

*"A psychological thriller that will plunge you into  
the claustrophobic confinement of Lukas  
... Nothing is as it seems!"*

*Prologue to the Knots & Blades saga!*

*Confinement and redemption*

# KLEITHROS

*"The only escape is to confront what you fear the most."*

## KLEITHROS

Gregori H. Orlov

# κλειῖθρον



Dedicated to you who have suffered, suffer, and will suffer. To you who torment yourself harshly, who sometimes choke on that lump in your throat without shedding a tear, or cry while feeling alone. You have the power to free yourself. You and only you. You just need to be brave, make the decision, and stand firm against all odds.

Gregori H. Orlov

***The Cell of Lukas:***  
***Between Uncertainty and Fear***

It is just another day; perhaps it would be the same as yesterday, and just as identical to the day before yesterday, following consecutively from the preceding days, if it weren't for the fact that nothing lasts forever. Every cycle must come to an end one way or another. There had been completely different days when hope and spirit flooded every fiber of his being; “freedom” was a livable illusion, an almost realizable experience. But on this day, he was starting a struggle for true liberation, a battle to overcome his worst enemy. Lukas would now have to atone for his sins in order to break the cycle.

— Hey, wake up.

Lying on a cot, Lukas, still groggy, half-opens his eyes to discover who is pulling him out of his rest.

— Who the hell are you?

— No, no, no. Who are you? – the stranger replied.

— I’m Lukas; now tell me who the hell you are and what you’re doing here.

— I'm here because of you, bastard.

— What? What are you talking about?

Confused and disoriented, Lukas takes a moment to react. Realizing that the situation is unusual, he sits up and opens his eyes wide.

— But what... huh?

— What's wrong with you, idiot?

The prisoner suddenly awakens and realizes, after quickly surveying his surroundings, that he is locked in some kind of makeshift room, a sort of cell without bars, alongside a guy he has never seen before who claims to be there because of him. He has been there for a long time, wasting away, a victim of one of the most dangerous drugs that exist, but only now is he coming to grips with it. This was his situation, filled with uncertainty.

— Ha, ha, ha, look at your face. You thought you were going to get away with it.

— Get away with what? What are you talking about?

— You're a murderer, a damn killer! – said the stranger confidently, then hesitated — Or at least that's what I understand.

With a look of disbelief, Lukas starts scanning his surroundings. It's a room of about three square meters, with a cot on one side, a door, and a very narrow vertical window, opposite the door. The walls and ceiling are worn-out, apparently metallic, and the temperature is starting to rise, making the air oppressive.

After a few moments, he notices his cellmate, a peculiar fellow. His face looked like porcelain, without pronounced expression lines. His short hair was silver, not because he dyed it, but due to advanced degeneration. Apart from that, he was a man of stature and build similar to Lukas's. His gaze was inquisitive, with a halo of compassion—very strange!

— Why did you kill them?

— What? I haven't killed anyone; besides, you still haven't told me your name.

— Klaus, my name is Klaus. Though that's irrelevant. – the man said disdainfully.

— Well, Klaus. No matter how irrelevant it seems to you, I think it would be easier to have a conversation or find some explanation for this situation if I know who I'm talking to. – disoriented, Lukas looked around before whispering: Although maybe you have a point.

Lukas had fair skin, amber brown eyes, a prominent nose, and straight chestnut hair. He was tall and thin. It was evident that he was still in shock. He didn't remember how he had gotten there, not even when or why. Apart from the great bewilderment, he felt pain in his back and neck, and a heavy weight throughout his entire body. After considering the evidence, which did not offer many clues, he turned to Klaus.

— Hey, why do you say you're here because of me?

Klaus, sitting on the floor where a pile of discarded items and materials rested, mostly stacked to one side and in the corners, glanced at him sideways. Without any expression, he replied. I was there when that maniac caught you.

— Maniac, you say? That makes no sense. First, you say I killed someone, and now you say a crazy person has us locked up.

