

Anastasia NOVYKH



*of Shambala*

SENSEI

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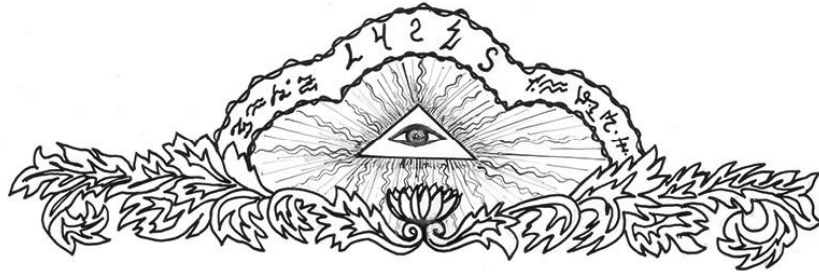
**SENSEI**

**The Primordial of Shambhala**

**Book II**

There is no hiding from the Truth, and nothing can be concealed from **Wisdom**. There is no **secret** on Earth that will not one day be revealed. Human life and death is the flow of a single process. To **understand** the past **means** to learn to overcome the dangers of the present. But to **swim out** of it is only possible by becoming a Human!

This book was written based on a personal diary of a former high-school girl in her senior year, reflecting the events of the summer of 1991.



## Prologue

“But it's not all that bad. What's more, since you've decided to stay, give them another chance and let me...”

Suddenly, from out of nowhere, a light breeze flew over the sea, breathing life into the moonlit path, which charmingly sparkled with its silvery hues, leading the way into a hazy distance. It was as if nature was teasing the Creature, embracing it on the one hand with its eternity, and on the other, with its natural earthly beauty. Apparently, some innermost mystery, known only to itself, was hidden in this delicate gust.

"If you want it so much, go ahead and try. While we are here, there is still time... However, the field has ripened long ago. And the accumulation of weed, tirelessly multiplying, is beginning to overburden the earth... The crops turned out to be weak, although they were carefully cultivated — the seconds of illusion overshadowed the reality of eternity for them.”

“And yet I hope to find...”

Another gust of wind took the words away to its boundless expanses. The two parts of the Creature merged again in their essence. A brief silence fell. Only the fire crackled softly with its burning branches. The delicate twigs were quickly turning into a charred shapeless heap of ash. Strangely, only a moment passed, yet it seemed as though this peculiar matter was never there, as if it had never existed at all.

*A stone fallen to the sand – rustle of  
sand grains.*

*A wave reaching the land – rustle of  
sand grains.*

*Your impetuous running,*

*A foot in the sand – rustle of sand  
grains.*

*Life is just a step,*

*And the years in it are rustle of sand  
grains.*

**Rigden Djappo**

1

All the guys ran to swim. Finally, the moment came when Sensei was alone. He was standing in shallow waters, gradually getting used to the cool sea water. Taking advantage of his solitude, I began to tell him my strange dream about the Red Horseman, which I had seen last night. This extraordinary vision impressed me with its unprecedented realism, vividness, and emotional intensity. Telling Sensei about it, I lamented that I couldn't recall its meaning. I only remembered that it was very important for me. Contrary to my expectations that he would fully decode this dream from the physiological and philosophical points of view, Sensei only smiled and, looking at me somewhat mysteriously, said,

“The time will come, and you will know everything.”

These words intrigued my persona enormously, but Sensei didn't add anything to that. Having left me in complete confusion, he joined the group of our guys who were already having a lot of fun, trying to stop the incoming waves with their athletic bodies. "A strange dream. And a strange answer. What could it mean?" I pondered again.

Observing Sensei from the sidelines, I couldn't help being surprised at how natural he was in seemingly completely different spheres of reality. In our group of guys, he barely stood out, except maybe for having greater endurance and a fantastic sense of humour. But as soon as, figuratively speaking, we touched the strings of his spiritual life, a beautiful melody began to emanate from them, enchanting us with its unusual sublimity, simplicity, delicacy and, at the same time, an extraordinary wisdom that really drew everyone to him...

An amazingly mysterious Human. Analysing the past, I came across an interesting observation: everything, whoever or whatever Sensei encountered, gradually began to change. To me, it was inexplicable, how did he do that? Take my destiny, for instance. Just half a year ago, my body, despite being seventeen years old, was within a hair's breadth of death. This was a difficult period of my life, when practically everything seemed hopeless, and my relatives' eyes were full of sorrow and sympathy. It was at precisely this "last moment" that I met the master of martial arts — Sensei, whose knowledge and abilities clearly went beyond the ordinary. Sensei literally changed not only my destiny, but my perception of the whole world. Now I'm definitely sure that this meeting was not a happy coincidence as I thought previously. Having added up all the 'unexpected coincidences' that inexorably led me to certain consequences in my life, I became convinced that this meeting was rather a logical outcome, a manifestation of someone's will from above. And since, thanks to Sensei, I remained alive after all, it meant Someone needed that.

But what for? And why? What can I do to fulfil the task which I was left here for? It's difficult to guess about something you don't know. How can one fully comprehend the plan of the Higher forces? After all, a random encounter, a word, even a wordless action can cause such a chain of events that will

invisibly lead to some kind of global changes, whether in individual people or on the scale of society as a whole. But an ordinary person who gave this initial impulse will probably remain unaware of the overall result of his act, because he lives in a limited world of his thoughts and is surrounded solely by 'his reality'. What's really striking is that every day every person, without even knowing it, makes his own little contribution to this growing snowball of future events by the will of his choices.

I intuitively felt that the clue to the true meaning of my destiny lay in this mysterious dream. As a curious person, I wanted to know everything at once and preferably in great detail. However, the mystery remained a mystery.

## 2

After a delicious breakfast, our big group settled down blissfully on the sand, exposing our bodies to the gentle rays of the morning sun. Our group consisted of enthusiasts of various ages, united by a common passion for martial arts (among other things), as well as a special, sincere respect for our coach Igor Mikhailovich whom we fondly called Sensei.

Sensei is really an extraordinary personality. Outwardly, he did not stand out from the group in any way. A young fair-haired man of athletic build. Although, at first glance, a careful observer could notice his unusual perceptive and intelligent eyes. But other than that... As to age and maturity, our forty-year-old psychotherapist Nikolai Andreyevich was more likely to stand out. The most serious one was Volodya, a long-time friend of Sensei, who was in charge of some special forces unit, as people say, 'spetsnaz'. Victor, our senior senpai who worked for the police, stood out with his commanding voice. Zhenya and his friend Stas, tall guys of athletic build from the senior group, were notable for their ardour, pranks and never-ending humour. The youngest were Ruslan and Yura as well as our merry group, who after watching films about martial arts went in search of a good Teacher and came across such a

fountain of knowledge as Sensei. Even in our wildest dreams, we didn't expect that such unique personalities existed in this world. Our merry group was Andrey, Kostya, Slava, Tatyana, and me. This year, for us, the last school bell had 'rung', the hot season of the final exams had passed. School was left behind, and our entire life was ahead of us with its sorrows and joys, victories and defeats, ups and downs. We were right in that uncertain 'in-between', which seemed to us to be the best time for a 'respite'.

It was only the third day of our unforgettable vacation with Sensei on the sea coast, but what days those were! It was that very golden time when you had an opportunity not only to relax with your best friends, but also to become enriched with an amazing experience and, most importantly, with wisdom from such a warm and friendly communication with Sensei.

