. We must retrieve the medal and return it to the crypt where the monk Adrien rests. And I believe that is where Émile lost his life, said Théo in a hoarse voice to Mia and Sofia, who displayed evident concern.

Mia shivered, an icy breeze enveloping her despite the absence of wind — a sign she had learnt never to ignore.

— Théo, are you certain about this? It may be dangerous to return down there, especially after what you felt. We don't know what awaits you there, she said, her voice vibrant with anguish.

She paused, fixing her gaze upon the shadows that danced upon the walls of the fort, as though they were coming to life.

— There is something else I must tell you. I have a feeling... There are other spirits here. They are furious and do not want us here. They are on edge, angry, perhaps even terrifying, her voice grave, sending shivers down her two friends' spines.

Sofia swallowed with difficulty, casting nervous glances around her. She wrapped her arms about herself, attempting to calm her anxiety.

— Mia? Can you sense what they want? She murmured her question, as though dreading the answer.

Mia closed her eyes for a moment, trying to concentrate on the ethereal whispers floating in the air.

— I cannot perceive everything clearly... but there is definitely a force here, a blocking force. It does not want us to touch what has been left behind, explained Mia, reopening her eyes, visibly anxious.

A heavy silence fell, laden with their future decisions. Théo breathed deeply, his face hardening despite the fear that gripped him.

— I must go. If we go back down, we shall take care with every step, and I swear I shan't run off this time, Théo assured them.

With a determination tinged with nervousness, the trio gathered their courage, ready to plunge once more into the darkness, fully aware of the risks. Each step towards the entrance to the tunnels weighed with invisible threats. The glacial air of the tunnels enveloped them like the breath of a ghost. Théo offered them a timid smile, yet his eyes were filled with palpable anxiety.

Chapter VI

The Descent

With a mixture of determination and palpable tension, Mia, Théo, and Sofia stood once more before the gloomy entrance to the tunnels of the Fort of La Chartreuse. Even the daylight seemed pale and wan, at the prospect of venturing further into the dark void before them.

Mia, adjusting her torch with care, said in a calm yet clearly curious voice:

— Are you certain we really must venture in there? Her hands were steady, her gaze fixed straight into the darkness, attempting to perceive the hidden vibrations.

As for Théo, he was trying to mask his anguish, advancing with a feigned assurance that crumbled with each strange noise emanating from the dark depths of the tunnel.

— Mia, we cannot simply leave now. I must return Émile's medal to the crypt. Let us stay close together, agreed?

— I cannot believe we're going back in there... Every time I think of those corridors, my heart races. But very well! At the slightest strange occurrence, we come back up. Agreed? added Sofia, casting a worried glance at Mia, hoping for some support.

— Agreed, it's a promise, said Mia and Théo together, their determination evident. They were clearly ready to see it through, whatever the cost.

They took a deep collective breath and once more engaged upon the time-worn steps, descending slowly towards the anguishing mysteries that awaited them in the enveloping darkness.

Scarcely had they descended a few steps into the obscurity when strange phenomena began to manifest. A current of cold air suddenly enveloped them, more intense than what they had experienced before. Théo shivered, feeling icy fingers brush his neck. He turned abruptly, his lamp sweeping the darkness behind him, yet nothing was visible save the old oozing walls of La Chartreuse.

Mia, who was ahead of him, was trying to concentrate on the presences she perceived around her. Suddenly, a flash passed through her — a fleeting vision of Adrien, the protective monk of the fort, appearing before her. He wore his monk's habit and seemed to float slightly above the ground, his face marked with severity yet his eyes filled with compassion. He raised his hand to reassure her and guide her further into the tunnels.

— Continue. Adrien, the monk, is with us. He is showing us the way, murmured Mia to her friends, her voice trembling yet firm.

Despite her evident fear, Sofia nodded and drew closer to Mia to find comfort in her proximity. Guided by Mia, who herself followed Adrien's indications, they descended with caution. In the depths of the tunnel where the atmosphere seemed even heavier and more mysterious, Théo, his eyes fixed upon the ground, abruptly halted his descent to search the floor by the light of his torch.

— The medal must be here somewhere. We must find it and bring it back. Can you help me? he said, his words betraying a slight urgency.

Mia and Sofia hastened to join Théo, their eyes searching the staircase. As the beams of their torches swept the old stones in search of the medal, Mia could not help but grimace.