— Maybe I rushed to label him “crazy,” but he's not exactly sane.

— But you saw him; you know what he's like!

— Well, not exactly – Klaus said hesitantly.

— Friend, the truth is you don't inspire much confidence in me. I wake up not remembering

anything, locked up with a complete stranger in this kind of cell. And the only thing I can say for sure is that you're locked in here with me; well, let me tell you that's already obvious!

Lukas was evidently transitioning from a state of shock to a more reactive one, motivated by Klaus's unconvincing responses. Hearing Lukas, Klaus got up off the floor, looked defiantly at his inquisitor, and then began to stare vacantly around the small room.

— What a mess; how are we going to get out of here? Do you think you can get out of this hole and stop squealing like a little pig resigned to its fate?

— Well, this seems airtight. That door looks like it's been closed for a long time. If anything can open it, it must be outside. And as for that joke about the window— — he said, pointing with his lips — only if we turn to dust or smoke can we get out that way. I have no idea how I got here, much less how to get out— he confessed, caught between astonishment, rage, and despair.

— Pig! — Klaus whispered.

— I heard you — Lukas replied.

Then, without much enthusiasm, they both smiled, releasing some of the tension from the



situation. At that precise moment, the light filtering through the crack in the wall that served as a window was interrupted for a fraction of a second. Realizing this, both broke the moment of relaxation and began to shout.

— Hey, help! Who's there? Hey...

After a couple of minutes, they understood that if there was someone outside, they were surely not going to help. In fact, it was most likely the one who had locked them up.

— God! – Lukas expressed with a confusing whirlwind of emotions within him.

— God? God doesn't exist! And if you think he's out there, then I assure you he left you a long time ago.

— How can you say that at a time like this? We must believe in something greater, have faith.

— We believe in totally different things; I have faith. But certainly, in something more real, much more present.

— I know what you're talking about, but...

— But what? – Klaus asked, knowing Lukas was lost.

Lukas looked at Klaus with a mix of confusion, discouragement, and desperation. In that small cell, his beliefs seemed to be crumbling.

— I don't understand how you can be so sure of that, Klaus. What makes you think there's nothing else?

Klaus sighed, and for a moment, his gaze softened.

— Lukas, it's not that I don't believe in anything. It's just that... sometimes, “reality” is harsher than we would like to accept. Here and now, we must focus on surviving and getting out of here. The truth is no one is coming for us; absolutely no one is going to lift a finger to find us. Much less will that door magically open.

— But... how can you be so sure? — Lukas pressed with a lump in his throat.

He still didn't understand how he had gotten there or at what moment. He could hardly be certain of who he was. Fleeting memories came to his mind: projects, dreams, hopes, illusions. But now all of that felt so distant; it had faded away.

Klaus, seeing the fragility of his companion, fell silent for a few minutes. He limited himself to observing him and fiddling with a coin, sliding it

between his fingers. It was impressive the calm with which he endured the terrible situation, although his fiddling with the coin grew compulsive, showing impatience, an anxiety he was attempting to conceal.

While both remained immersed in their thoughts, time passed inexorably and mercilessly; some insects buzzed around the cramped room, bothering them from time to time. Sweat soaked their clothes and trickled down their foreheads. With the mental and emotional exhaustion inherent to the situation, Lukas lay back on the cot. He then thought about his life, envisioning a child with a vivid imagination playing in a green garden with little toy soldiers, making trenches and simulating the sounds of explosions. He remembered the pets he had managed to keep for a short time because they became bothersome to his elders.

Then that child left this world isolated and happy, in which his grandmother took care of him while his mother worked. His father visited him, just as was agreed in the divorce. The attempts to provide a family environment by his parents who loved each other but did not get along often ended in shouting that affected him due to his tranquil nature, to the point of always fearing being the cause of some displeasure, which often resulted in failure. He always received some warning: “You’re going to

end up in hell if you misbehave,” “be obedient, mind me or you’ll do poorly in life.”

