

Anastasia NOVYKH



Anastasia Novykh Birds and a Stone

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Аннотация

People are like birds and stones. For some, just a hint, a single word is enough to be prompted to the spiritual height. And their awakened essence will soar towards perception of the infinite universe. While others... Well, a stone is merely a stone.

Three captivating stories of this book: "Duty", "Everything is so simple" and "Birds and a stone" tell about unusual people who reconsider their life values. All these people are united by a legendary personality of Sensei. Interesting facts about a human from the point of view both of modern science and ancient civilizations. Amazing information how thoughts are "born" and how to control them. Interesting information about "Jesus' Prayer", Saint Agapit, the Elder Antony. And many other useful things for those

Who are on the spiritual way and strive to become a Human!

Содержание

Duty	4
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	23

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Birds and a Stone

Duty

“Lord, what a dull pain! Seems like it’s not my liver, but a solid yawning wound. When will it stop torturing me? When will it all end? This hell of a cirrhosis... At such a wrong time. Dam it, the death! We’ve already been face-to-face with this rawboned friend several times. But my daughter... She is to graduate from college. Who will help her in this nasty life? No, I can’t, I simply have no right to die!.. I need to hold out for three years. I have to hold out at any cost. It’s OK, it’s nothing, I must stay firm. We shall still fight the Raw-boned for Rebrov’s body...”

The ringing phone brought Rebrov back to the grey routine reality. “What is happening today? It was never like this before... Well, the world is really on the road to ruin. How could you leave your child alone...”

“Major Rebrov, officer on duty, fifteenth department. Can I help you?”

Twelve hours passed after Major had taken over his daily duty in the district department of Internal Affairs. During the latest days, the situation was very tough. A new gang was operating in the district for already three months. Within such a short period of their insolent and brutal activity, the felons already committed several robberies using firearms. People were horrified by these monsters’ barbarity. The department staff now had to collect information virtually in crumbs because the population reluctantly contacts militia.

After a number of successful robberies, getting a taste for entire impunity, the gang flew into a passion. Its members killed a female director of a local commercial store after torturing her savagely. The murder exasperated both local inhabitants (especially those involved in business) and the law-enforcement authorities. Paradoxically, grief and despair became the very things to temporarily unite people working in spheres so differing.

Life is life. And it includes various situations that each person evaluates from his or her own angle, according to his or her personal outlook at this very moment. Yet, there is also a certain boundary, common to all mankind, which invisibly exists in the subconscious of all people. And those who dare overstep it, not only incur others’ anger, but also destroy all the greatest valuables inside themselves, not even noticing it.

Having performed a deed through mind weakness, one thing is then you endeavour to correct it for good and to find reconciliation, first in your inner world rather than the outer. It’s quite another matter though when you tightly close the louvers of your consciousness, this lucid window in the temple of your soul. Then precisely comes a moment when, as ancient Slavs used to say, “...a ferocious rage chills heart with its power, dims eyes with a mist of anger, and a person falls into a trap of dark thoughts which burn down his essence worse than a fierce fire. He stays all alone like a raven on a charred tree in the middle of ruins...”

Nearly all the officers of the district department worked under pressing regime for already ten days in search of the murderers. No wonder, the staff’s nervous condition came to a breaking point. Telephone was ringing in the duty room incessantly. Its deafening sound made all present shudder each time, like a burst of thunder.

Major Rebrov tried to answer clearly and calmly although it took him quite a great effort. His body was simply falling apart with terrible pain. His head was breaking, his liver was aching, and his stomach was causing him trouble responding with a strong pain to any exertion and nervousness which there were plenty of. Apart from titanic exertion at work, it turned out that Rebrov had serious health problems. His liver “showed” itself at a very inappropriate time. Rebrov was dilatory hoping

it would turn out all right. But, as Russians say, “a man won’t cross himself until a thunder begins”. With heavy paroxysm, without his family’s and colleagues’ knowledge, he went to see his friend who was a doctor. After respective tests, the diagnosis was more than unfavourable: developing liver cirrhosis. And no predictions on how the liver would do in the nearest future.

For Rebrov, it was not a stroke of bad luck, but rather a knockout. He would not be so afraid to die, if he lived alone. But he had a family – a wife and a daughter, his closest people on Earth for whom he felt inexplicably responsible. While Major was a single family bread-winner. His wife could hardly find any job, for she was suffering from asthma for already four years. His daughter attended the Pedagogical College where they charged big money for education. So, Rebrov’s salary remained the only source of the family income. And, despite the fact Major could retire even two years ago, he continued working in order to support his daughter until her graduation. And, all of a sudden, he got such a “luck”!..

Certainly, his friend recommended him the best doctors, advised him to take care of his health (because time wouldn’t wait), to go into a hospital for treatment. Yet, the treatment would cost quite a lot even by a minimal calculation. Major would not surely afford such enormous additional expenses. Innate honesty and conscientiousness would not allow him to borrow such a big amount from his friends, since his few friends were living from payday to payday just like him, merely making both ends meet. Finally, Rebrov immediately rejected his friend’s suggestion to pawn or to sell his realty. Firstly, his entire realty was a two-bedroom apartment which at one time he had awaited for almost fifteen years. And, secondly, he couldn’t allow himself to leave his family homeless for the sake of his own salvation. Thus, by his Consciousness’s standards, Rebrov’s choice appeared to be simple and narrow – to sweep away all medical predictions and to do his utmost to live another three years, so that his daughter would successfully graduate from college. And, then, whatever works... He decided to stand firm at any cost, all the way until his last breath.

Having recorded another telephone call in the journal, Rebrov took a pill of analgin to abate the pain which persistently reminded of the approaching inevitable end. Although his friend recommended ketanov, but the latter was much more expensive than analgin. Major always saved on himself believing it’s better to buy sweets or to otherwise entertain his child. Now, all the more, he would not spend up on his “shabby shell” as he lately began to name his body.

* * *

The district department was buzzing like a bee hive. Everybody was rushing about with their faces concerned. The tenth day of futile search was ending, and the atmosphere was nervous and extremely irritable. After all, except the urgent work, there were plenty of usual routine matters.

New “clients” – some tree hypes and a locally famous grubby beggar – were just brought to the pre-trial prison or “the monkey-house” as the Department staff called it. The beggar was always brought here when criminal statistics went down, as if no other beggars were found around. Department officers jokingly called this poor fellow Vasia, for in some way he was a local scapegoat. Once, a street gang beat him much heavily than they did with other beggars. The other time, an installation suddenly inflamed at a garret where he was spending winter; and, despite all Vasia’s efforts to extinguish the fire, he was the one to be accused of the arson by house lodgers. Still another time, he became an onlooker of such bloody doings which would shock any human being. Hence, Vasia constantly got into troubles.

Rebrov looked around for Chmil, his assistant, senior lieutenant. That one had asked leave for five minutes to speak to a pal, and disappeared for entire half an hour. Not seeing Chmil at his desk, Major held keys to a sergeant, his second assistant.

“Kostushkin, open.”

“Hi, Rebrov!” captain Onishchenko who was accompanying the group of prisoners entered the duty room. “Why are you so morose? How are you doing?”

“Nothing good,” Major waved his hand.

“Oh, please! Cast aside your gloomy thoughts. We all have “nothing good”,” Captain grinned. “You know very well: all the good in this life is either illegal or immoral or leads to obesity...”

“True,” Rebrov agreed, trying to show a likeness of a smile. “Where have you “dug out” such dandies?”

“Imagine, we were checking one address...”

Onishchenko didn’t had time to finish when one of the hypes, who was obviously out of his consciousness in full, suddenly turned from a passive “client” into a particularly aggressive one.

“Get up, everyone! You, goats! I’ll shoot down you all!” he shouted at the top of his voice, then switched to obscene vocabulary and started gallop around the room at rabid speed dumping chairs which were almost broken even without that.