Slava and Yura, led by Volodya, following the army routine, headed to the sea to scrub the dishes with sand, because this morning it was their turn. The younger guys didn't even have any objections. A subtle reminder "Let's go!" from Volodya's commanding deep voice was enough for them to enthusiastically grab the pots. This comical situation caused a whole stream of jokes aimed at Volodya. But Volodya, not at all embarrassed, replied in a military manner,

"Order is order."

The book appeared again in Nikolai Andreyevich's hands. He had been casually reading from it for the last three days. Judging by the questions he raised in his conversation with Sensei, obviously the book was somehow connected with his psychotherapeutic work. He discoursed on the fact that psychology, unfortunately, was still a young science, and that nowadays a good psychologist must also be a good philosopher, because it was precisely philosophers who stood at the origin of the development of psychology as a science.

"Take, for example, one of the initial founders of psychology, Socrates. Listen to the remarkable words he wrote." Nikolai Andreyevich opened a bookmarked page and read aloud, "Just as you ought not to attempt to cure

eyes separately from head or head without treating the body, so you should not treat the body without treating the soul..." And then, "One has to treat the soul... with appropriate spells, and the latter are nothing more than right speeches." Nikolai Andreyevich made a special emphasis on the last words, "As a result of these talks, prudence takes root in the soul, and its rooting and presence facilitate inculcation of health both in the area of one's head and of the whole body."

Nikolai Andreyevich paused, his eyes scanning the page, and then continued,

"Critias, hearing my words, exclaimed, 'My Socrates, headache would have been a true gift of Hermes to the boy, if it had forced him to improve his mind for the sake of his head!'"

"That's for sure," Sensei chuckled.

"Even though it was written fourteen centuries ago, it is still relevant to this day."

"Certainly, because wisdom is beyond time."

"Yes, Socrates noted this quite correctly."

"Socrates only passed down what he had been taught. Socrates would not have been Socrates if he had not met Crito on his way, who was attracted by his spiritual beauty and gave him an appropriate education. Therefore, you are deeply mistaken, thinking that psychology originates from Socrates. What was passed on to Socrates by his Teacher, and later on, respectively, to his descendants, is just a distant echo of the true knowledge of the ancients... Psychology is a more ancient science than it is assumed, and it's not new at all. Its founders and creators were by no means Socrates or William James, let alone Le Bon, Sigmund Freud, Alfred Adler and others. These people just tried, through the prism of their worldview, to partially restore what had once been given to people in full and what was carelessly lost with time... While actually, this science traces its roots back to remote antiquity."

"Maybe, regarding philosophy. But not scientific theory and practice?!" Nikolai Andreyevich was sincerely surprised.



“Why not?” objected Sensei. “Exactly regarding science. The ancients possessed such knowledge that modern people are still very far from. If today psychology is only trying to study the structure of personality, general patterns, and laws of communication between people, for the ancients it was only a superficial philosophy since they possessed a more subtle knowledge of psychology — various psycho-techniques. They studied the depths of themselves, of their souls, and not of their Ego. While the science of ‘psychology’ begins precisely with the study of oneself. And the better a person knows himself, the better he will understand not only others, but the entire world as a whole.”

“Wait, but in modern psychology, there are also quite a lot of various psycho-techniques.”

“Right, but what kind of psycho-techniques? As a rule, the most elementary ones, and note, mainly the ones aimed at the material nature. Can modern humanity, at the current level of development of the science of psychology, really be called a spiritually developed community? Of course not. Because modern psychology mainly deals with a very base level — it tries to solve the problems of conflicts generated by a person's Ego. Simply put, it is cooked in the broth of the Animal nature, despite the fact that its goals include understanding of the human soul. With such a correlation between ‘theory’ and ‘practice’, you do realise what a contradictory future awaits it. That is, by and large, modern psychology attempts to reconcile egoism with megalomania.”

"In principle, it's one and the same," the psychotherapist remarked delicately.

"That's exactly what I'm saying," Sensei emphasized, giving Nikolai Andreyevich a chance to grasp the meaning of his words more deeply. “I am in no way diminishing the importance of psychology in the modern world. It’s a good discipline, a needed one. It's really worth developing, it helps people relieve stress and fight their fears. However, I have a question for you, doctor. Please tell me, why aren’t all the psychologists able to put their own heads in order while trying to get into someone else's head?”

"Well... what do you mean why?" Nikolai Andreyevich drawled slowly and, after a short pause, responded excitedly, "Everyone wants to eat, after all."

They laughed merrily, and the psychotherapist continued the conversation.

"If the ancients possessed such knowledge, then, in theory, they should have had a golden age."

"That's right. That's what it was."

Nikolai Andreyevich pondered, and then asked, "Which antiquity do you mean? In our civilisation?"

I noticed that Nikolai Andreyevich sometimes addressed Sensei in a familiar, friendly manner and sometimes in an official, respectful way.

"I would certainly not call even the beginning of our civilisation ancient. Our civilisation has only existed for some twelve thousand years. Although at the beginning of its development, humankind was given a certain part of knowledge, including that in the field of psychology."

"Knowledge was given? I wonder, who was it given to?"

"This knowledge was scattered all over the world: in Europe, Asia, Africa, North and South America. It was kept as sacred knowledge by wise men in the tribes of Ancient Egypt, India, Mesopotamia, Siberia, and China. Yet, despite the wide geographical scope of those who were initiated in it, still, this knowledge was eventually lost. That's why you, gentlemen, are now forced to reinvent the wheel."

"Still, it's rather strange. How was it possible for people on different continents to get this knowledge, and especially in tribes? And what's more interesting, who could have given it? After all, as far as I know, the ocean was an insurmountable obstacle in the past. There were no means to fly over it, and it was almost impossible to sail across it."

"It's just that, as you envision it, in order to do this, one must have some kind of equipment or at least a device of some sort. Whereas the ancients managed to do it just with their abilities. I intentionally mentioned their subtle knowledge of the human psyche. After all, they were able to control their abilities. And what is now the subject of debate — levitation, telekinesis,

teleportation, telepathy, and the like — for the ancients, was an ordinary reality. It was just as natural as, for instance, riding a bicycle or swimming is for us...”

"Wow, super!" Ruslan who, like us, accidentally overheard the conversation between the 'gurus', broke into the dialogue rudely. "I wish we had such knowledge! One wants to fly and just flies. That's so cool! Can we learn this, Sensei?"

Sensei looked at the boy seriously at first, but then a slight grin appeared on his face.

"Of course, you can."

"How, if we examine this in detail?" Ruslan tried to phrase his question 'cleverly'.

Sensei paused for a moment, looking at him with a slight smile on his face, and then said,

"It's simple. You see, the main thing in this matter is your attitude, your wish, your inner morale and, most importantly, your great desire to experience this levitation. The very principle of levitation is not complicated. The main kernel lies in your desire..."

"That's more or less clear, but more specifically... I mean, in the physical sense?" Ruslan kept asking, frowning with concentration, as if it were a puzzle beyond his understanding.

"More specifically? Well, let's put it this way. Every human is a generator of a strictly individual torsion field. This torsion field affects the photons of the physical space surrounding a person and interacts with the torsion fields of other individuals. In order to launch the effect of levitation, that is, in simple terms, the effect of your physical body hovering in the air, you need to give a certain excitation by means of psychic energy and to transform kinetic energy into potential energy, and vice versa. This provokes a mighty surge of psychic energy as a result of adrenaline discharge, which will cause an enormous excitation of the torsion field of another individual, which will inevitably cause considerable increase and acceleration of your energy potential.