These constant warnings became the programming that ensured his docility. Lukas felt trapped in his own fears, unable to free himself. Just like an elephant raised in captivity that, after years of chains and restrictions, remains still when they are removed, Lukas too was trapped by his emotional and psychological chains. Freedom, then, seemed a chimera; it appeared unattainable due to the obedience and fear programming instilled since childhood. Now, it was nothing more than a myth, a legend, the Holy Grail.

But he also recalled car rides, playing with the wind on the road, lifting his hand when he stuck it out of the window, while thinking about what he might become when he grew up, who he would turn into. Yes, dreams! At school, math was a torment; however, he felt like a fish in water in humanistic or creative subjects—the letters came easily, as did drawing. He was a quiet and calm boy, an easy target for the class bullies, who usually sought to ridicule him and would even wait for him outside to bully and hurt him physically. Nevertheless, he met who would be his lifelong friend.

Klaus, noticing that Lukas was lost in his thoughts, interrupted brusquely:

— Wake up! — said Klaus, hitting Lukas on the shoulder. — We can't waste time on memories. We need to find a way out of here.

Lukas blinked, returning to the present. The reality of his situation hit him hard once again. He looked at Klaus, trying to find some spark of hope in his eyes, but he only saw cold, calculating determination.

With a similar coldness, Lukas interrogated him, fixing his gaze on Klaus's eyes:

— Who are you? What do you do?

— I'm Klaus; I've been many things. Even a prisoner! — he said with a mocking smile, making light of his tragedy.

— I used to have a family; I built a business, lived love, passion, and enjoyed the company of several women. I had a life... and now look at me, I'm here — Lukas responded bitterly.

— Hey, don't think I don't understand everything you're saying. I listen to you, and your words resonate in me, in fact, like a thunderous echo. I see you, and I simply see my own reflection. I know you're staring at me intensely, scouring my eyes looking for something beyond, but you can't find anything. And do you know why? You're blind;

you've decided to be a cripple, believing in an outside force that will open this can and pull you out of your miserable lamentation. You think that...

At that precise moment, the room trembled and seemed to tilt as if everything were about to collapse. There was a violent shift that was made evident by the sudden reduction of the light filtering in through the crack. What had happened? Now, a quarter of the crack was buried, partially blocking the entrance of light, diminishing the entry of vital oxygen.

Lukas's face took on an expression of fear and sadness, reflecting in his watery eyes the image of resignation. In contrast, Klaus immediately clutched onto the first handhold he found. He did a quick survey of the space, raised his eyebrows, and continued with his intervention as if nothing was happening that he didn't have clear:

— Do you realize? We're wasting time; if you want to cry and whine go ahead, but at some point, you're going to have to change your attitude before it's too late.

Klaus's concern was not about getting out of there; that was evident. Just as he had said, he was a prisoner, but not of that place. His greatest anguish, if it could be called that, was the time and... something else.

Klaus, abandoning his apparent impassiveness, walked towards a mound of rubbish, where old junk and broken trinkets piled in a disorderly fashion, among pieces of wood, broken mirrors, and other waste; he bent down and began to dig. He murmured something inaudible and, upon standing up, turned with a piece of paper in his hand. Lukas watched with curiosity, but Klaus, after giving it a quick glance, simply stuffed the paper into one of his pockets without referring to it.

Lukas frowned but restrained himself from asking. Klaus's presence and attitude felt unsettling, confusing, enigmatic. He felt distrustful of this circumstantial partner; however, he was also familiar. Additionally, his company offered a certain degree of reassurance. He thought that being there all alone would be disheartening. Although he distrusted him, Klaus's presence gave him a strange sense of security, as if the unknown were less terrifying with someone by his side.

Indeed, being locked up alone would have been terrifying. The stifling heat, the annoying insects, the collapse that had afflicted the room, and now the lamp that illuminated them with difficulty began to flicker; all contributed to an incessant atmosphere of horror. Time seemed static, and yet it was clear that it was running relentlessly. Hunger and thirst began

to become part of the gruesome picture, while a putrid smell was increasingly noticeable.