Rebrov and Onishchenko reacted immediately, sergeants joined couple moments later. The entire crowd had to calm down the hype.

The other two hypes were observing this brawl with absolute indifference, while the beggar noted such active attention of the staff to a single person, quietly squatted and started to grabble rapidly towards the exit. However, at a very wrong time for him, senior lieutenant Chmil appeared at the door, hurrying to help his colleagues. His impressive figure which nearly occupied the entire doorway made the beggar exclaim. Without slowing down, the poor man turned around harshly and made his way back with the same nimbleness and speed and in the same pose. Once he reached his prison cell, he quickly took the vertical position and occupied his previous place beside the two drug hypes. Casting a sidelong look at Chmil, the beggar pulled a suffering face, and then continued to watch the brawl in the duty room. Rebrov’s assistant got amused with such a clownery, but he had no time to deal with the beggar at that moment. Having passed the unlucky escaper, the lieutenant only shook his fist at him, checking smile with difficulty. The beggar ceremoniously nodded with understanding. At that, the incident was closed, imperceptibly for those around.

Somehow, the furious hype was finally suppressed. He went limp as suddenly as he had gotten into rage before. All prisoners had got locked up in “the monkey house”. The men who had participated in the brawl, were now pouring out their emotions.

“Damn it, what a nervous day!” captain Onishchenko complained.

“Captain, it’s never so bad that it couldn’t become worse,” Chmil giggled.

“Curse that tongue of yours!” Captain responded rapidly. “We’ve been rushing about the whole day, as overworked hounds... People are going crazy. Each time they bring new surprises.”

“Perhaps, the Moon has turned to a wrong side. Look through the window: it’s huge, round, it’s full indeed...”

The men laughed.

“Yaaa, it’s really full... Today, four out of ten calls have been idle. People get worried over a single knock.”

“Well, there was an announcement on TV... So, they keep vigil.”

“It would be good if witnesses were as watchful! Yet, the lady’s been killed inside her own shop, while nobody saw nothing and heard nothing! We have a great deal of matters even without this... Just imagine, the damn “guest performers” have showed up again...”

“That would be the last straw!” Rebrov uttered with bitterness.

“Agree,” Captain nodded. “What a life! Everyday huge piles for a paltry monthly salary!”

“Captain, try being optimistic!” the senior lieutenant said.

“You’re too young to know what life is. An optimist is a former pessimist who has full pockets of money, whose stomach works excellently, and whose wife has left the city.”

The men burst out laughing again.

“Chmil is queerly merry today. Do you agree, Rebrov?” Onishchenko asked teasingly.

“He’s like this after he seeing that pal of him,” Major answered with a mysterious smile.

“With a pal?!” Onishchenko’s eyes flashed with zest. “I’ve seen his “pal” on the porch! Well-shaped pal, I’d say... What a bosom, what a “moon”!”

“All right, all right!” Chmil said with a contented smile. “What if it’s love at first sight?”

“Aha! Which one this time?” Onishchenko asked with a jeer. “You should marry, ‘cause love at first sight is becoming your chronic conjunctivitis.”

“What?” the senior lieutenant asked to repeat.

“Eye disease.”

“You’re jealous, Captain, aren’t you? By the way, all people are born free and equal,” and, after making a pause, Chmil cunningly added, “But some get married later on.”

“Well, finished as usual!” captain Onishchenko gave up, and the duty room got filled with laughter again.

* * *

The workday was almost over. It was indeed very intensive and hard both for the city inhabitants and local militia. The evil generated by the new gang’s activity was spreading by leaps and bounds. It was sowing out more and more fear in people, and attracted all the worst like a magnet. Besides the “the guest performers”, a group of drunk teens appeared in the city streets, trying to demonstrate their collective force to passers-by. Household crimes became more frequent. It seemed like people were losing their genuine cast of mind, surrendering to the negative side of their personality.

The district department became noticeably deserted around midnight. Only the operations group and officers on duty remained. People felt sleepy over the accumulated tiredness. Lost in thought, the senior lieutenant Chmil walked up and down the department and stopped in front of “the monkey house”. Quiet puffing of sleeping “residents” was heard from the inside. Satisfied with this serene atmosphere, the senior lieutenant sat into an old, worn armchair which the department had inherited from the former district socialist club. He put his legs on a single safe chair. Having settled in such way, he took some out-of-date newspaper and made a concentrated face in attempt to probe into the printed information. In half an hour, however, the newspaper was already peacefully heaving of senior lieutenant’s muted snore.

Sitting at the side desk, sergeant Kostushkin attempted to overcome sleep, but his young organism came into its own. His eyelids became leaden-heavy, and then he fell into a youthful slumber, carelessly propping up his cheek with his hand. Only when the telephone started ringing, both assistants started and woke up. But, once they saw there were no outside bosses around, they fell into sweet dreams again.

Only Rebrov sat at his duty post, not having a wink of sleep. That pain would not set his body free. Analgin deadened it for a while, but didn’t relieve for keeps. Major had never had such prolonged bouts before. He felt as if his body was belonging to someone else, and had to apply sizeable force to make it move. Needlessly, he would not want to budge at all. His consciousness instead... It rolled feverishly, conducting an internal analysis of the life spent. And all this was happening at peculiar consciousness estrangement from the body, through a misty shroud of the dull ache.

Rebrov still couldn’t calm down after the last telephone call. “What’s happening to humans? What’s happening to the world? Seems like everyone has got wild, embittered... And this old hag... She might have fallen into insomnia. We have such a strain here without her, while she took it into her head to lecture me on the phone at midnight. “Militia is useless nowadays!”... Anyone knows how to criticize! But let’s take them here to work as “a human waste cleaner” for a while!

Respectable citizens do not see a hundredth of the filth that militiamen have to deal with... They'd better pay more attention to their children's and grandchildren's upbringing rather than throwing curses around. Most teens are left on their own! They kick up a row, they hype from sheer boredom and idleness, taking their "advanced" pals as an example. While a little time needed for a mind to be cracked... A youngster starts with a small dose so that his pals would not call him a looser, and then he takes no note of how he's becoming totally dependent on that damned stuff. A hype can sell his mother for a dose! Yet, when we arrest teens, their parents commonly say: "My son wouldn't do this", "You've arrested him for no reason at all". And, looking like a fool, you start vindicating yourself, you try to reveal the real facts and to show them their near cheerless future. What do I need this all hell for, I ask? Life is far from being a honey anyway...

Say, militia bosses castigate the operations for the low crime unraveling statistics. But how can the crimes be effectively unraveled, if militia works only at its enthusiasm? The Ministry of Internal Affairs budget is cut down by the Parliament almost each year. The city patrol service is totally messed-up, while it used to be the one to mainly help unraveling most of street crimes, hot on the heels. Again, experienced employees, being disillusioned about everything and everybody, further tend to leave the law-enforcement service due to money dearth. What has it all resulted in? Nothing good. The professional core of many service bodies have actually been destroyed; the positions previously occupied by high-rank specialists are now taken by the raw youth, half of those not even possessing college education. Besides, what stimuli do those youth really have? Officer's honour, decency, dignity like in my times? Not at all. The main stimulus nowadays is craving for power and easy gains. Using the law as a cover, they shameless fleece citizens, and even dare being rude with those, – Rebrov looked at Kostushkin and Chmil sleeping peacefully. – Not everyone, of course, but great majority. Thus, how can militia be trusted by people whose interests, in fact, it should protect?"

Major massaged his eyelids and forehead to somewhat ease the dull pain.

"Well, on the other hand, I can understand the guys," he went on thinking. "They need to support their families. Who wants to put his ass under fire and fray his nerves daily inside this filth for such a paltry pay? Looks like an exclusive circle... And I'm sitting here on the phone like a scapegoat and listen to complaints about the system..."

