**A gloomy November day**

“The cosine function is the co-function of the sine function. Similarly, the tangent and cotangent functions are co-functions. The reduction formulas can be formulated as a following rule…”

To be honest with you, my dear reader, I enjoy Math and consider that Mrs. Crinck is a talented teacher. However, that lesson was terribly boring and her voice was so monotonous as if she knitted a yarn with her words and braided it around the students. I tried my best to concentrate on the topic of the lesson. My eyelids got heavy and at one moment, my head “faced” the desk. Eventually I just fell asleep during the lesson that gloomy November day.

“Where am I? “, I thought stepping into the puddle of mud. I looked at my clothes and realized at first sight I was wearing my usual school uniform. I took a closer look and understood that the clothes I was dressed in were old-fashioned like clothes worn by adolescents long, long ago. My first impression was perplexity then I experienced consternation. I was not a coward, but the situation really scared me.

I got out of consternation and began to look for a logical explanation of what was happening. Initially I decided to look around. At once I realized that I concentrated only on my feelings and clothes so I had no chance to admire the scenery which had been opened to my look. The nature of that inhabited place was attractive and inviting to stay there. I cannot say the weather was fine. On the contrary, the weather was gloomy: the sky hung over with its leaden clouds, the trees were already in autumn but there were some leaves on them.

I looked down. I found myself in a meadow covered with a carpet of grass. Although a puddle was normal phenomenon for that time, the puddle I stepped into was the only in that meadow. I sniffed - the air smelled of leaves and grass was preparing for the cold. I peered the distance and saw a house. That was not just a house but a real country estate. It was a huge, completely white building with columns and large windows looking at the meadow where I was standing. At first, I thought it was a museum. I had a little hope to meet somebody to find out at least something about that strange place. I took a deep breath of frosty air and ran with all my force to the estate. I was running as fast as I could. I reached only a half of the way but quite exhausted. Then I stumbled as if over something invisible and fell down. I tried to stand up but it was literally impossible. My ankle might have been stretched or even broken. It was so painful that I dived into unconsciousness.

When I regain consciousness, I could see a lady next to me. She wailed and tried to bring me back to life. She was scared a lot. Love and care were visible in her movements and facial expression. Even though I was frightened, I felt sorry for her. However, I began to examine the lady more closely. First of all, I looked at her clothes. I started to suspect I was out of my time and I tried to find some evidence of this guess. She was dressed in an old-fashioned crimson velvet dress looking very harmoniously in that landscape. Her shoes were outwardly uncomfortable and unsuitable for walking through the meadow. At that moment I realized what was strange and unfamiliar only for me. As for her, she looked as if it was her usual style of clothes and she did not feel any inconvenience because of old-fashioned dress and shoes. The lady looked very aristocratic, especially with the estate in the background. At last, I came to my sense and gazed at her face. She was really beautiful, having lovely facial features, so I involuntarily decided that she was a real noblewoman. She looked extremely anxious.

“Margaret, what happened to you?”, she asked. “Why are you here, at the Damned Field? I literally gone mad trying to find you! You had run away without asking again!”

I tried to understand what was happening at that moment but I could not concentrate on her. Even so I realized that she was a little bit angry. The meaning of the name of the field reached me – “The Damned Field”. “Look at your clothes! They are dirty! What will Mrs. Crinck say about it?”, she continued. I heard a familiar name. "Mrs. Crinck...Who is she?" I could not recollect. "Exactly! Mrs. Crinck is a Math teacher at school, where I am studying now!" I thought. “Let’s go to the house!” the strange lady suggested. “Your sister has been waiting for you for a long time, Margaret.”

I was lucky to hear it because twilight was coming to the meadow and it became colder and colder there. I considered that it would be warmer in the house. Also, my clothes, as the woman rightly noted, were dirty and torn. She held out her hand inviting to follow her. We headed the direction of the house, so I had a little time to think about the situation. Firstly, I understood that I did not remember anything before my appearance in the middle of the spacious meadow. Secondly, the lady mentioned Mrs. Crinck and I remembered that my last memories from the past were about her. At one moment I grasped that the lady called me Margaret. It would be very courteous but it was not my name. My name was Alice.