So, when you concentrate mentally, certain spin structures arise in the labile

spin system, meaning, in your brain, which duplicates the spatial frequency structure of the formed image. This information, in turn, is transmitted not only to the body as a whole, but also to the environment, and thereby interacts with photons, that is, with quanta of electromagnetic radiation. The presence of certain conditions, namely, personal strength and clear concentration of thought, produces an effect which subsequently allows you to dramatically reduce your weight. And then, as they say, it's a matter of technique. So, the more power your generator of stable thought generates, the longer the effect of levitation will last. It's simple physics, and there is nothing complicated or supernatural about it..."

The guys tried to listen attentively to Sensei's every word. As for me, failing to understand even half of what he said, I was just trying to memorize his words, repeating them in my mind, so as to write them word for word in my diary later. Nikolai Andreyevich's jaw just dropped from everything he heard. He looked like a confused first-year student listening to someone presenting a PhD thesis.

"...So, everything depends on your internal willpower. After all, this power is enormous. For example, in ancient times people were able to lift such huge structures as 'vimanas' up into the air by the force of their will alone, that is, by psychic energy of a concentrated thought, not to mention lifting their own bodies. The ancients were able to lift and move hundreds of tons. And why were they able to do that? Because these people possessed discipline of their mind... The most important thing is focused concentration on a desired result, that's when accumulation of psychic energy occurs. There should only be the final goal in your head, a precise and clear one. You must really feel and imagine this whole process..."

During this explanation by Sensei, a purposeful look appeared on Ruslan's face. Apparently, he had a burning desire to put words into practice immediately. "Sensei, does this take long to learn?" Ruslan asked enthusiastically.

"Well, in all seriousness, if you want to learn to levitate for hours, of course,

it takes time." But hovering for a few seconds can be done by almost every beginner."

"Wow!" Ruslan exclaimed delightedly. "May I try it right now?!"

"Why not? Everything's possible if you really want it."

"But how? What should I do?" Ruslan inquired hastily.

"Well, in this case, at the initial training, fast takeoff is extremely important. For the first time, of course, I cannot promise that you'll be able to soar for a long time, but about a minute of free flight is quite realistic. You are unlikely to endure more. At the very least, after passing through the critical point, you'll be able to run on water for a few seconds."

"Really? On the surface?!" Ruslan exclaimed with joy.

"Of course... Here, the element of speed is very important as well as the impulsive force of the takeoff..."

At these words, for some reason I recalled water striders, how quickly and easily these insects slide on the water surface. I recalled zoology lessons and thought, "If a small weight and the film of water surface tension are taken into account, then, probably, this process is quite possible."

Our group became agitated. Listening to Sensei's words with a look of intense concentration, Ruslan was preparing to start towards the sea. The other guys were observing this process with interest. Zhenya and Stas started to give suggestions to Ruslan on how to make a good start. Andrey and Kostya expressed their desire to be the next participants of this experiment. Tatyana and I were already looking enviously at the 'lucky' Ruslan who would be the first in our group to soar in the air.

At this moment Kostya, with his usual enthusiasm, suggested to Sensei,

"Maybe, I should try it instead of Ruslan, for the purity of the experiment, so to speak. After all, I weigh two kilos less than him."

"Two kilos, two kilos," Ruslan mimicked him in jest. "The one who asked first will fly first! Wait your turn."

"What's the difference?" Kostya waved his hand. "Sensei, maybe we'll do it together at the same time? In case he cannot do it the right way?"

“We'll see who cannot do it the right way!” Ruslan protested. “Go away, man, you are only distracting me...”

Sensei just grinned at such boyish fervour and continued with his instructions,

“What are you worrying about, guys, you'll all have time to try if you wish. I repeat once again: the main thing is to get a good running start...”

“Will I feel anything... physically, while doing it?” Ruslan asked zealously, glancing askew at Kostya who was trying to fall in beside him.

“Of course. There will be certain sensations. At the moment of takeoff, for example, your pulse rate will change drastically. It will increase by about forty units. The coherence of wave processes in your brain will also change. At takeoff, your breathing will first stop completely, and then the very pattern of breathing will change. Anyway, don't worry about the range of sensations. Rest assured that a full gamut is already guaranteed for you. The main thing for you now is to get a good running start. Have you got it?”

Ruslan was standing completely tense, as they say, at combat readiness level one,

"I got it, I got it," he reported. “What do I do next? How do I take off from the ground?”

Sensei replied,

"Oh, don't worry about that, you'll take off for sure. The main thing is to pick up a good speed. Make sure there are no extraneous thoughts. The main thing is the goal. Your goal is to fly.”

"Got it, got it! So, the goal is set. I have no thoughts. What do I do next?”

"Next," uttered Sensei, "you pick up speed and... kick Volodya in the butt as hard as you can." With these words, he pointed at our spetsnaz man. The latter was appropriately bent over and peacefully washing dishes by the edge of the sea. Yes, Volodya was exactly in the ‘starting position’ for Ruslan's ‘initial push-off’. “And that's all! Subsequent levitation is definitely guaranteed for you.”

Silence fell. Surprised, people turned their gazes from our spetsnaz man

Volodya to Sensei, trying to understand what was happening. But this silent scene, frozen in time, didn't last long. The first one who grasped the whole essence of what Sensei had said was Nikolai Andreyevich. He burst out laughing so hard that he even started crying. The other guys got it a little later. But when even I finally 'saw the light', the whole sea coast was already shaking with our group's booming laughter and the 'kind concessions' Ruslan and Kostya were making to each other for the right of the first 'flight'. Even our guys on duty, turning towards the hysterical laughter of the group, hurried to join us with half-washed pans. Torn by curiosity, for another ten minutes they were trying to draw out of our group, who were dying with laughter, what had actually happened here.

Once the guys calmed down a little bit and most of them ran to swim, jokingly testing the 'new method of levitation' on each other, only then did Nikolai Andreyevich return to his interesting conversation with Igor Mikhailovich, which had been so rudely interrupted by Ruslan's stupid curiosity.

"I still cannot really understand, first of all, who could give this knowledge to the ancients, and secondly, how could such primitive tribes comprehend such a science with their primitive thinking?"

"The thing is that those tribes were far from primitive. Those were the survivors of the Atlantean civilisation. And their thinking wasn't primitive at all, as you think. It was absolutely the same as ours. After all, throughout this entire time, the human brain has not undergone any changes. Moreover, they used the capabilities of the brain much better and more effectively than we do."

"Are you saying that they were much more developed intellectually than we are?"

"Maybe this sounds paradoxical to you, but it's a fact. If we count in terms of percentage, we currently use about 10% of our capabilities, while they used more than 50%. Just do the math. It means that they were five times cleverer than we are, despite all the illusory 'high-tech' development of our time."

"But how is this possible?"

"The thing is that, by and large, we are just starting to master our capabilities. Whereas at the beginning of this civilisation, even though people had a high potential of their mental abilities, they, on the contrary, degraded, meaning, they went from their greater achievements to smaller ones. This is normal, because those scattered groups were the remnants of the previous highly developed civilisation. Subsequently, their descendants lost their former abilities and knowledge, so to say, regressed to the utmost, and then they started everything all over again.