All of a sudden, Rebrov keenly sensed the caustic smell of the room again, exactly like on the day he had first entered the duty subdivision. It was a pungent, strong, very specific smell of sweat, tobacco and stuffiness, intrinsic in such authorities... One just could not get rid of this smell. It saturated him and his clothes with its miasma, and accompanied him everywhere like a stigma, notifying those around him of the place such individual works in. At first, working in the duty subdivision, Rebrov couldn't get used to it a long while, but afterwards he even forgot about its existence. And now this smell struck his nostrils again, as if somebody thrust an open bottle of ammonia under Major's nose. Rebrov hastily popped out to the corridor, opened the door-lock and got outside.

It was late autumn, and the weather was chilly enough, but Major liked the sensation of humid, fresh and bracing air. "What's happening indeed?" he complained to himself, somewhat coming round after the unexpected suffocation. "That would be the last straw... Calm down, Rebrov, calm down..."

Major took out a cigarette, struck a match and began to smoke, trying to quiet his lately shattered nerves. However, obtrusive thoughts threaded one after another along an invisible spiral of logical reasoning on the sense of being.

"Well, life has flown by like a spark of this match. It hasn't had enough time to kindle, while it already goes out with a waft of somebody's will from above... From above?!" Rebrov got wondered at himself. "Am I getting old? Seems it's not that age yet..."

It's a paradox though: your body is falling into pieces, as if you're a decrepit old man, while there is a feeling inside that you're full of strength and youth... Youth... Oh! What a golden time that was! No burdens, only bright dreams and the unflinching faith in better future. The first true love... Yea, it was really the best part of my life..."

Major recollected how he dreamt of entering a literature college after the army service. He was very good in Russian language and literature as early as in the secondary school. But his fellow-countryman Sergei together with whom he was called up to the army asked for his help with entering a law school. As a joke, Rebrov applied to the same school to keep his company. He wrote a literature essay for two of them at the exam. They managed to pass the history exam somehow, same was with English. They amused a young teacher at the latter exam, and she was indulgent with them. Thus, jokingly, Rebrov entered the law school together with his friend. Being a lawyer was very prestigious during the Soviet times, too. Young people were as well educated by means of movies in which officer dignity, honour, fortitude and heroism were glorified. Both Rebrov and his friend were gripped by such a romantic appeal and aspired to become like their favourite movie characters.

Later on though, when they started working, their romantic youthful ardour somewhat diminished in view of the reality they faced. His friend left the service almost at the start, while Rebrov stayed and devoted himself to "the people of his Nation". He changed jobs inside the service between preliminary and main investigations several times, and nearly everywhere he had steady conflicts with his management because of his honesty and straightforwardness. Then, he was enlisted with the Criminal Investigation Department headed by an "old school" man as honest as himself. Rebrov spent around fourteen years on the operations job, and it's impossible to mention everything he saw and faced during those years...

The recent considerable conflict recurred to Major's memory, after which militia bosses dismissed him from the operations, having accused him of "rude communication with senior officers". The situation was as follows. For two years, the operations were tracking down a scum who had twice been imprisoned before and was related to numerous local crimes. Yet, it was very hard to prove his participation in those crimes was, for he managed to commit those with other people's hands, formally remaining pure under the law. Nevertheless, once he made a floater. The operations had to follow on his and his partners' heels for almost four days. Owing to such persistent work, they succeeded in preventing another crime. Two of Rebrov's colleagues were heavily wounded upon detention of the criminal group. Finally, their hard work was depreciated. A member of the criminal group assumed responsibility for the crime preparation, whereas the main suspect was set free "due to evidence insufficiency". At that, all major documents which could be used for his accusation mysteriously disappeared from the files. Two years of work and the colleagues' wounds turned out to be idle. Why? Rebrov believed it was his duty to reestablish the truth in front of militia bosses who had actually ordered to release the main suspect. As a result, Rebrov was driven from the operations with a scandal, and neither his former merits nor the Investigation Department head's intercession could mend matters. The best thing his honest boss could do for him was placing him into a duty subdivision of one of the remote city districts, and then hushing up the unpleasant affair.

At heart, Rebrov still felt aggrieved. The militia bosses actually showed they cared neither for his services nor for the fact he and his colleagues risked their lives while the bosses were comfortably sitting in their offices. Nor they cared for the fact Rebrov ruined his health doing his job. Cirrhosis was the outcome. No wonder, this disease could be called "a militia operations disease". Daily violent stresses, dead bodies, rivers of blood... How could a normal organism endure this? Nearly the only way to relax was drinking vodka, so as to digress from the lingering shock state at least a little.

Major hastily searched for any sense in his entire service to which he had devoted the greater part of his life. “How have I spent my life? I’ve always been fighting for justice... How many real gangsters have I imprisoned? None! Those who must be in jail are now delegated to local councils or sit in the city administration, being considered “respected people”. But they precisely are the criminals! While who is imprisoned? A one who stole a hen from an old farmer in the market, or a car from his neighbour, or a beam from the factory? Well, they committed such crimes through starvation or drunk foolery! We imprison those who have no money to pay off, while the real gangsters don’t care! They just bribe, and a case is dismissed. It’s time to set official prices and let people do what they want... Why getting under fire and risking life? Chaos...”

Although the air was very refreshing, Rebrov got nervous again. A tangle of thinking again started to wind painful thoughts which had been already overthought numerous times with anger and hatred. Major put out the cigarette end, crushing it under his foot with such frenzy as if it was guilty of all the troubles in Rebrov’s life. Having entered the building, he closed the door behind himself and returned to his office. The disgusting smell inside was now felt muted, but still disturbed his nose with its stuffiness which seemed to be the stuffiness of the law-enforcement system as a whole.

Low snoring resounded in the duty room. Senior lieutenant Chmil opened one eye, examined the situation and fell asleep again. Major approached the peaceful, dozy “monkey house”. “H’m! Beggars, hypes... Same faces always. Ensuring statistics?! On these people? It’s so stupid... Everyone well understands this “civilization waste” is only a consequence of the surrounding mess, while the reason is in those who shamelessly produce such “waste”. And everybody keeps silent, trembling with fear. Where can we find justice in this country? And who really needs justice defenders now, when such terrible things are happening around? Feels like I was born not in my times...

Life, life... Who invented it as it is? When you are young, you dream, plan something, but eventually you get something else which is completely unexpected, and you flounder inside it your entire life. Looking into it deeply, all this around is not mine. All my life, I worked here just because it turned out this way. Besides, I needed to support my family. I thought I would realize my literary dreams once my daughter graduated, and I could retire... And there you are – cirrhosis... It appears that life is already coming to its end. Yet, what have I had time to do out if the things my soul desired? Nothing. It would be foolish to think I still have time. Even if there’s time, it is only here and now. And it should be used rationally, without losing a single chance, a single precious moment of life.

Who knows why I was born in the Earth at all... To assure continuation of my kin? But a child grows up in some eighteen years. What’s next? Grandchildren, the old age... Everything moves in a constant wild flow of looking after posterity, just like any animal has. Then what distinguishes a human from that animal? It is an ability to think? But what should one think about? About how to set a dwelling, to procreate children, to raise and support them? It turns out a human being differs from an animal only by the fact that it does everything instinctively, while he does same things deliberately? Judging from life, it does turn out like this. Yet, why does inside one want something greater, something exceeding the bounds of this exclusive circle drawn for ages? Yes, posterity is splendid. But you are born alone, you stew in the pot of your life almost on your own as well (because your family can be some external incentive and support for your personal life program), and finally you die alone, experiencing this event solely on your personal inner level. For, at bottom, no one knows either your thoughts, or your true feelings, or your real life with all “video” and “audio” reflections of the reality pictures inside your brain. Then why does nature need to accumulate such inner information, i.e. human thoughts? After all, not a single living thing except oneself needs it. What hides in the depth of this mystery of nature? If you spent eighteen years raising children (and at times you don’t understand whom you have brought up, for some

of their thoughts and deeds remain an undiscovered secret for you), then for “nurturing” or for, better to say, “accumulation” of your inner fortune you spent your entire conscious life since the early childhood and until your last day on the Earth. So, what is the sense? Why are we given all these stages of difficulties and sufferings? Why the transient youth favours you with such instants of inner happiness for which you then long the rest of your days? What is the true basis of human existence? Who am I eventually? Am I just a body? Definitely, I’m not. Why does this sack bones and liquid move, thanks only to my will power? My will power? And who am I then, if I think regardless of the body pain? What is pain at all? Who am I?!»

