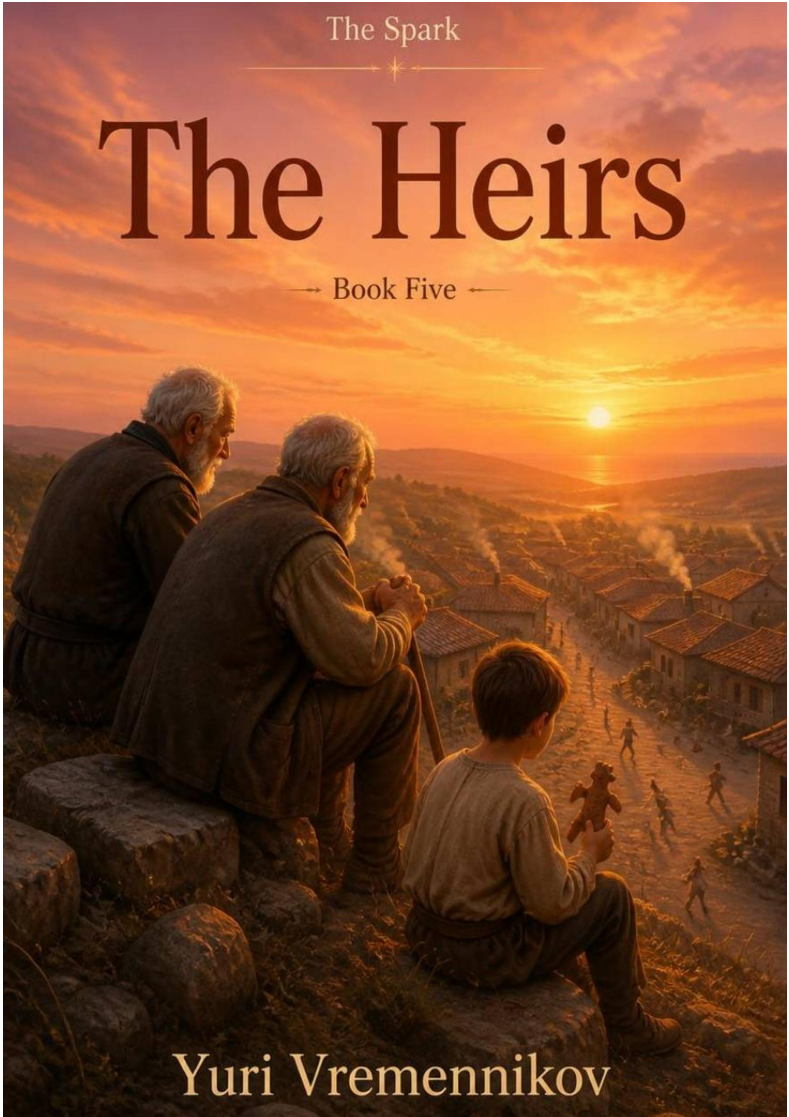

The Spark
The Heirs
Book Five
Yuri Vremennikov

Юрий Временников

Volume 5. The Heirs

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Аннотация

The brothers have grown old, but their work lives on. The city flourishes, iron replaces bronze, and grandchildren and great-grandchildren now conduct negotiations with distant kingdoms themselves. Arsen and Miron pass on their knowledge to a new generation, watching their students and children make history. The final book is about wisdom, about how true victory lies not in battles but in what remains after you. A warm and bittersweet story about farewell, about the eternal cycle of life, and about how even a spark, as it fades, lights a new fire.

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Юрий Временников
Volume 5. The Heirs

Chapter 1. Return to the World

Five years had passed since the great battle. The city by the river had changed beyond recognition. Those who had seen it before now could not believe their eyes: instead of wooden houses, stone ones had risen; the streets were paved with flagstone; on the site of the old walls new ones had risen — high, impregnable, with towers every hundred paces. In the center of the city they had built a great temple — not for gods, but for memory. There were kept Chick's clay tablets, there the elders gathered, there the most important councils were held.

The population had passed three thousand. Their own people, former prisoners, settlers from the south and north — all had mingled, spoke different languages, but gradually learned to understand each other. The main language was becoming the one the brothers spoke — everyone learned it, because records were kept in it and deals were concluded.

Arsen and Miron had aged greatly. Arsen's beard had become quite gray; he walked with a stick — the wound received in battle made itself felt. But his eyes remained as clear as ever, and his mind — sharp. He rarely intervened in affairs, but without his word nothing was still decided.

Miron had retained more strength — perhaps because he had fought less and sat more over books. He now almost never left

his "academy" — as he called the house where he taught children writing, counting, and history. He had two dozen students, and among them — his pride, the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of those first children with whom he had begun.

Chick was already nearing forty. He had become portly, important, with a long beard, in a long shirt of fine cloth. He was in charge of the library — now thousands of tablets were kept there, and every year new ones were added. Even from the south people came to study with him — the fame of the wise chronicler had spread far.

Niya and Vetka lived in a big house right by the temple. They had three children — the eldest, Arsen the Younger, already a seventeen-year-old youth, tall, strong, resembling his grandfather. He commanded the youth druzhina and was considered one of the best warriors. Two daughters helped their mother in the workshop — Niya still molded figures, and now her works were known far beyond the city.

Yara had died three years ago. She was buried with honors, on the hill from which the whole neighborhood was visible. Vetka placed a stone on the grave with an inscription carved by Chick: "Mother of All."

Veda had also gone — a year ago, quietly in her sleep. She was probably close to a hundred — no one knew exactly. She was buried next to Yara, and now two stones stood side by side, reminding of those who had held this city in hard times.

Life flowed peacefully. Caravans came from the south —

trade had been established, Hammurabi no longer tried to conquer the north, he had enough troubles in the south. With the steppe dwellers and northerners friendly relations were maintained, cemented by common battles and marriages.

But peace is only a respite between wars. And the brothers knew it.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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