The entire problem is that highly developed civilisations are very dependent on external factors." Sensei looked up at the sky. "Take the Sun, for instance. Modern scientists assume that its resources will be sufficient for a billion years. And then it may expand and get extinguished, as a result of which all living beings on the Earth will disappear. Well, first of all, these are only their assumptions and guesses, since scientists know very little about the Sun. And secondly, even now, at any moment, a solar mega flare directed at the Earth can occur. And if this happens, very little life will remain on the Earth within three days. Out of all humanity, at best, there will remain small isolated groups of people who will face an acute problem of survival. After all, in order to even eat plants, you first need to grow them, and for this you must at least find their seeds. But even if we don't consider a global disaster, just imagine what would happen to us if electricity, gas, oil, and so on, in simple terms, all the benefits of civilization, are taken away from us now. We would be practically maladjusted to survival. That's what happened back then as well..."

"Yeah, that's how 'hunters' and 'gatherers' appeared in history," the doctor smiled sadly, "with unexpected glimpses of astronomical and mathematical knowledge inherent in a higher civilisation."

"Absolutely right. In the beginning, there were tribes and communities. Then religion began to develop quite rapidly there. Power was usurped by some individuals who were interested in degradation of intellect in the masses. After all, stupid people are easier to control. That's how we, my dear Nikolai



Andreyevich, have come to what we have.”

"Hmmm," the psychotherapist drawled heavily and, having pondered a little, he added, "It's true, a human is, first and foremost, a consumer of various products of civilization and only a small link in their production chain. But if none of this existed, what would happen then? You wouldn't even be able to build a house. Because, in addition to theoretical knowledge, you also need a lot of inventions from civilization such as bricks, cement, nails, and so on. Otherwise...”

Nikolai Andreyevich shrugged his shoulders.

"Otherwise, you would have just a hut or a dugout," Sensei chuckled.

"Right, a cave at best," Nikolai Andreyevich seconded his humour. "For if we really look into this, what can a modern human do if left face-to-face with nature? Nothing sensible, really.”

“That's for sure... Some particularly lazy individuals have no idea even about elementary things, for example, how and what to grow,” Sensei remarked jokingly, “Their food ‘grows’ in shops, already in plastic packaging. What can we talk about in such a case?”

Hearing this, I began to ‘try on for size’ what was said onto my persona. I hastily tried to recall the experience of my family in the country, what my mother used to plant in the garden, and how she did that. And in general, what I knew and didn’t know how to do in this life. It turned out there were so many gaps in ‘elementary things’ that I was simply horrified. And I decided, by any means possible, to fill these gaps as much as I could. I planned to ask the elder generation about how they managed to survive during the war, when there were severe conditions, hunger, and devastation all around. And I also set a goal for myself to take part in the garden works to the best of my abilities and to really learn, as Sensei says, the ‘elementary things’. After all, it's one thing when you are forced to do something and quite another when you yourself are burning with a desire to learn.

Our ‘gurus’ again laughed at their own jokes, and then Sensei suggested,

“Okay, doctor, enough talking about sad things, let’s go swimming.” And,

glancing at the location of the sun in the sky, he added in a philosophical manner, “while we still have a chance.”

### 3

After they got their fill of swimming, Stas and Zhenya decided to make a voyage in an inflatable boat, to scuba dive and to fish if possible. Volodya and Victor eagerly joined them. Having prepared the inflatable boat and loaded it with fishing tackle, the quartet rowed along the coast in the direction of the fish factory. The rest received their fill of water activities, alternating long swims with short rest periods on hot sand. Sensei and Nikolai Andreyevich preferred sunbathing, after which they took long swims towards the sea, where our young group didn't dare swim.

The time of complete rest was passing unnoticed. After another swim, our guys stretched out blissfully on the beach. They started creating small sand hills, as a primitive entertainment. Then, by using more creative thought, they began making an unpretentious sand sculpture, using various body parts. Kostya, Ruslan and Slava, or rather their heads, arms and feet, became ‘victims’ of the grandiose design. In the process of ‘sculpting’, thanks to the creative appetite and wild fantasy being played out, an idea was born to decorate the ‘work of art’ with kitchen utensils (plates, spoons, and forks), elements of clothing, as well as nature's gifts such as reeds, seaweeds, seashells, and meagre local vegetation. In view of the exceptional position of the heads of the ‘posers’ during our creative activity, they constantly had to be given food and drink, their noses and cheeks needed scratching, and we had to drive away flies and other living creatures that, using this opportunity, tried to climb them like curious tourists climbing Mount Kilimanjaro. Finally, after painstaking labour accompanied by an endless stream of laughter, instead of the planned fairy-tale ‘three-headed dragon’ in its modern version, we got, as Andrey expressed it, a ‘mutant of an unknown breed’. When we were putting the final decorations on

our 'handsome fellow', one of its 'heads' (bearing the name of Ruslan) noticed Stas and Zhenya running along the seacoast in the distance.

"Oh! Where is the boat?" said the most 'sharp-sighted head of the dragon' in surprise. "What's wrong with them?"

The 'head' by the name of Slava, in its unsurpassed decoration in the form of a 'hat' with seaweeds hanging from it, turned lazily in that direction and added, chuckling,

"They must have forgotten something."

Finally, the third 'head', the wisest one (by the name of Kostya), which was located in the middle of the other two and was decorated according to its status with a super-turban made with Tatyana's own hands out of a roll of toilet paper, napkins, reeds, and various grassy vegetation, uttered sensibly,

"If they had forgotten something, they wouldn't be flying at such a speed."

Indeed, judging by the guys' haste, it couldn't be said that they were out for a leisurely jog. Moreover, the absence of Victor and Volodya, as well as of the equipment with which they had sailed away, clearly indicated that something had happened to them. We focused all our attention on the senior guys.

Whereas the guys, having reached the camp, began to regain their breath after the sprint, while looking at our embodied creative design with astonishment.

"What happened?" the 'wisest head' inquired, puzzled.

"Wow, that's cool!" Zhenya grinned, contemplating the grandiose sculpture.

"Where is Sensei?" Stas answered the question with a question.

"There he is." Andrey pointed to the sea where glimpses of two heads could be seen among the waves. "He swam out with Nikolai Andreyevich."

Stas and Zhenya turned their heads, peering into the distance. Without thinking twice, Zhenya put his fingers to his lips and started whistling loudly in the direction of the sea. The sound of the whistle was so piercing that Andrey even recoiled from him, laughing and rubbing his ears,

"Hey, you should have warned us! That was deafening."

"So, what happened?" Yura joined our inquiries.

"Was there an accident on your boat? Couldn't you handle the current?" the 'sharp-eyed head' said snidely.

"We hope there are no victims," the 'wise head' concluded his 'fellow's' thought.

"No, nothing happened," Stas answered all the questions at once, while Zhenya was rhythmically whistling. "The vessel is fine. Everyone's alive and healthy, and wishing the same to you..." Stas looked at the guys' heads sticking out of the sand with their limbs 'scattered'. "It's just that we've found a dolphin on the beach."

"A dolphin?!" Tatyana and I exclaimed almost in unison.

"Yes, a small one." The guy showed the size with his hands. "About a meter and a half."

A cry of excitement burst out of our group.

"Wow!"

In the meantime, Sensei and Nikolai Andreyevich who were swimming in the depths glanced back, and Zhenya signalled to them by waving his hands. The men started swimming back towards the shore.

"A living dolphin?" Andrey wondered.

Zhenya, having fulfilled his duty of a 'radio beacon', immediately joined the conversation.