Rebrov even winced of such new thoughts, having swept over him suddenly and touched the very depth of his heart. He slightly shook his head. Something unusual was happening to him this night, which had never come about before. His consciousness was accustomed to answer questions through logical, irrefragable reasoning. And now he was asking himself questions so simple at first sight, but yet incredibly intricate and broaching something deeply personal, such that his mind with its customary militia officer’s logic was nearly exploding of the overstrain of searching answers. Rebrov shook his head slightly again, fondly expecting to get rid of these thoughts in such a way. However, they did not disappear and only intensified their attack, in eager rivalry grappling with his usual somber thoughts of the daily routine. At that, his body continued to signal painfully of the serious defects inside of it. A next telephone call at 3 a.m. caught Major in such a terrible condition. Rebrov lifted the receiver and automatically responded with a tired voice, “Major Rebrov, officer on duty, fifteenth department...”

A female voice started to chatter on the other side of the line. There was a habitual event – a drunken brawl. Somebody’s prolonged birthday party which included excessive doses of alcohol has turned a private apartment into a boxing ring. And “the heart-to-heart talk” has resulted in bloodshed... Rebrov connected to the operations group on duty through an internal telephone line. After a while, captain Onishchenko entered the room, looking half-asleep.

“Well, who else has broken his madcap in crapulent and hungry state at 3 a.m.?” he asked, rubbing his eyes.

“Look,” Rebrov pointed to the journal.

Captain glanced over the latest notation.

“Not bad! We have to go to the very other side of the district! Eh, our hard lot...”

Onishchenko looked at Chmil sleeping with his face under the newspaper, smiled and softly sneaked up to him closer.

“Squadron, stand up! Senior lieutenant Chmil, two duties out of turn!” he commanded loudly.

Sleepy Chmil sprang up in the stand of attention instinctively, having dropped the only intact chair and accidentally pushed down an ashtray full of cigarette stubs. But he came to his senses right away. Sergeant Kostushkin jumped up frightened together with him.

“Damn, Onishchenko! You’ll make me childless once,” Chmil grumbled with displeasure.

“Why childless?” Captain wondered laughing.

“Why, why...” Chmil mimicked him. “Because... Do you know how one’s mind is affected by...”

“A-a-ah...,” Onishchenko drawled and then added, “Well, “authority loses its appeal without abuse”. These are your words, aren’t they?”

“Well, yeah, it’s called ‘even a storyteller dozes off without urging forward’.”

It became somewhat livelier in the duty subdivision. While Onishchenko was talking with Chmil, two more operations officers and a driver came.

“All right, we are going,” Captain uttered leaving the duty room.

“Good luck,” Rebrov replied.

After the operations group had left, Chmil wandered around the room, like a bear awoken in the middle of its winter hibernation. Kicking the chair wreckage, he muttered, “This Onishchenko... is like a dog in the manger. He’s interrupted the dream at such a passage, reptile...”

“Sit down to the control desk, and I’ll make coffee,” Rebrov said, staring at the senior lieutenant.

Chmil gave up his “occupation” and heavily seated himself on the chair, looking around for somebody to vent his bad mood upon. Rebrov was obviously not suitable for this purpose. He was of senior rank, and furthermore he was a good man always conducting himself humanly, unlike that Onishchenko. Chmil glanced over the room. “Maybe, I’ll drop into the ‘monkey house’,” he thought, having rested his gaze at the cell. But suddenly Kostushkin entered the room, having returned from the lavatory. And Chmil chose an ideal target for letting the “steam” out on. He made a stern face and, profiting by the fact Rebrov was in the other room, articulated imperiously, “Sergeant Kostushkin, why is there rubbish in the duty room?” he pointed his finger at the cigarette stubs scattered on the floor and ordered. “Take a besom and tidy the territory now!”

“But why me? Was it me who threw them about?” Kostushkin replied in a similar flatulent tone.

Chmil was nearly struck dumb with surprise.

“Look at this youth nowadays! How dare you speaking like this to a senior officer?!”

“Oh, come on, Chmil! Why are you jumping on me? You’ve dropped this, so you’re to sweep it yourself.”

“What, what?”

The senior lieutenant began to rise from the table slowly. Looking at his impressive figure, Kostushkin even shriveled for he did not particularly distinguish himself for the musculature. Thus, when Chmil menacingly halfrose in his not full hefty height, the sergeant no more tried his destiny and saluted, standing at attention.

“Sir, yes, sir! Let me take a besom and tidy the territory!”

And right then he passed out of sight to get the necessary cleaning tools. Chmil smacked his lips contentedly, seated himself again and grumbled, “There you are...”

When Rebrov brought coffee for all three of them, the senior lieutenant was instructively lecturing Kostushkin on how he should fulfill orders while working in militia. Meanwhile, Kostushkin was sweeping the last stubs, glancing askance at Chmil with displeasure.

“Ah, you’re doing the room! Good fellows!” Rebrov praised. “OK, let’s have a snack.”

Major took out a big sandwich cautiously prepared by his wife and cut it into three portions.

“Here, dinner is served.”

Sipping hot coffee, Chmil softened his aggressive tone.

“Well, coffee” he glanced at his watch, “at 20 minutes past 3 is a heavenly delight! Kostushkin, you should value the instants of youth! Where else could you drink coffee like this at 3 a.m., close to those exotic individuals,” Chmil pointed to “the monkey house”, “with such special admixtures of various aromas?”

Rebrov faintly smiled, already foreknowing where Chmil was driving at. And the latter continued to pile it on, “Just imagine: you are sitting and drinking black coffee at such a dismal night (it’s a pity it’s not Friday the 13th), under the light of full moon in black-black clouds, when vampires and werewolves agitate the city with their drawling howl...”

At that very moment, a dog actually howled somewhere nearby. Kostushkin almost dropped his cup. However, aloud he said, “Aha! You’ll now tell about vampires... Stop duping me, noodle!”

“Me?! Duping you?! Never! Rebrov won’t let me lie,” and he went on with an ominous voice, “Two months ago, in a neighbouring village not far from here, a vampire died under very strange circumstances. His name was Luka. If you visited his house and especially his little shed... you would die of terror! Even the operations veterans couldn’t sleep for several weeks after being there

because Luka kept looming to them. Just imagine: a large preparation table, blood, bowels, stench, ten corpses hanging...”

Kostushkin, being already impressed by the story, choked with coffee. He started coughing and rushed out to the lavatory.

“What a fellow!” Chmil gave up. “Weakling!”

“Well, ten corpses have been excessive,” Rebrov said. “For this guy, a single one would be enough for an effect.”

“Oh, it’s nothing, I only wanted to tickled his nerves a little,” Chmil laughed off.

At this moment, there resounded an acute, deafening telephone call. Chmil and Rebrov flinched simultaneously.

“Yeah, brother, we all have weak nerves!” Rebrov said, grinning at such a reaction, and picked up the receiver.

“Major Rebrov, officer on duty, fifteenth department.”

“Come here promptly!” a trembling voice of an old lady was heard on the other side. “There... there is... shooting..., something’s happening, the boy’s crying...”

“Just a minute. Please, give your given name, family name, address...”