— Ugh, it's truly filthy here, she murmured whilst scrutinising the ground.

Sofia, sharing her disgust yet remaining focused, added:

— I know, it's revolting, but we must find it. Concentrate, Mia.

The oppressive silence was broken only by the sound of their discreet movements and the echo of their breathing, as they tried to overcome their revulsion to accomplish their mission. After several minutes of intense searching, it was Sofia who, with a small cry of relief, spotted the metallic glint of the medal upon one of the steps.

— I've found it! she exclaimed, her voice resonating in the dark corridor. She bent down, delicately grasped the object, and straightened to hand it to Théo.

Théo displayed a relieved smile that lit up his tense face. He took the medal from Sofia's hands.

— It must return to where it belongs.

— Yes, absolutely. Let us find the crypt now, replied Mia, watching the medal gleam faintly beneath the light of their lamp.

Chapter VII

The Protection of Adrien

They continued their descent down the narrow staircases of the old fort, the atmosphere filling with strange supernatural vibrations.

— Do you hear that? They do not want us to be here, whispered Théo, his torch illuminating the darkness, catching shadows that seemed to dance just at the edge of their vision.

Despite the warnings of the invisible entities, their curiosity drove them deeper into the fort. Each step bringing them closer to a mysterious truth, they advanced cautiously through this dark corridor of the fort, following Mia, who was guided by the spirit of the monk Adrien.

— Do you feel that? It is as though the walls were speaking to us... whispered Mia, her gaze fixed upon the obscurity that loomed before them.

Sofia, firmly grasping her camera in video mode to film every moment, declared:

— I'm ready to film every detail. That way, if we capture something extraordinary, we shall have proof. Her hand trembled slightly as she watched the shifting shadows and furtive flashes of light that punctuated their progress.

As they reached a landing that crossed two other corridors, a massive, blurred shadow swept past them at great speed, accompanied by a current of icy air. All at once, Sofia's camera was wrenched from her hands by an invisible force and struck the wall with a dull thud. Sofia, utterly shocked by the incident, remained frozen for an instant, seized by fear. Then, recovering her senses, she rushed to retrieve her camera, checking it quickly.

— It's held up. Did you see that? she said, turning towards her friends.

Mia, still in shock, replied:

— It's utterly mad! It truly seems as though someone doesn't want us to continue.

— Yes, this is becoming serious. We must be extremely careful. But we cannot turn back now, not after coming all this way, replied Théo.

Mia nodded, reaffirming their resolve.

— Precisely. We must discover what is happening here, now more than ever. Something here wants to frighten us, but we shall not let ourselves be intimidated. Adrien is here, he is guiding us.

Mia pointed towards the left corridor from which a light breeze seemed to emanate.

— It is this way. The crypt lies at the end of this passage, her words cutting through the oppressive silence.

They froze, attentive, trying to perceive the direction the monk was suggesting to them.

Théo, holding the medal firmly in his hand and guided by Mia, held the hope that it would play a key role in freeing the spirit of the young soldier Émile. Sofia, though trembling, continued to film every step. Following Mia, they advanced through the indicated corridor, guided by the benevolent presence of Adrien.

However, Mia also sensed the presence of a malevolent spirit amongst them. Before she could express her fears and warn her friends, an invisible force suddenly struck them once more, causing them all to stumble. Théo and Mia managed to catch themselves against the wall, but Sofia, less fortunate, was thrown to the ground, her hands scraping against the cold stone.

— I don't like this! What was that?! exclaimed Théo, turning towards Mia whilst gripping the rough wall firmly to regain his balance.

Mia, her eyes wide, was catching her breath, quickly seeking to understand what had just occurred.

— That is the malevolent spirit I spoke to you of! Her trembling voice betrayed her growing concern.

On the ground, Sofia groaned slightly as she propped herself up on her elbows, trying to push away the pain. Théo rushed over and helped her to her feet, quickly seeking to assess whether she was in a state to continue.

— Are you all right? he asked, looking worried.

Sofia nodded, catching her breath.

— Yes, I shall be fine. Let us continue.

Mia, scrutinising the dark corridor before them, intervened:

— Are you certain? This is the second time something has struck us. Perhaps we should reconsider.

Théo looked at the medal in his hand, determined.

— We must see this through for Émile. We shall be careful, but we cannot abandon now.

Mia acquiesced, tightening her grip upon her torch.