"No... a dead one, with a hole in its side. A fresh wound. Blood is still oozing out of it."

"Ugh," said Ruslan with disgust.

"Yeah," Zhenya continued embellishing his story, "this is not a sight for the faint of heart."

"Who did that to him?" Slava uttered with pity in his voice.

"There are plenty of 'nature lovers' around," Zhenya replied sarcastically. "Everywhere you look, there are maniacs walking on the beach, looking for a victim..." and, looking at the immobile position of the guy buried in the sand, he added, "especially for a helpless one."

"Come on," Kostya grinned together with us. "I'm sure you can tell us horror stories! It is called 'take off your hat, and open your ears wide'."

Zhenya looked appraisingly at Kostya's head within the general composition of the sculpture, and a mischievous light flashed in his eyes.

"That's a good idea," the guy said, and like a true master of sand matters, he began to supplement our already comical 'mutant' with even funnier details.

When Sensei and Nikolai Andreyevich came out of the water, our group was already rolling with wild, unrestrained laughter, and not only the 'spectators' were laughing, but also the 'posers' for this sculpture themselves. By the way, the latter laughed the most, shaking like awakening volcanoes, as a result of which parts started falling off the 'masterpiece'. And taking into account Zhenya's comments on this, you can imagine in what kind of 'tearful and dying' condition Sensei and Nikolai Andreyevich found us when coming out of the water. Although they quickly joined our fun, making a couple of hilarious jokes about our collective creation. Furthermore, judging by Zhenya's additions to the sculpture, which he was boasting about, Nikolai Andreyevich jokingly gave him an unequivocal 'diagnosis', having described all its inherent symptoms.

When this incessant laughter ended and the sculpture 'victims', extracted from the sand, went swimming, Stas briefly told Sensei and Nikolai Andreyevich about their discovery. Our psychotherapist, who was standing next to Sensei, at first was listening to the guy with some tension, but then, having relaxed, he said,

"I thought that... You were whistling from the shore so loudly as if your entire crew had sunk."

"That's our Nightingale the Robber," Stas nodded towards Zhenya with a guilty smile.

"Yep," Andrey backed him up, listening to the conversation, "he was testing the limits of our ears."

Zhenya gave a self-satisfied smile and waved his hand towards Andrey.

"What an ignoramus you are! You have no clue about my whistling art."

Everyone laughed again, while Sensei just smiled and said,  
"Go ahead and show us your 'high road'."

Stas, Zhenya, Sensei, and Nikolai Andreyevich set off. Coming out of the sea at that moment, Ruslan asked Yura,

"Have you ever seen a dolphin?"

"No."

"Me neither. Let's go see?"

"Let's go."

They hurried to catch up with Sensei. The rest of our group rushed after them, tormented by intense curiosity too. Nikolai Andreyevich turned around and, seeing such a massive crusade, stopped.

"Hey guys, who will stay at the camp?"

"Whom should we protect it from?" Andrey answered for everyone.  
"There's not a single living soul around anyway..."

"Except for a lonely maniac," Zhenya added in a frightening 'offscreen' voice.

Everyone laughed, and Nikolai Andreyevich looked inquiringly at Sensei.

"It's okay," the latter replied to his silent question.

"What about the cars?"

"No problem, it's just metal. If anything happens, we can walk to the city."

"True enough," the doctor backed him up cheerfully, switching to Sensei's good mood. "Especially since walking is good for our health!"

After walking for about twenty minutes, we saw the inflatable boat pulled ashore. Next to it, Volodya and Victor were sitting near an animal's immobile body, wetting him with sea water. Apparently, their actions were out of pity, although it was obvious that this would not help him. The dolphin was lying on the sand with its head directed to the shore, the coastal sea waves hardly reaching the tail part of its body.

We approached and silently gathered around this unusual creature. The first thing that struck me was its slit-shaped dark brown eyes. They were frozen in an expression of silent, terrible pain and suffering, just like a human who had

experienced great sorrow. Its dark, almost black back, moistened with human hands, was glistening in the sun, giving an illusion of a body full of life. The white abdomen and beautiful black and white stripes on the sides stood out in contrast to the perfectly smooth skin.

Light sections were visible around a pretty face with a slightly protruding lower jaw. On the side of the body, just below the head, there was a puncture wound that was barely bleeding. The dolphin's 'everlasting' good-natured smile seemed so unreal against the background of this terrible death. Looking at this harmless, friendly creature, my heart sank with pity at my inability to help him in any way.

"Who did this to him?" Andrey asked sadly, looking at the dolphin.

"Apparently, fishermen hit him with a gaff," Sensei replied, examining the wound.

"My God, but why?!" Tatyana exclaimed with compassion.

"Sometimes dolphins steal catches from fishermen or damage their tackle. But a dolphin is just an animal. It goes where there is food. While people..." Sensei sighed heavily, and his gaze became somewhat severe, "kill them for that."

Sensei fell silent, while in me, a whole range of feelings stirred at that moment. A lump got stuck in my throat, and tears came to my eyes. What kind of a beast (this person cannot be called otherwise) dared to raise his hand at such a magnificent creature? After all, this is a dolphin, a rightful inhabitant of the Earth, an ocean dweller, and its home is much larger than ours. Instead of killing them, we humans need to learn from these benevolent creatures their amazing friendliness, their natural joy of life, and the harmony of coexistence. Even though they are wild animals, they never try to take more from nature than they need for their existence, and never try to conquer anyone or anything. They get along peacefully with a vast diversity of species dwelling in the World Ocean, and they don't just exist, but, given their life-loving attitude, they undoubtedly know how to rejoice at every moment of their life.

In my opinion, in pursuit of our 'civilised' progress which requires more

and more nature's sacrifices, we are losing our humanness and, in particular, our Spiritual essence. We exalt the Ego with endless insatiable needs and turn into ugly, soulless beasts that destroy not only the Earth, but all living beings on it, including our own kind. And we consider this to be normal?! But is this really what we were born for? Life is an instant. And in this instant, everybody wants to be happy. Everybody wants to, but cannot be. Why? Nature gives us its silent answers to these questions in harmony of its daily existence. But we do just the opposite: we kill instead of observing, we destroy instead of creating wisely. It's awful, indeed, to live with the beast's nature and to possess a mind in which the Ego prevails. Eternal suffering... While happiness is so close. One just needs to turn towards the Good and become a Human.

The guys stood silently over the dolphin's body. Even Stas, as reserved as he was, even he looked away, barely restraining his emotions,

"I wish I could get my hands on this 'fisherman', he would lose interest in taking anything heavy into his hands for a very long time..."

"...or taking bad ideas into his head," Victor added in the same tone.

"Hatred is a bad advisor," Sensei remarked thoughtfully.

"Who's talking about hatred?" Zhenya shrugged. "We would wallop him 'lovingly'. So that not only would he never lift a hand against a dolphin, he wouldn't approach water and would even forget his way to the washbowl."

"Come on, our 'tolerant' friend," Sensei said with a barely noticeable smile, and after a pause he added, "But seriously, of course, you are right to some extent, **if you are tolerant towards evil, you won't notice how you become indifferent to good. However, when punishing evil, you must be able to stop in time. That's the only way you can avoid the danger which is concealed inside you. The victorious one is not prideful, he doesn't force and doesn't exult. He wins a victory... first of all, over himself. So, when punishing evil, one should remember about good.**"

The guys heard Sensei out and again hung their heads over the dolphin's body.