The old lady began to speak unevenly, being nervous and all along repeating that something had happened behind the wall, that the child’s crying, and that militia had to arrive urgently. At some mysterious level, the old woman’s troubled state passed to Rebrov as well. Something clenched inside him. But Major endeavoured to hold on in cold blood while clarifying all details of the situation. He was supposed to do so under regulations, although he understood very well how stupid and absurd these questions seemed to those on the other end of the line. A person was in a shock condition, and somebody was asking his or her name. But, on the other hand, someone had to keep composure in order to think sensibly and intelligibly no matter how tense the situation could be, for any kind of panic only aggravated the stress.

After couple of minutes, Major finally clarified the matter. The telephone call came from neighbours living in the same private house with victims. An old married couple woke up because they had heard sounds similar to shooting. Afterwards, there started some ado, bustle, child’s cry. So, they phoned to militia.

Rebrov strained his memory. The address seemed to be familiar. And suddenly he remembered... Of course! When Rebrov was still in the operations, he met the owner of that house. The latter was quite a good man who worked in the street patrol as a volunteer and once helped the operations to detain an inveterate criminal. He now had a private business, and lived together with his wife, ten-year-old son and aged mother. He and his wife sold clothes in the local marketplace. They were neither poor nor rich, just earning enough living. The man did not drink alcohol and didn’t smoke. He had some health problem, a sort of stomach ulcer... No, a drunken brawl could be anywhere, but not in that house.

Rebrov became tense. A vague inexplicable feeling of unrest was growing like a snowball. “No, something’s wrong, something really grave has happened there. The operations group must be sent their immediately. Wait a minute...” The group was at the far end of the district. Rebrov counted the time: whilst he would inform them, whilst they would arrive, it could already be late. Too late!!! Rebrov didn’t know himself why he was so sure the operations would not be on time. But he felt at a subconscious level that something should have been done right away and very fast. Major sprang to his feet and rushed to the other room to take his jacket.

“What is it again?” Chmil had no time to finish when Rebrov interrupted him, having paused halfway.

“OK, Chmil, communicate the recorded address urgently to the operations. Have them go there as soon as possible!”

Becoming aware of the entire gravity of the situation, Chmil asked, “Damn it, what happened?”

“The old lady heard shooting and fighting behind the wall... That house is two blocks from here... Do you mind having a refreshing run?” Rebrov tried to speak more or less easy, but he was not really good at it.

“Sure,” Chmil said in bewilderment, shrugging his shoulders. “What about the duty division?”

At that moment, sergeant entered the duty room.

“You play funny tricks at night!” Kostushkin said laughing, having taken this scene for a practical joke.

“Kostushkin, you’ll remain on the phone. Chmil, call the operations right now!”

Rebrov hurried to get his clothes. Chmil started calling the duty operations group.

“What has happened?” Kostushkin got alarmed.

“Militia officers not only sleep at night, but also work from time to time,” the senior lieutenant said sarcastically. “Why are you staring at me? Fulfil the order!”

He contacted the operations and illustrated the situation.

“Why, do I have to stay here alone?!” Kostushkin finally understood, and his eyes turned roundwide. “It’s contrary to regulations!”

“But why alone? You have so many interlocutors here!” Chmil spitefully nodded in the “monkey house” direction, putting his jacket on. “One’s better than the other.”

“Regulations do not permit this!” Kostushkin did his utmost to cover his fear with a hysteric.

“Listen, you, milksop!” Chmil grabbed sergeant and shook him violently. “Stop harping on the same string: “Regulations, regulations”... Consider this an emergency situation. Do you understand?! Rebrov and I, we’ll come back soon. You will sit here and be totally fine. Are you scared like a molly?!”

The last phrase had a sobering effect on Kostushkin. Rebrov, having dressed, appeared just at the moment.

“All right, let’s go,” he commanded, checking his gun on the move. “Kostushkin, close the door after we leave.”

“Should I call to the authorities, if it’s an emergency?” sergeant murmured with dismay.

“Don’t you dare!” Chmil threatened. “Why disturbing people for nothing at 3:30 a.m.? Maybe, everything’s OK there, the neighbours might have misheard... We’ll see and come back. Clear?!”

“Yes,” doomed Kostushkin mumbled.

“I don’t hear you!”

“Yes, sir!” he reported.

“That’s a horse of a different colour. Good boy!” Chmil stated with satisfaction.

“You’re wasting time on trifles. Let’s go quicker!” Rebrov hurried the senior lieutenant.

* * *

It was pretty cold outside. The prickly north wind was blowing. The ground was slightly iced. No one was around. Rebrov and Chmil were running along the sleeping block of grey nine-storey apartment houses. Their tramping sounded loud all through the neighborhood, but hardly anyone heard it. Lights were already put out in windows, and dwellers were peacefully sleeping in this before-dawn hour in their cozy beds, enjoying their sweet dreams.

Chmil was running ahead, and at that managed to talk to Major.

“Don’t worry that much! Maybe, the granny has misheard. Or a young company parties, launching petards. I was young myself, and I know how it can be.”

“I see,.. look at this “old man”,...” Major uttered with short breath.

Rebrov fell somewhat behind. He tried to run as fast as he could. His body was falling apart from terrible pain, and each shake-up was felt in a burning liver colic. His feet turned numb. There was a hum in his ears and a mist in his head. But Rebrov still continued this race so arduous for him as if he was surmounting not the two city blocks, but a distance equaling to his lifetime.

Chmil turned around. Looking how much effort Rebrov was making in order to cover the given distance, he felt his heart clench. The senior lieutenant dropped speed and aligned with Major.

“Listen, why are we running like hell?! Let’s walk a little. The old woman might have had a nightmare, and we are hurrying for a date with her at 3:30 a.m. like idiots!” and then he added wittily, “Are you and I some gerontophiles, or something of that sort? As for me, I have a strictly traditional sexual orientation.”

“Run forward!” Rebrov croaked.

“Forward is forward... I don’t mind really,” and Chmil went on ironically, “Eh, so it be! After all, as the saying goes, one should experience everything in life... Hey, what if I visit that granny myself? I would find everything out, and you’ll wait in the department till we sort out our relationship...”

“Life isn’t all beer and skittles...” Rebrov tried to respond likewise with a joke, choking with rapid running.

A block of nine-storey apartment buildings remained behind at once. There began labyrinths of small private houses.

“Where are you, Chmil?” Rebrov called to senior lieutenant.

“Why? The street is on that side!” he pointed.

“No... there,” Major waved and started to run in the front, showing the way.

Awaken by the patter of their feet, dogs set up restless barking all through the neighbourhood. Finally, there appeared the needed street, and the necessary last house at the corner, located on the crossroad. Rebrov ran up to the wicket and stopped, drooping over it and trying to recover his breath. Chmil also bent, leaning his hands against his knees and catching his breath.

“It’s truly hard... to keep pace with you,” he said, puffing.

Chmil raised his eyes at Major who got fishily quiet. Rebrov stopped dead, holding his breath and staring at something inside the yard. And, should he not lifted his hand showing “Attention!”, Chmil would really think he passed away. There was light in the side and front windows of the house, probably in one and the same room. People’s shadows showed up behind the curtain.

Rebrov opened the wicket silently and entered the yard together with Chmil. A dead dog was lying in a small dark puddle. Chmil squatted down and touched the sticky liquid with his finger. “Blood”, he nodded assent.

“Approach from the left,” Major whispered, pointing at the side window.

Chmil nodded again. Bending down and making short dashes along desolate outhouses, he reached a low fence separating the yard from a little flower bed near the house, faced by the side window. Despite his impressive figure, the senior lieutenant jumped over the fence almost noiselessly and disappeared in the dark.