— Very well, but let us all stay very close together.

With a silent accord, they resumed their march, advancing with caution in an atmosphere that grew ever heavier. Each step seemed to test their determination. At one point, Adrien manifested once more before Mia, his silhouette clear and luminous, standing out sharply against the darkness. He positioned himself as protector, between them and the threatening shadows, raising his arms to create a barrier of light that enveloped them. The ambient coldness dissipated and a fragile calm settled.

Mia felt a reassuring voice resonate in her mind, for her alone.

"Fear not, Mia. I am here to protect you. Continue, but remain vigilant," Adrien told her.

— Adrien is shielding us. He tells us to press on, but we must be careful, she murmured to her friends, relaying the message.

Their progress towards the crypt, though arduous, plunged them ever deeper into an almost spectral fusion of past and present.

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Mikaela Georgio

Urban Legend

The Fort of La Chartreuse

Chapters VIII - X

Translated from French to British English

Chapter VIII

The Crypt of Adrien

Mia, Sofia, and Théo finally reached the crypt. Upon their entry, a breath of warm air enveloped them, filtered through the interstices of the vault, creating an almost welcoming atmosphere — a striking contrast to the glacial corridors they had traversed. A feeling of relief mingled with palpable admiration seized them as they contemplated the place. It was as though the protective monk, Adrien, had prepared this safe refuge for them, far from the malevolent spirits that haunted the other parts of the fort.

The walls of the crypt were covered with ancient frescoes, depicting scenes of monastic life and forgotten battles. In the flickering glow of their torches, dancing shadows seemed to bring these images of the past back to life, creating an atmosphere both mystical and solemn.

Mia let out a sigh of fascination, whilst Sofia, captivated, silently lowered her camera to better admire the details of the frescoes. Théo, with an emotional smile upon his lips, murmured:

— It is as though time had stopped here.

They exchanged a knowing glance, recognising the rarity of the moment and the fragile beauty of this preserved place. A scent of earth mingled with incense hung in the interior, where an atmosphere of solemn tranquillity reigned. The crypt, carved into the dark and damp stone, was vast, with vaults supported by thick pillars that seemed to defy time. Niches hollowed into the walls were adorned with sculptures and religious frescoes faded by the years.

— Do you feel that? One feels protected here, far from all the evil that lurks beyond these walls, murmured Sofia, her voice resonating softly in the sacred space.

Mia nodded, scrutinising the shadows that played upon the walls.

— Yes, it is Adrien. I sense him... he is here, watching over this place.

Mia's gaze was drawn to a statue representing a monk, eroded by time, yet whose features were still discernible. She approached slowly, torch in hand, illuminating the face frozen in a strangely serene expression.

— Look at this. I believe it is Adrien. It almost seems as though he is watching us, she murmured, drawing the attention of her companions.

Sofia approached in turn, scrutinising the statue with a mixture of fascination and admiration.

— It is incredible how well preserved it is despite the humidity here. Do you think it has a particular significance, Mia?

Mia shrugged, her gaze still fixed upon the stone statue.

— Perhaps he watched over the deceased of this crypt.

— Wait, do you see what is written at the foot of the statue? interrupted Théo, who had bent down to better see the base, almost covered with moss.

The three approached, and after clearing away the moss, they discovered an inscription carved into the stone: "Adrien, the Protector."

What reassured Mia was knowing that they were accompanied by Adrien, the Protector, in this bubble outside of time. They felt safe, enveloped in a tranquillity that contrasted with the tensions of the corridors beyond. Despite the weight of history and the invisible yet benevolent presence of Adrien, they knew they had a mission to accomplish. This moment of peace, however, gave them the strength necessary to continue.

Chapter IX

The Connection with Émile

It was then that Théo drew from his pocket the time-worn medal they had found earlier in a corridor of the fort. This discovery seemed destined to play a key role in their quest to appease the spirits of the place.

Mia took the medal from Théo's hands. The moment she touched it, a wave of energy overwhelmed her.

— Émile is here, with us, she whispered.

She closed her eyes and began to breathe slowly, gradually entering a meditative trance. Yet before plunging completely, she turned towards Sofia and Théo and explained gently:

— Very well, what I am about to do is attempt to communicate directly with Émile's spirit. I shall enter a trance state to reach a plane where we are almost beside the world of spirits. I must perceive what they feel in order to help them free themselves. They are trapped here because of what happened to them, and it is for us to help them.