"Let's bury him, shall we?" Zhenya suggested after a brief silence, obviously



trying to somehow rehabilitate himself before Sensei.

"That's right," Andrey backed him up. "I'll run and get a shovel..."

"Why do we need a shovel?" Zhenya objected. "There are many of us, we can dig a grave in the sand faster with our hands. It's easy!"

And as if in confirmation of his words, Zhenya made several sweeping movements in the sand with his hands, like a multi-bucket excavator, demonstrating how quickly it could be done. During Zhenya's 'sand work', Sensei, however, scooped up water and poured it on the dolphin. Then he began to gently stroke his head, while saying,

"Why do you want to bury him on land? He's a sailor. His native element is the sea..."

"Are we just going to throw him into the sea?!" Zhenya was surprised. "It's better to bury him in the sand, then at least fish won't eat him. Here he will rest in peace..." Squatting, Sensei looked at him and grinned, causing Zhenya, who sensed that he had again blurted out something wrong, to add in confusion, "our dear friend."

The last remark drew smiles from the guys, which they tried to hide since it was clearly an inappropriate time for that. Sensei didn't respond to Zhenya. He began to lift the dolphin's head, holding it with both of his hands.

"Come on, Nikolai Andreyevich, give me a hand..."

In addition to Nikolai Andreyevich, other guys, including Zhenya, immediately rushed to help as well. But it was quite enough to have Sensei, Nikolai Andreyevich and Volodya for transportation of the body. The 'funeral escort' moved into the sea. A part of our group remained on the shore, while the rest, including my persona, accompanied the 'escort'. As soon as the water began to reach our waists, and the dolphin's body was half-submerged, Sensei said to his assistants,

"I'll take it from here. He's lighter in the water."

When the men were passing the dolphin's body to Sensei, I noticed that Sensei didn't just grab it haphazardly. To my surprise, he put the palm of his left hand right on the wound, as if shielding it from curious eyes. While with

his right arm he embraced the back of the animal from above and, immersing the dolphin's body halfway into the water, walked into the depth. Meanwhile, we remained where we were.

Sensei was walking slowly and cautiously, as if it were not a dead dolphin in his arms, but a little child whom he was tenderly supporting and patiently teaching to swim. They were gradually moving away into the sea. Only when the water reached Sensei's chest, did he stop. I thought that now he would push the body out to the depth and it would sink. I felt extremely sorry for this dolphin. Despite the sad circumstances in which we were able to see this wonderful creation of nature and the short duration of our 'meeting', this dolphin still seemed to be so dear and near. An unusual feeling for this animal arose in me, which was difficult to accurately describe in words, as if his grief during his lifetime was my grief, and his pain was my pain. This incomprehensible sensation of some invisible unity began to fill me from within. I half-closed my eyes, afraid to see the moment of his immersion in the water, and I thought it's better to save in my memory the picture of his 'voyage' with Sensei. However, after my eyes were closed for a while, I suddenly heard Tatyana's surprised voice,

"Is he alive?!"

I opened my eyes and, to my amazement, saw my friends curiously observing Sensei and the dolphin that was still in his arms. The water, where the dolphin's tail was, swayed wavelike. At first I thought that I was imagining it. But after a few seconds, the swaying repeated again, even much stronger. It was impossible to confuse this with anything else. The guys noticed the same thing. We exclaimed happily,

"Look, look, he's alive!"

Our shouts drew the attention of the guys who stayed on the shore, and they tried to approach us, while we wanted to get closer to Sensei. However, Nikolai Andreyevich stopped us all.

"Keep quiet, don't make noise. Stand still. You will scare him..."

Our group stood still, admiringly observing what was happening. At first,

the dolphin's movements were weak as if he was slowly recovering from deep slumber. But a little later, they became bolder and more intensive. It was also amazing that this wild wounded dolphin, which had obviously experienced an incredible pain from a human who had nearly killed him, didn't even try to escape Sensei's arms, although the latter was only keeping him afloat. On the contrary, judging by his animated movements, the dolphin appeared to be getting filled with life energy. It seemed that, somehow understanding this, he was in no hurry to slip out of the caring, kind hands.

A short while after, the dolphin threw his flat tail similar in shape to a whale's tail, only in miniature, out of the water, splashed it on the water comically, and dove. Having come up to the surface not far from Sensei, he positioned himself sideways to him, and for some time balanced himself on the surface, while 'observing' the one who had recently been holding him in his hands. Sensei also stood still, looking at the dolphin. After a while, apparently when this silent 'dialogue' was over, the dolphin turned around and started swimming slowly towards the high sea. Contrary to our expectations, he didn't dive anymore, but tried to hold himself on the surface. For a little while Sensei watched him leave, then took a dip, smoothed his hair, and started back to the shore.

Once all of us crowded on the shore, Victor remarked,

"He's swimming a little weakly. As far as I know, dolphins are high-speed creatures."

Zhenya responded to that in his favourite country dialect,

"I'd like to see how you would swim if you'd been hit with a gaff like that... It's good that he can move as well as he does."

"Yes, he is still weak," Sensei said thoughtfully, watching the dark silhouette with the crescent-shaped fin, slowly receding into the sea, disappearing and reappearing amid the waves.

"That's what I'm saying, will he survive?" Zhenya said businesslike.

"Keep your fingers crossed," Stas replied.

Zhenya immediately followed his advice. He crossed his fingers, then took

off his baseball cap and knocked on his head. Stas noticed his movements and grinned,

"You need to knock on wood. On wood!"

"Well, wood is wood," Zhenya said in a tone meant to convey that those were just trifles of life.

We smiled, while Stas waved his hand towards him, turned to us, and said, "Help us carry our things back. All interest in fishing is gone."

We didn't need to be asked twice. All together, we went to grab the fishing rods and backpacks, unloading the boat. Then guys launched the boat itself into shallow water and dragged it with a rope along the shore like barge haulers do.

While we were getting ready, a strong wind started. Walking away, we again glanced at the sea, looking out for our dolphin. However, he was no longer seen anywhere amid the rising waves. Through the noise of the wind, a sad cry of a seagull circling over the water reached our ears... Well, unfortunately, everything in this life has its beginning and its end.

We hung our heads. Apparently, no one wanted to believe that our revived dolphin had drowned, even though common sense implied the opposite. For some time we walked silently, constantly looking back with hope at the spot where we had last seen the dolphin. But every time, with sadness, we lowered our eyes to the sand under our feet.

"Oh, for goodness sake," Zhenya was the first to break this sorrowful total silence. "Dolphins don't drown anyway. They are fish!"

"They do drown," Sensei answered in a steady and calm voice without even a hint of slightest emotions. "There are cases when they drown within a minute, especially when excited or frightened. But if they drown, it happens quickly... And, as a matter of fact, dolphins are not fish at all, but warm-blooded mammals, just like humans. They have a developed brain. By the way, the cerebral cortex of a dolphin is bigger than the human cortex."

"Hence, there are more convex folds in it, unlike some homo sapiens," Nikolai Andreyevich added jokingly, looking at Zhenya.

Sensei smiled and continued,

“And just like humans, dolphins react to various situations, including stressful ones. They experience fear, too.”

"I still don't understand, how can they drown?" Zhenya shrugged, either really not understanding or just pretending.

"It's simple," Sensei replied. "They just choke like a human being. If a dolphin is in a state of stress, then it's enough for water to get through the blowhole into its lungs... and that's it.”