Rebrov wiped sweat from his forehead, pulled his gun out of the holster, released the trigger lock and approached the door. His heart was throbbing inside his chest, resounding in the whole body. His breath was quickened. His hands were trembling of the fast running and extreme overstrain. His throat was parched. He seized the handle and slightly pulled the door. The latter yielded easily because it appeared to be open. Rebrov opened the door a little as accurately as he could and entered the house inaudibly. Moving ahead in the dark almost by touch, he stumbled on something soft and carefully squatted. In a faint beam of light coming from under the next room door he discerned an old woman’s hand. He felt the pulse. It was default, however the body was still warm. “Apparently, the lady’s taken on the first attack,” flashed through Rebrov’s mind. “And

it's happened very recently..." Major overstepped the corpse, holding the grip of his gun tighter, and started noiselessly moving towards the ribbon of light.

Having reached the next door, he again slowly pulled it. This room was a communicating one. The light was switched on in a neighbouring premise on the left. There was exactly from where the child's cry was being heard. Male voices were brutally demanding money. Muted knocks and groaning wafted. Rebrov squatted near the doorway and peeped out carefully. Two armed gangsters in black masks were beating the house owner who was lying on the floor, fastened down, and were demanding to show them a place where the money was kept. One of them had an automatic gun hanging over his shoulder, the other one held a pistol in his hand. A third bandit was standing on the left, holding an axe and watching the action of his pals. There was a boy behind him who was tied to a radiator next to the window. He was plaintively crying, screwing up his eyes with fear. A woman was lying on a couch to the right, bound with a linen rope and gagged.

Rebrov frantically tried to think out what to do next. But, all of a sudden, the gangster with the automatic gun grasped the man's hair and, pointing to the child, yelled: "Watch, you rubbish!" He beckoned to his pal, and the latter lifted the axe against the child's fragile body. The boy let out a deafening squeal...

Rebrov as if got discharged. Not taking a single instant to ponder, he made a dart, shouting out some standard phrases and not even hearing his own voice. The only thought frantically pulsating in his mind was to rescue the child at any cost. At that moment he felt as if a bright sizzling ray pierced him from behind in the back of his head. It seemed to have exploded inside his body, generating multiple shivers like after a mighty discharge of electric current. From that very moment, Rebrov's perception pattern completely changed. Thoughts disappeared. Lucidity and absolute peace set in. Time seemed to slow down.

He saw a gunpoint aimed at him, but felt no fear. There was only lucidity of mind and cold intention. His eyesight was concentrating unusually and clearly fixed how the bullet was flying out of the gangster's gun barrel. Rebrov mechanically deflected his head from the bullet flight path. And only afterwards he saw the fire bursting from the round black outlet.

He glanced at the right shoulder of his adversary. Strangely, Rebrov neither his clothes nor even his skin, but just a shoulder joint being torn by a bullet. He pulled the trigger mechanically. And, in an instant, the bullet pierced his adversary precisely in the target point set by his eyes. Acting almost automatically, Rebrov took a jump incredible for his age towards the gangster with the axe and stroke the gangster's chest with his left foot as if he practiced Oriental fighting techniques during his entire life. His adversary heavily knocked against the wall, then bounced back off it like a ball and fell to the floor, having dropped the axe.

Rebrov slightly turned his head to the right. The third bandit, having let go the man's hair, was already raising himself and aiming the automatic gun at Major. Rebrov acted rapidly, easily and coherently as if he had been practicing these movements for years up to automatism. He kicked off the gun aside and then held it down with his right foot. Carrying on with the movement, half-squatted, he turned his entire torso and struck a mighty blow from behind the gangster's ear with his left elbow. The bandit collapsed unconscious, having fallen straight on the house owner. Rebrov shifted the gun into his left hand and started to pick up the automatic gun with the right one. At that moment, he fixed something strange with his side vision.

Major turned his head. In the Further in the communicating room, near the doorway where he had stood a second ago, he saw a transparent shining silhouette. Its features were further becoming clearer and more distinct, and finally an image of a beautiful face appeared. The creature's gaze was penetrating deep into the soul with any hindrance, illumining its most secret stratum with its light. Rebrov felt he could neither endure the power of this gaze, nor he was able to turn away from its delightfully pleasant and kind gravity rejoicing his heart.

However, in a second, to Rebrov's ineffable amazement, his side vision worked in such a way as if he looked straight at what was happening sideways. Rebrov discerned in the smallest detail how the window was shattering to pieces, how a wood log was flying into the room, having broken the window frame, and how the senior lieutenant Chmil's robust figure was tumbling in afterwards. Wondering at such an unusual quality of his vision, Major hardly tore his eyes from the shining face and looked at the window which strangely appeared to be intact. But suddenly the glass indeed shattered to pieces, and the scene recorded by Rebrov's mind accurately recurred in reality. Chmil flew into the room like a hurricane. But, seeing Major alive and unhurt as well as the gangsters lying around him, he stopped taken aback. Having overcome his numbness quickly, the senior lieutenant began to tie the bandits' hands.

Rebrov was in the same state of absolute peace. He again glanced towards the communicating room which attracted most of his attention. But the room was already empty and gapingly dark. Only a slight dissipating light was fluently moving away, shimmering from the corridor. Rebrov moved to follow it without hesitation.

The world was changing its outlines with his every step. The further Rebrov was moving away from the bright light, the more focused and condensed the space around him was becoming. Having entered the darkness of the corridor, he seemed to plunge into a slowly revolving tunnel. Round "walls" and "floor" were in an amorphous condition. Putting it more precisely, "walls" and "floor" were notions from Rebrov's past. Now he saw something like various by configuration and subdued light congestions of atoms and molecules which were changing their shape as if being animate and were copying imprints of his steps. Rebrov's hand freely penetrated the "walls" of this mass. Though his hand turned to be not a hand, but a streaming flow of multicoloured energies enveloped with same ultimate particles as the corridor "walls" and "floor".

In the front, he saw strangely grouped atoms and molecules mixed up with scattering light of fading energies. "The old lady", flashed in his head. A slight luminescence was surrounding her body. In the head area, in its very middle, a little jelly-like paste was pulsating with golden-reddish light. A small glaringly bright clot was hanging poised above the body. Rebrov somehow comprehended that the clot of energies and the pulsating jelly-like paste piece were a single whole constituting the very essence of a human residing in a corporal shell. It seemed to him this small beaming Something was a living indeed, perennial creature. He felt its invisible gaze at himself along with tension and some soul-oppressing yearning. And he understood what it was without any words. "Everyone's alive, alive", Major uttered in his mind. The creature perceived his thoughts precisely. It burst with smooth, incredibly warm play of colours, duplicating these tints on the jelly-like paste and leaving a similar appeasing and placatory sensation in Rebrov's heart. And it suddenly dawned upon Rebrov that there was no death existing as such!

Such revelation astonished him, having opened the door to a world unknown before, but yet more than real, to a world of eternity, filling his life with a totally new sense of existence. Having come outside, Rebrov found himself in a world kind of familiar, but completely different at the same time. Flows of charged particles washed his body with a gust of quite palpable living power which people call "wind". These particles penetrated the corporal shell and saturated with their energy other particles which transmitted their power to the rest by chain, generating feelings of vivacity and freshness in the entire organism.

The world was by no means painted in dark colours. It was shimmering with a fantastical light of life which Rebrov had never noticed before. Everything around was beaming with variegated colours. And there was no division into animate and inanimate objects. Everything was living in its own way, moving, uniting, acquiring unique scales of tints and tinges, coming apart into separate pulsating hues, transforming its states unusually...

Stunned with what he saw, Rebrov squatted on a porch edge. And only then he noticed that he was seeing in a strange mode like a chameleon. His range of vision widened significantly.

He could watch almost everything located above, below, behind and sideways without turning his head. Only a small zone located behind and below remained invisible. He needed to turn his head slightly to observe that part of space. Rebrov could not understand what had happened to his eyesight. He closed his eyes, having covered them with his hand. Yet, although his eyelids were now closed, Rebrov strangely saw his own hand with the fingers out over the eyelids. Moreover, he saw everything happening around him as if there was no obstacle at all.