Turning specifically towards Théo, with an intense gaze:

— Théo, your connection with Émile when you held his medal was a key moment. I believe you were, even briefly, the bearer of his spirit. I need you to be at my side, to strengthen this bond whilst I make contact with him. Your presence can help us guide Émile towards the light.

Théo nodded, understanding the importance of his unexpected role. He approached and positioned himself at Mia's side, ready to support the spiritual process. His murmurs mingled with the ancestral echoes of the crypt, creating an atmosphere of profound solemnity.

Sofia, for her part, was ready to capture every moment. She adjusted her camera to video mode to film every detail of the ritual, aware that the images she was taking would be a testimony to their adventure and their interaction with the supernatural. Mia was perfectly framed in the lens, the intensity of her expression captured in a mysterious light that seemed to emanate from her. At her side, Théo offered a reassuring presence. Together, they formed a circle of strength and unity, ready to help the lost souls find rest. Mia gave them one last reassuring sign, then closed her eyes, letting herself be guided by the ancestral vibrations of the crypt on her spiritual journey.

As Mia entered a deep trance, the sounds of the crypt began to fade, replaced by the murmur of an ancient wind. Around her, space seemed to open, giving way to a timeless landscape where past and present merged.

In this meditative state, she saw herself walking through a long underground corridor of the fort, illuminated only by the faint glow of a lantern held by a silhouette in military uniform. It was Émile. The soldier stopped and turned, his face marked by time and battles, yet his eyes reflected a profound wisdom and a resigned sadness.

— Who are you? he asked her, his voice emanating not as sound, but as a sensation directly in Mia's mind.

— I am Mia.

Émile observed Mia for a moment, then his gaze darkened slightly.

— I sensed a connection with your friend, Théo, when I temporarily took possession of his spirit. He bears an aura that is familiar to me, an aura of courage and resilience — qualities that we soldiers hold in high esteem.

Mia felt a shiver of apprehension.

— Why Théo? What role must he play in all this?

— Théo is the catalyst. It is through him that my men and I can channel our energy for the final ritual of liberation. His inner strength gives us the power necessary to break the chains that hold us here. Without him, our bond with this world would be too weak.

Mia then understood the crucial importance of Théo in their quest. She nodded, accepting the responsibilities that this implied for them all.

Émile offered her a ghostly smile, a sign of gratitude and trust.

In the real world, Théo and Sofia watched Mia, her body motionless yet her face expressing intense concentration. They knew that somewhere, in the depths of her mind, she was walking with a ghost towards a destiny long deferred, ready to guide Émile and his companions towards the light, with Théo playing a key role in their liberation.

Suddenly, Mia reopened her eyes, her gaze fixed intensely upon Théo.

— Théo, Émile needs you. You are tremendously important. Your connection with him, even brief, was truly intense, she said in a firm yet gentle voice.

Théo nodded, feeling the weight of the importance of his role.

— Very well, I am ready. Tell me what I must do, he replied with renewed determination.

Mia smiled at him, reassured by his response.

Chapter X

The Ritual of Liberation

Beneath the ancient vault of the crypt where the echoes of the past still seemed to resonate, Mia and Théo prepared to begin the ritual. Around them, Mia had traced a ritual circle with candles and sacred symbols. She had also arranged various stones to channel the energies necessary for the liberation of the souls.

With eyes closed, Mia recited ancient incantations, her voice rising and falling in hypnotic rhythms that seemed to vibrate against the stone walls. Théo, at her side, held between his hands Émile's medal, symbol of his courage and sacrifice. He felt the energy of the medal rising within him, pulsing to the rhythm of Mia's words, as though it were answering the call of the spirits.

— Concentrate upon the medal, Théo. Imagine it as a bridge between us and them, a conduit for their passage, Mia told him.

As the ritual progressed, a light mist seemed to form around them. The silhouettes of Émile and his companions appeared gradually in the veil between worlds. Their faces bore the marks of sadness yet also of hope, as they drew nearer to the circle of light formed by the candles.

Sofia, usually sceptical, observed with a mixture of astonishment and fascination. Despite her earlier doubts, the apparitions seemed to shake her convictions, arousing in her a feeling of wonder mingled with disbelief. Théo, for his part, was overwhelmed by a cascade of emotions: sadness, hope, and a profound connection with the present moment that flooded through him, rendering each beat of his heart both painful and exhilarating.