We were walking for a long time and at last we got closer. The house turned out to be even more beautiful than I had expected. It was bright and nice looking. In general, the house was built in a classical style of estates of the second half of the nineteenth century. What astonished me it was not a museum at all but a dwelling house. The lady went straight to the entrance of that huge house and entered. I hesitated a little but went inside right after her. When I came in, I was literally shocked! It was a real estate – not a museum with reconstructed rooms of noblemen which I had visited a lot. I heard someone walking down the stairs and stopped my admiration for a while. It was a young girl. She was wearing the same clothes as me (certainly, her clothes were not dirty and torn). I could affirm that she definitely had the exact hairstyle and height as me. When she came closer, I even could not believe my eyes! She looked like me, she had the same face as me. Exactly the same! I was shocked more than ever in my life. She smiled at me. I did not know why but I smiled too. The woman who was still standing nearby also smiled and admired at us tenderly.

“I'm so upset when you quarrel, my honey girls! I worried a lot”, she said embracing us. “All diseases are from nerves. Do you want me to die so young?”

I do not know why but I nodded just like my “sister”. The lady's question about her youth seemed strange because she was in her late forties. *I decided that she could be my mother.*

“Go to your room, Mrs. Crinck will call you for lunch", she said.

We went upstairs and I was able to review the second floor of the house. There I saw a library and a living room. My attention was attracted by the library with countless books on the shelves. Then we got to our room where I was able to change my dirty clothes. I was very exhausted and decided to have meal and a good rest before making a plan how to escape from this pleasant place.

Before long Mrs. Crinck told us the lunch was ready. I tried to recognize her in her new look. It was difficult but I managed. She looked like my Math teacher. Here, at such a strange place Mrs. Crinck was working as a governess.

My “sister” and I went down the stairs for lunch. It was a boring meal but I saw one more person at the table. He was a rather gloomy man of the same age as the lady. That all was like a family dinner. I decided they were a family. But how my being there could be explained? At one moment the man looked at me with caution and hope.

“Alice, will you pass the salt, please”, the man asked. I began stretching my arm for the salt but my “sister” did it faster. Then I reminded myself that woman called me “Margaret” earlier. After lunch my “sister” and I had a lesson with Mrs. Crinck. It was Math. Last time I having a lesson with her I fell asleep. Now we were the only students so it would be indecently to sleep right there.

“The cosine function is the co-function of the sine function. Similarly, the tangent and cotangent functions are co-functions. The reduction formulas can be formulated as the following rule…”, she said monotonously and I fell asleep. I woke up the next morning in a bedroom. I did not remember the ending of the day and the only thing I was sure about was that I had slept enough.

One routine week passed. We had lessons with Mrs. Crinck, played in the garden and walked around the estate. We were able to walk everywhere but the Damned Field because it could be dangerous there by our parent’s idea. That was carefree time. I made friends with Alice. She was a kind girl. I was no longer surprised by the fact that she looked like me, as if my own reflection in the mirror. It seemed to me even funny!

One day Alice disappeared. That day I woke up, opened my eyes and told her good morning, but she did not answer me. I got scared and started to call mom (I started to call the woman as mom on my third day there).

“Margaret, what happened to you?”, she asked me.

“I’m ok. But Alice…”, I started.

“Sorry, what? Who is it?”

“Your daughter!”

“I don't know any Alice, stop laughing at me. Get ready for breakfast”, she closed the topic.

I went downstairs for breakfast. The Father was much more gloomy than usually. At the end of breakfast he passed me a note in secret from mom. I returned to my room to prepare for the lessons. At that moment I realized how much I missed home, parents, friends and school. I remembered the note and opened it.

“Run away before it's too late”, was written there in clumsy handwriting.

To say that I was scared is nothing to say. It became very cold there. The house began to crumble. I only managed to run out of it. I decided to reach the place, where the story began - the Damned Field. I caught a sight of the puddle and had stepped into. I realized it was not just a puddle (there was no rain all the week) but a kind of portal. I heard a woman’s scream. She tried to tell me something.

“Wake up! The lesson is over!”, a classmate shouted.

I woke up and packed my notebooks and textbooks in my backpack.

This story remained in my memory as a nightmare, but I believe that it was not just a dream. A few years later I went on an excursion to the surroundings of a certain abandoned estate of the nineteenth century. Near that beautiful house I felt freezing cold despite the hot sun. I felt frightened. It seemed to me that I saw familiar outlines in the window…

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