Rebrov removed his hand from his face in shock and looked at it. But then he discovered other surprising abilities of his eyesight. The more he focused his attention on his finger tip, the deeper his gaze delved into, enlarging the visible range numerous times like through a magnifying lens. Although Rebrov simultaneously felt he was holding his hand at the same distance from his eyes. He saw the patterned outline of his fingers in smallest details, in a form of quaint labyrinths. They resembled a dodging area indented with uneven ditches and flat hills. Another invisible world was disappearing behind this mysterious relief. A pink paste enveloped forked mouths of supple bluish tubes. The latter ones strongly pulsated, pushing impetuous flows of red liquid along their tangled passages with an enormous internal pressure. But inside this incredibly lively world there existed a still subtle world. Rebrov even felt a little dizzy of such a deep concentration. He mechanically diverted his look from his finger, and his eyesight became defocused again, restoring the finger in its habitual shape.

Trying to come to his senses, Rebrov switched his attention to sounds. Yet, there he also faced a unique phenomenon. He didn't hear sounds as usual, but rather sensed those with his entire body. Major began to study the new talents of his body with unconcealed curiosity. First, he felt dogs' barking. These waves seemed to be a living independent force with its own energy store. Springing up and passing their extremely short lifetime, they changed the surrounding space with their vibrations. Rebrov sensed how the resilient waves were hitting his body like sea surges rolling one after another, how they were washing him like a violent undercurrent would wash an underwater stone. He senses still other, more subtle noises and the living power of those energies.

Rebrov started focusing on various sensations with rapture. And there he revealed an absolutely marvelous picture of the universe. All the colourful hues of the surrounding space appeared to be nothing else than various energies of diverse wavelengths. Furthermore, all animate and inanimate objects were indeed energetic particles generating specific waves. Their variety and interaction impressed. The waves were bearers of diverse power and energy, moved at their own speeds, intensified each other meeting in the space, reflected, got absorbed or merged into a different energy. Observing this entire splendour, Rebrov unexpectedly made another astonishing discovery: this life wouldn't end! There was no "death" notion in it. Energies representing the very essence of life simply turned from one state into the other, changing shapes. They existed perpetually!

Such discoveries took Rebrov's breath away. A prodigious joy and a boundless love for all existing swept over him. He wanted to embrace the whole world and to dissolve completely in its stunning harmony. Gripped with inspiration, Rebrov delightedly looked at the vast space of the night sky sparkling with dazzling stars. From up there he felt noises which he had never heard before. Or rather there were not noises, but some symphony which composed all sounds into one lovely melody or charmed ears by separate sounding of a magnificent solo. This music enchanted with its soft modulation, with its uncommon internal beauty.

Rebrov enjoyed the harmonious sounding of the outer Space. He clearly felt some inner inseparable connection between himself and the wonderful universe. He had a feeling as if he knew exactly where and what is located: where there was a red-hot star, where there was a planet, where there was simply light of a long ago transformed energy of some extinct form. And in certain dark zones of the Space he distinctly sensed the existence of galaxies and planets, invisible for a human eye, which had perfectly real and similar life prototype. Rebrov felt not just his unity

with the Space, but some inexplicable connection of every atom of his body with each electron of heavenly bodies. He understood at an unknown level of his consciousness that, if he stayed in this astounding state of deep penetration into mysteries of the universe, something totally other-worldly would be eventually revealed to him. And, at that very instant, he felt very bad. It seemed he would become unconscious any moment. Rebrov lowered his look to the earth, making efforts to come to his senses.

The operations group arrived. People began scurrying about at the doorway. Rebrov's nostrils got struck with smells of blood, gun powder, gasoline, mixture of male and female perfumes with the acrid stink of the duty department and a dozen of some characteristic smells of the house. Cars from the prosecutor's department, the organized crimes department and the ambulance arrived. Active movement started in the yard.

Rebrov watched fussing people in detachment. They looked like mighty sources of various waves emanating from them. Those waves rapidly filled the space around the house with their energy vibrations. Major for the first time saw that a human occupies a much bigger volume than he could have imagined. A human body by appearance resembled a swarm of tiny bees moving in various groups in their own directions. That swarm of atoms and molecules mixed with internal energies was encircled with an opaque mist around twenty centimetres thick. The mist was covered with an unusual half-metre luminescence from above. And this entire cocoon intensively radiated energies which were exactly the ones to fill the space around at an unbelievable speed.

Rebrov was patted on the back, was asked something, and he answered not drawing his inner look from contemplation of what was happening. A doctor came up to him and asked whether he was wounded. And then Major turned and paid attention to this man. The fact was that he had grasped the question much faster than the man had time to pronounce it. Yet, simultaneously Rebrov perceived also other, much more powerful mental waves as if different people were speaking inside the doctor about totally discordant matters, with an obvious superiority of negative ones. At that, Major was feeling the doctor's thoughts so distinctly as if that all was taking place in his own head.

Finally, the bustle came to an end. Rebrov was sent home by the authorities. He got into a militia SUV together with other colleagues who had volunteered to accompany him. The engine scarcely began to roar when Major switched to another perception. His attention was attracted by the operating engine. Oddly to say, Rebrov viewed what was happening inside it. He clearly saw how the shimmering gasoline was sprinkling and mixing with the air, how the spark was igniting that mixture, how the explosion was occurring. The explosion force pushed the piston, the latter transmitted energy to the crankshaft. Through the crankshaft, the energy flew to the wheels, and the wheels were turning, clinging to the road asphalt. And it seemed the converting energy which was moving the SUV should have been bringing Rebrov closer to his house, but, strangely enough, he instead felt his house approaching him.

Major observed this whole enigmatical world with unconcealed surprise. He seemed to have become double. On one hand, this all was new for him, although on the other hand he felt he had already seen this all: the outer Space, the atoms, the waves. He was familiar with that world!!!

As a precaution, Rebrov told nothing about his fabulous sensations to his colleagues in order not to be called insane. Although, looking at the real surrounding beauty of the transformed world, he realized somewhere deep inside that it was the human world to be considered insane due to its emotional filth and bodily needs.

Having got home, Rebrov quietly entered his apartment so as not to wake the family. He even didn't switch on lights because he could perfectly see in the dark. As a matter of fact, there was no darkness as such. The world was playing with manifold light spectrum. Each Major's step or touch to anything generated a new surge of wave vibrations and their interaction.

Rebrov made up a couch in the sitting-room and lay down, or rather sank, like a stuffing in a puff pastry, into a similar unusual environment of atoms and molecules moving along various

trajectories. He felt a state of blissful relaxation and tried to close his eyes. However, even when he shut the eyelids, he could still see the volumetric picture of the room with all the living movement of the “immovable property”. Rebrov grinned to himself: “How am I now supposed to sleep?” Not having an idea of what to do, he started to examine the wonderful independent life of his apartment. Later on, all the last night’s events began scrolling in his mind on their own in a reverse order. And, once his thought came up to the stunning penetrating gaze of the light creature’s face, a bright blinding flash flared in front of Rebrov’s eyes, and he fell into profound sleep.

* * *

Major woke up when it was already noon. His eyesight was usual as it had been before. Nevertheless, Rebrov felt himself a completely different person as if a total positive revolution had taken place inside him. His body strangely was not aching at all. On the contrary, it was full of strength as if a second adolescence began. His entire organism had become light and vigorous.

Nobody else was home. His daughter left for the college; his wife, most probably, went shopping. Whistling a cheerful melody, Rebrov made some body exercises which he had not done for quite a while. He lifted dustladen dumb-bells and went to the shower in excellent mood. Having washed himself, still singing, he squeezed a shaving cream from a tube as usual and began to apply it to his two-day bristle with a shaving-brush. And suddenly Rebrov saw himself in the mirror and froze. His hair having started to turn grey fifteen years ago, were now umber. The netting of little wrinkles vanished from his face. Undereye bags and skin yellowness disappeared. The face incomprehensibly regained its natural healthy colour. Yet, the main thing was about his eyes. They not only became rich brown in colour, but also reflected such power and brilliance that were not in Rebrov’s nature even when he was young. Major squatted on the bathtub board and then jumped up again peering into his own reflection. He tried to conceive: what metamorphoses had happened to his organism? But then he stopped tormenting himself with such “trifles”. After all, it was merely a body.