Mia, sensing her gift amplify as the ritual progressed, felt herself growing ever stronger. This intensification of her power confirmed her central place in this moment of liberation, making her ever more determined and confident in her capacity to guide the lost souls.

The presence of the monk Adrien could also be felt, benevolent and reassuring. His spiritual strength enveloped the group, offering protection.

"You are not alone," he seemed to murmur through the silence, his voice a guiding thread that led Mia in her incantations.

Sofia, silent witness to this moment outside of time, captured every movement, every expression with her camera, conscious of the importance of these images. The candlelight flickered gently, casting dancing shadows that played upon the walls of the crypt.

At the summit of the ritual, Mia raised her voice, pronouncing the final words that would break the chains of the beyond.

— By light and by shadow, by iron and by fire, may these souls find peace through the ages.

With a final pulse, the medal in Théo's hands shone with an intense light, then all became calm. The apparitions dissipated, leaving behind a sensation of profound peace. Émile and his companions were free, their bond with the crypt was broken. The silence that followed was that of liberation, a new chapter beginning for the souls long tormented.

Amidst this supernatural tableau, a silhouette took shape gently: Adrien, the Carthusian monk who had long watched over the crypt. His presence, almost translucent, seemed bathed in a soothing aura. He gave a nod of recognition to Mia, Théo, and Sofia, to thank them for having accomplished this act of liberation. The candles around the circle crackled lightly, and a gentle fragrance of incense made itself felt, filling the space and leaving an olfactory trace of this sacred passage.

Théo, usually stoic, could not conceal his surprise and wonder.

— This is incredible, he murmured, his eyes never leaving the luminous figure of Adrien.

Beside him, Sofia, despite her habitual scepticism, felt a wave of respect and humility wash over her.

— I would never have believed that something like this could be real, she admitted in a low voice, visibly moved by the apparition.

Together, they observed in silence, conscious of the singularity of the moment — an encounter between the tangible world and the invisible that would mark them forever.

— We succeeded, whispered Mia, deeply moved, whilst Théo slowly recovered from these emotions. Sofia stopped filming and joined her friends for a moment of complete silence.

Adrien, their spiritual guide who remained in the shadows, had watched over them to the very end, ensuring that the passage of the souls was accomplished with respect. Théo, his eyes bright with emotion and his voice trembling, gently placed his hand upon Mia's shoulder.

— You were brilliant, Mia. Without you, we would never have managed it. I felt so connected to every moment of the ritual, as though Émile and the others were speaking to me through you. It was as if I were the link between them and us, and to feel that... it truly touched me, his eyes bright with admiration and profound respect.

— What we did today... it's extraordinary, said Mia, her eyes bright with gratitude, turning towards her friends.

— It has truly changed something within me. I feel stronger, more connected, she added, her voice filled with a newfound assurance. Her words flowed with a sincerity and warmth that enveloped the group in a bubble of camaraderie and profound sharing.

Mia paused a moment to look once more into her friends' eyes, marking the instant with palpable gratitude and a feeling of indelible connection. Sofia, who had long doubted such possibilities, felt transformed by what she had witnessed.

As the last echoes of the ritual faded into the depths of the crypt, Mia, Théo, and Sofia began their ascent through the dark corridors of the Fort of La Chartreuse. The silence was heavy, yet a feeling of triumph carried them, their footsteps resonating like a victory march through the maze of corridors.

Emerging at last into the open air, they were greeted by the last glimmers of twilight that slipped gently through the trees surrounding the fort. The coolness of evening enveloped the landscape in a light mist, adding a veil of mystery to the world that was slowly sinking into shadow.

Each took a moment to look upon the fort one last time, this ancient bastion that had been the theatre of their extraordinary adventure. A feeling of melancholy gripped them briefly, knowing that they were leaving behind a closed chapter, yet also a sensation of relief and new perspective.

Excitement was already mounting amongst them at the thought of viewing the photographs and videos they had taken during their adventure. They were impatient to relive the powerful moments and to share these visual memories with a few friends, curious to see the reactions they would provoke. This anticipation added an extra layer of eagerness to their steps as they left the site.

Discussing their future plans, they expressed their impatience for their next urban exploration. It was the beginning of a series of adventures, each member of the group fuelling the flame of collective enthusiasm for the mysteries to come.

~ *The End* ~