— What stench! — Klaus emphasized.

— I wonder where it's coming from — Lukas responded, trying to pinpoint the source of the odor.

— We're in a sort of shed, I think. Where they store junk and waste. I suppose something is starting to decompose — Klaus said, taking a tour of the space disdainfully.

— So you were aware; you were conscious when they brought you here! What else do you remember that could be useful to us?

— I'm just speculating, but if you think about it, that would be the most logical explanation. Although nothing here seems to make sense, everything has its explanation.

Suddenly, a screech was heard, and the light coming through the crack started to gradually diminish. Darkness descended over them in a decisive manner, like a sinister cloak that settled upon them. Soft footsteps echoed outside the room, followed by a light knocking, almost playful, but imbued with a sadistic malice. Something, or someone, was surrounding the space, lurking, enjoying their prey with morbid delight.



— Do you hear that? — Lukas whispered, his expression revealing the terror that was engulfing him. Klaus, for his part, could only nod in agreement.

— It's him — he responded after a few seconds, almost as if he were exhaling with extreme caution. His eyes widened, revealing a gaze filled with madness that flickered in rhythm with the decrepit bulb.

The bastard was nearly enjoying the situation! Despite the seriousness of the matter, the scoundrel was having fun watching the fear in Lukas's eyes. Nevertheless, there was an implicit rage seasoned with impatience and frustration, softened only by a forced but well-disguised empathy. Lukas, pierced by terror as if by a dagger, thought he was lost. There was a psychopath outside, and another one inside with him, a psychotic.

The atmosphere grew increasingly tense: from outside, the footsteps, the knocking, the smell of death, and a faint whistling, and from inside, the heat, the company of a lunatic, the insects, and the flickering light. Suddenly...

The footsteps stop, the whistling halts, and instead of the knocking, a thunderous creaking erupts in the scene. Boards and pipes leaned against

the inside of the room fell and shifted; a cloud of dust was released from the wall, and a mechanism became exposed. It activated by turning, and the heavy door ajarred with difficulty, letting in a bit of light through its edges.

— Look, the door! It's our chance. — Klaus was emphatic, even knowing that escaping from there alone was impossible. His crazed gaze fixed on Lukas, hoping that the frightened man would come out of his stupor and dare to claim his freedom.

Lukas, petrified, showed no signs of even breathing; he had leaned back and wasn't even thinking of trying it. To him, whoever was out there seemed more terrifying than staying inside that cage. Frustrated yet oddly understanding, Klaus resigned himself to the fact that he would have to find a way to make Lukas understand that remaining huddled in that corner wasn't an option; he needed to decide to act, or they would both be buried there until they died.

After a couple of minutes, the door closed again. A silent laughter made it clear that the jailer was reveling in the docility of his pets. Klaus approached Lukas; his eyes, now stripped of any trace of madness or exasperation, looked at him with determination. In a soft but firm tone, he said:

— Staying here is not an option, Lukas. We'll grow old and die sad... or maybe sooner. You need to pull yourself together, find the strength, and face the fear.

Lukas looked at Klaus, knowing he was right; he was ashamed of his attitude, but it was something much stronger than him.

## Author's Note

*"Kleithros: Confinement and Redemption"* presents itself as the written testimony of the character Alexander Nasir Levy, who will also be the protagonist in my upcoming saga, *Knots & Blades*. In his role as a writer, Alexander will use the pseudonym Gregori H. Orlov, just as I have.

Alexander Nasir Levy's journey continues in *Knots & Blades*, where the omens that emerge in *Kleithros* expand into an exciting trilogy: *Dark Labyrinths*, *Whispers of Chaos*, and *Revelations*. In this new phase, the shadows and reflections that have dominated the minds of Lukas and Klaus take on a new form in Alexander, who faces challenges that transcend the individual to touch upon the mysteries of destiny and truth. Alexander's story is just beginning, and the chain of secrets will only intensify with each installment.

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