Having finished the morning treatments, Rebrov went to the kitchen and made a habitual tea. Taking a sip, he strangely felt the true aroma and taste of this flavoured water for the first time in his life. It whetted the healthy appetite. Having rummaged in the nearly empty fridge, he took out some food remains, created sandwiches out of those and started eating with pleasure. Rebrov ate his breakfast with pleasure for the first time in many years. Crooning the same cheerful melody, he got dressed and went to the district department to report on his “unauthorized heroism”.

Walking the habitual road which he had been going along for a number years, Rebrov got more and more certain that an amazing world was around him indeed, and that he was a part of this natural miracle. Rebrov walked and didn’t feel his own body. Colours around were much brighter and richer as if muddy scales had fallen from his eyes. He saw the genuine, living surrounding beauty. He heard how actually birds were signing. Even in sparrows’ chirping he distinguished an unpretentious dispute. He began to comprehend this world at a nonverbal level.

Rebrov came up to a bus stop. Waiting for his bus, for the first time in life he drew attention to a kind of a tree nearby. Thin, elegant curves alternated with thick, bulging parts, charmingly playing with chiaroscuro of each vein. And all these together constituted a magnificent, enigmatic picture looking like a mysterious labyrinth drawn by an invisible hand from the roots to the very top. There was a whole life inside, a whole destiny outside... So many various events took place for other creatures near this tree and owing to it...

Major thought, “Yes, everyone is assigned own place in this life. And everyone in this life is a perpetual destiny-creating element... Strange... Striking... And why these mysteries of being have revealed to me?” He simply couldn’t get rid of this question.

The bus arrived at that moment, and a door opened in front of him. “Prove,” Rebrov heard an unnaturally loud fervent voice of a young woman behind him. Major turned back, having thought for some reason that it had been said to him. But, seeing a hugging young couple who didn’t pay any attention to him and simply enjoyed their happiness, he got a little confused and entered the bus.

Rebrov barely squeezed inside not to block the way to the exit and stopped near sitting old ladies peacefully chatting with each other. The unfamiliar girl’s word was echoing in his mind. And, all of a sudden, one of the old ladies uttered a phrase with, as seemed to Rebrov, the same unusual intonation, “To God that...” Major was somewhat surprised with such concurring sound frequencies. The words sank into his heart. And, no matter how attentively he listened to their conversation afterwards, he heard nothing like this anymore.

Rebrov alighted from at his bus stop, puzzled. The words which had been pronounced by different people lined up on their own in his head: “Prove to God that...” Passing by a theatre, Major habitually glanced at playbills and immediately drew closer attention to those. Among the overall nonsense there was an unusually written phrase “you are Human”. Rebrov turned away for an experiment. Then he looked at the gaudy playbill again. And right away his eyesight accurately seized the same words as if that information was the most important for Rebrov at that moment. He shook up his head, being slightly taken aback because of his new discoveries, and continued walking his way.

Only a short distance of about two hundred metres remained to the district department, and there was a park on the way. Rebrov was walking leisurely, pondering over the unusual phrase which had formed. “Prove to God that you are Human... Prove to God that you are Human”, the words were scrolling in his mind. Suddenly, a sonorous child’s voice loudly uttered close nearby, “...and God will have faith in you”. Major gave a start and even turned around with astonishment.

“Is it correct, granny?” a five-year-old boy prattled, happily smiling and shaking hand of his grandmother who was sitting on a park bench.

“Correct, correct, my dear,” the touched old woman answered and kissed her grandson’s forehead.

This scene and mainly these words simply staggered Rebrov deeply in his heart. The ready sentence forthwith assembled in his mind: “Prove to God that you are Human, and God will have faith in you”. Something Existent was communicating to him as a totally living being. It gave him the answer to his vital question by using signs. Suddenly, it dawned upon Rebrov: it had always been like this! That Existent neither appeared from anywhere nor disappeared, but it was constantly beside him throughout his entire life. Yet, being like blind, he had never noticed that support and those signs which his Destiny had been generously showering on him. Everything was so simple, wise and clear... “Prove to God that you are Human, and God will have faith in you...”

* * *

Rebrov entered the district department and was surprised with his own new discoveries and observations. When some people were talking about his last night’s action, they seemed to be trying on that “blanket”. They regarded the situation though a shroud of envy. Others were proud of themselves for working with a person who would always lend a helping hand. Several others were rejoiced over benefits of the grown unraveling statistics and over the reward they were to obtain for such a subordinate. Still others secretly laughed at Major, considering him “a duffer” and “a loser” who voluntarily “put his ass under fire for the sake of some shopkeeper’s family”. And only individuals, being his true friends, were candidly happy for the fact that everything had turned out all right and their friend was alive and unhurt. Rebrov seemed to be feeling people from their inside. In an incomprehensible way he sensed what they were really thinking. It appeared that out of a hundred percent of all greeting words only ten percent conformed to sincere, pure intentions.

The remaining ninety percent were indeed from the evil one. Oh, humans, humans... Nevertheless, such circumstance made Rebrov rather laughing than angry because each of his colleagues fondly believed his thoughts were known only to himself. But that was precisely where Rebrov viewed a holistic illusion, feeling he was surrounded mostly by clones of the Ego legion very few of whom were truly individuals alighted with the truth of their spiritual world.

Rebrov looked at life from another visual angle. Passing by “the monkey house”, he thought: was there a real difference between the inner essence of department officers and detainees? None, both were same people. Previously, Rebrov had regarded detainees as potential criminals, as dregs of human society, whereas now he first looked at them with humane eyes. They were same people with their own souls, inner world, good and bad intentions, imperfections, weaknesses. And the external difference was merely in the fact that once they had given in to provocation of their negative side which in its turn inevitably engrossed them with generated circumstances. After all, no one including the department staff was insured against such lot since it’s all about the internal holistic battle of good and evil inside each person.

Surprisingly, people with extremely malicious cast of mind avoided Rebrov that day, as if they were afraid to whiten themselves with something buoyant and kind and to shake their life position once chosen. There appeared to be not many of such inner wicked ones in the district department, though there were only few candidly kind, too. Rebrov viewed the majority of people as standing on the border between good and evil. They inclined to where a thought would tempt them, behaving like drunkards swinging from one extreme to another. Nonetheless, they persistently clambered to the neutral zone, as if fearing to lose sight of this important life landmark. But the people didn’t see the volumetric picture like Rebrov who could grasp everything at once, for they were creeping in a circle.

Major sat in the duty room to write a report, but, being regularly distracted by congratulators, he was able to finish only towards evening. People came in one by one. They just seemed to be never tired of talking to him. They were telling their life stories, jokes, sundry trifles only in order to prolong being near Rebrov. In the evening when the bosses had left, in the duty room there gathered a big noisy company. If previously officers hurried home after work, that day no one wanted to leave. Everybody laughed, jested, cheered Major up and “blessed” him for new feats. Men inspired each other with cheerful laughter, finding peace of mind. And the most unbelievable thing was that they neither drank that night nor even thought of alcohol. As the saying goes, when a soul sings a body is thoroughly delighted.

Rebrov returned home way after midnight. Going to bed, he still could not calm down after the day’s rich impressions. And he felt he continued to change inside all along, although he didn’t have time to conceive and to explain everything with common logic. He now simply trusted his intuition. Rebrov was sure – it knew nearly everything about the world. When he was writing the report that day, his intuition suggested those were his last report papers in the district department though his logic asserted rather the counter. “Well,” he thought, “we shall see what we shall see”.

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