"Through the blowhole?" Ruslan asked to repeat. "Is it something like a human nostril?"

“Yep, only located at the very top of the head. It is directly connected with lungs.”

“That's great! It sneezes, and the entire sea all around is in...” Ruslan didn't finish, letting the listlessly smiling audience complete his ‘brilliant thought’ on their own.

“I wonder, how does it cough in the water?” Andrey inquired.

“It doesn't. Dolphins never cough.”

"How lucky they are... these warm-blooded mammals," Victor, who had been coughing since morning, said enviously. "They probably never catch colds."

"Why am I not a dolphin?" Zhenya uttered dreamily.

"You're mistaken," Sensei replied to Victor. "They get sick just like we do. We even have identical microorganisms that cause respiratory diseases. Only, in contrast to us, dolphins don't handle a cold very well. In their case, it often turns into pneumonia which almost always ends with the death of the animal.”

Zhenya put on a look of surprise,

“Really? Then it’s good that I’m not a dolphin.”

"But if they choke on water, how do they live there?" Kostya wondered.

“They die only when they are seriously stressed, when they panic, basically, same as humans. Apart from that, they live quite well. They have such a system of muscle and air valves which works perfectly in the most difficult external

conditions.”

"Indeed," Nikolai Andreyevich sighed. "As they say, everyone's equal in fear." And after a pause, he asked Sensei, "Wait a minute, does this mean that for dolphins, the psychological factor is important during apnoea, just as it is for a human?"

"Absolutely right."

"Apnoea?" Ruslan was surprised. "What is that?"

Zhenya grinned, "Come on, man! Apnoea is a pause in breathing. Even I know that!"

Ruslan glanced at the scuba equipment lying in the boat and uttered with a crooked smile, "You should know."

"That's okay," Stas encouraged him. "When you dive as long as we have, you'll know too."

"Right, with your head into the sand," Zhenya added with a grin and looked at Stas.

They laughed together, probably recalling some funny incident from their past. Offended, Ruslan said,

"Am I an ostrich to you, or what?"

"Well, if you aren't, you will be," Zhenya said good-naturedly, exchanging glances with Stas again.

Everyone felt an obvious trick in his words and insisted he tell us what was behind those grins. The guys told a story of their first unsuccessful experiments when they had been learning to dive. In general, nothing special, but in Zhenya's interpretation it surely looked very comical. At the end, Stas uttered,

"It would be cool if a person could stay underwater for a long time without any additional means, without scuba gear."

"That's quite doable," Sensei remarked in passing. "A human brain is programmed to do a lot. One just needs to know how to use these capabilities... After all, what is human breathing? It's an alternation of inhalation and exhalation of air. This process takes place by means of contraction of the diaphragm and the rib muscles, which results in a thorax

volume change. Gas exchanges are carried out at the level of pulmonary alveoli, enriching the blood. Blood transports oxygen to cells, extracting carbon dioxide. And what regulates this breathing rhythm? The respiratory centre, which is located in the medulla oblongata. That's where there is the golden key to 'shifting gears'."

"You mean, programs?" Kostya said.

"Exactly."

Zhenya grinned smugly, "Yeah, and the key, like in that fairy tale, lies there peacefully, and no one knows where it lies. While the one who does know isn't saying anything, for he cannot reach that keyhole himself."

"You're mistaken," Sensei smiled. "Whoever wants to, will always find it... and will reach the keyhole. There are plenty of breath-holding practices. You just need to seek and not be lazy, and not tell tales that they don't exist just because you are unaware of them. For example, in yoga, there is a practice for training control over breathing. It is called Pranayama. Although in the original version it was given precisely as a tool for awakening of one of the oldest human reflexes — the 'immersion reflex', not so much into the water as into the depths of one's own consciousness, where a person gradually approached the source of the soul. However, nowadays this practice has been somewhat modified by people and inflated into a whole teaching where yogis mostly spend their time and energy on learning to control their breath and to accelerate certain processes in the body, for example, to heal wounds or to slow down, for instance, the overall metabolism or cardiac contractions... This is certainly good as well, at least in this way people learn to control their thoughts. It's just that the whole was too fragmented into tiny pieces, and the simple was made too complicated. That's why a contemporary human, when performing this practice and contemplating a tiny piece, thinks this is exactly that very whole..." And Sensei said, addressing Zhenya directly again, "So, if you just want to learn how to hold your breath, you can use this practice as well. There are many choices. The technique of breath-holding in an altered state of consciousness has been known to people since olden times. This practice can

be found everywhere: in tropical Africa, in North America, in Lapland, on the island of Bali. I'm not even talking about those techniques which are passed down from generation to generation by people who have long lived on gifts of the sea, for example, those very pearl hunters.”

Zhenya pondered for a while and then began to reason aloud.

"Yet, how long can a person stay underwater without air? Two minutes at most, and only if he's a professional diver. I mean, without scuba gear," the guy specified.

"He's right," Nikolai Andreyevich agreed. "After that, anoxia or, simply put, oxygen deprivation begins, which leads to irreversible processes in the brain matter. A person loses consciousness..."

"...and that's all, alles kaputt," Zhenya finished, backing up his 'companion'.

However, Sensei objected, "In a special state of consciousness, even an untrained person is able to stay underwater much longer than any professional diver."

"Oh, come on, Sensei, don't tell us stories," the guy didn't believe it.

"Want to bet on it?" Sensei proposed immediately with a mysterious smile.

"With you, Sensei? No way," Zhenya promptly waved the proposal away to the collective laughter of the guys. "Do I look suicidal? I know that I won't be able to stay underwater as long as you can."

"No, I'm not talking about myself," Sensei reassured him. "Just choose anyone from this gang."

"My choice, you say?" Zhenya grinned mischievously and began to 'drill' us with his eyes.

At that very moment, as bad luck would have it, the handle of the plastic bag which I was carrying accidentally broke off.

"Ouch," my persona uttered with confusion and hastily started picking up fishing sinkers and other items from the sand.

Andrey and Volodya who were walking beside me started helping me. While Zhenya, having turned his attention to the 'object' of his safe bet, declared self-satisfied, "Here, let's take her, for example."



"Alright, let it be her," Sensei agreed. "Do you mind?" he asked me.

Naively thinking that it would be just another funny joke, I decided to play along with Sensei and declared in the same self-assured manner as Zhenya,

"Of course, I don't mind. Sure thing! In fact, I'm a hereditary diver in the seventh generation. And do you know how Siberians dive? Oh my! They can dive in the Altai Mountains and come to the surface already in the Kara Sea!

"Do they come to the surface or float on the surface, drowned?" Zhenya clarified with a snide smile.

"It depends on one's luck," I answered.

Our dialogue made all the guys laugh.

"Alrighty," Zhenya rubbed his hands in anticipation of a victory. "What's the bet then?"

"Whatever you want!" Sensei answered merrily.

"Then... let's see," the guy was at a loss.

"Camp duty," Stas gave him a hint since their turn was approaching.

"That's right, exactly," Zhenya took up the idea. "Camp duty. That's all the broom-sweeping, dish-scraping, fire-making on the shore, I mean 'a hearth' (that's what we called a bonfire). And all the other small and boring elements of camping routine."

"Agreed," Sensei said. "As soon as we arrive at the camp, we'll start the competition."

They shook hands on it, and Volodya agreed to referee the bet. We continued on our way, while Zhenya, inspired by his obvious advantage, began to 'psychologically brainwash' his opponent, preparing me for cleaning, and drawing a detailed picture of what I would have to do.

"Maybe, I should also clean the dust off the reeds?" I suggested with laughter, keeping up the fun.

"No, no, don't trouble yourself!" self-satisfied Zhenya began to play nice. "We are gentlemen, after all. Let's not go beyond the camp chaos." And then he added, "Although, if the madam should have such a desire, she can not only remove dust from the reeds, but can wipe off that little puddle too."

Zhenya nodded at the sea, and everyone burst out laughing again. And so we continued to our tents, exchanging ‘mutual compliments and concessions’ while the other guys laughed uproariously.

## 4

From afar, we could already see that our camp looked somehow unusual, as if it were covered with a white moving coating. Of course, we did try to keep it clean, but not to such a state of whiteness... Having come closer, we saw a flock of seagulls feasting. Our unexpected appearance scared the thieves and caused panic and confusion in their ranks. Breaking away from their lavish banquet, the seagulls soared up as if on command, and, as they say, hightailed it home, leaving behind piles of leftovers. Our group was dumbfounded by such unheard-of audacity.

You should have seen that scene. Torn plastic bags with cereals and pasta were scattered all around, and what's more, it was all thoroughly mixed with the sand. A kind of sand-cereal-macaroni foundation mixed with bird droppings. Small hills of spilled flour, salt, and sugar towered like little white dunes. And this entire morning disaster was supplemented by lacy napkins which the wind was whirling all around the entire shore, as if playing. And, taking into account our previous bet, for example, my persona became totally speechless and completely discouraged.

After a minute of deathly silence, during which some of us with astonishment, some with horror were observing this lovely scene titled ‘suburban landfill’, Zhenya scratched his head and said to Andrey with a triumphant grin, “Well, well, well. Is that what you call ‘not a single living soul?’!”

Andrey hastened to counter, “Yep, except for your lonely maniac!”

"The fact that he wasn't alone is unequivocal," Victor remarked jokingly, examining the multiple remnants of the devastation. "And, judging from the

imprints, this ‘instigator’ was, most likely, a representative of the local fauna, which had four paws and maybe even a tail. Obviously, he was the first to visit our food tent.”

"That's right," Zhenya stood up for the unknown beast. "He overate there, became bored, and so he invited everyone he could to a party.”

"Nice party," Stas snorted. "Who will be cleaning all this up after them?"

"Guess on the first try," Zhenya suggested to him with a grin and looked at me with satisfaction.

Then, as if it suddenly came to his mind, he began to look actively for our improvised broom made of branches bound together. The broom turned out to be ‘half-trampled’ into the sand. Picking it up, Zhenya shook it off, pretended to blow the last specks of dust off it, and generously handed the broom to me.

“Take it, Cinderella! No rest on the beach for you today. A bet is a bet.”

I took the broom, realising that things would have to be put in order anyway, one way or another. I began to mentally plan where to start the big cleanup of the territory. Meanwhile, Sensei took the broom from my hands and turned to Zhenya,

"But she hasn't lost the bet yet."

"But she’s unlikely to win it either," the guy uttered, smiling, with a self-confident expression on his face.

"Here’s what I propose," Sensei said. "Since that is the case, let's make the task more difficult..."

"No way! A bet is a bet, as agreed," Zhenya began to protest, thinking that Sensei would now propose something extraordinary for his persona.

“But it's in your favour!”

Zhenya calmed down, looking at Sensei with suspicion and trying to figure out where the trick was. Meanwhile, Sensei went on,

"Take a partner for yourself. Your total time underwater will be summed up. I mean, how long both of you will stay underwater, one after another, against her one dive.”

Not finding anything onerous for himself in this, Zhenya immediately agreed, fearing that Sensei would change his mind,

“Alright, agreed!”, and he added fawningly, "I always knew that you, Sensei, are the fairest of all the fairest. For who knows," he nodded at me with a sly smile, “Maybe, she has grown gills instead of lungs on our way to the camp.”

Everyone laughed, and so did I, just for show. However, a rapid wave of doubt began to rise in me about this being just a joke. If they were not joking, that meant a total disaster was impending for my persona. I didn't even really know how to dive, not to mention holding my breath for a long time, let alone to endure longer than the two well-trained guys! “I've really gotten myself into a mess,” my persona thought in horror.

“Well,” Zhenya rubbed his hands in anticipation of victory, having chosen Stas as a partner just as I expected, "let's not waste time. Let's go to the sea!"

He made an inviting gesture for our entire group, calling them to be witnesses. All of us eagerly agreed to our comedian's proposal and followed him, leaving our belongings behind. Lighting a cigarette, Sensei stayed behind together with Nikolai Andreyevich. Tatyana and I also tarried a little bit, collecting the abandoned things into one pile out of habit. Meanwhile, Nikolai Andreyevich said in a low voice, addressing Sensei,

“Zhenya is so sly. As soon as the condition of the deal became favourable, he immediately changed his attitude towards the situation. Although that's what many people do. A typical example of manifestation of egocentrism.

"What can you do?" Sensei shrugged his shoulders, responding just as quietly. "Man seeks a better fate like fish seeks deeper water," and he added with a smile, "How can he deprive his beloved self of his share?"

“Yes, this egocentrism has developed in people to the point of automatism. How can we talk about love for one's neighbour if they don't even want to understand each other?”

"That's the saddest thing."

Meanwhile, Tatyana and I had finished our work. I hesitantly approached Sensei, hoping to settle the bet before implementation of its terms.

“Well, I...”

Sensei didn't let me finish the phrase and express the doubts sweeping over me. He said kindly,

"Go get ready and get used to the water."

His soft, confident tone calmed me a bit. Still hoping that this was actually a joke, I headed to the sea along with Tatyana. A 'support team' represented by Kostya, Andrey and Slava was already waiting there. It should be noted that our large group split itself into two parties: those who were jokingly 'rooting' for Stas and Zhenya, and those who jokingly 'sympathised' with my position.

Unlike the senior guys, who like torpedoes rushed noisily into the water, immediately diving into the depths in order to quickly cool their bodies heated by the sun, Tatyana and I were trying, as always, to get used to the water gradually. However, the guys, so to speak, the 'sympathizers', decided to speed up this process and began to splash us from all sides, as if actively helping us get used to the water. As they were intentionally attacking us from shallow water, Tatyana and I had to flee to the depths, naturally with a subsequent submergence.

After watching Zhenya and Stas practice their breathing before diving, Kostya, having put the 'crown of the winner' made of woven seaweeds onto his head, began to play the role of my mentor in 'the matters of diving in shallow water'. This whole process was accompanied by hilarious jokes of the guys. However, despite Kostya's philosophical instructions, I was obviously unable to hold my breath for long. Kostya even tried to hold me underwater by my shoulders, mumbling his 'instructions' from above the surface. But all these actions of his scared me even more, because as a result, my self-preservation instinct prevailed anyway. I managed to 'scramble out' to the surface with surprising agility, sometimes even drowning my 'mentor' in panic. After several such completely involuntary dives, even more 'innovative proposals' to improve the diving method poured forth from Kostya, for example, to make my body heavier in the water by hanging on it a 'necklace of bricks' or 'shackles made of concrete', and so on.

"After all, what is your task?" Kostya reasoned jokingly, shaking the water out of his ear and adjusting the dangling weed that had fallen off after Kostya's latest dip in the water by his 'indiligent student'. "To dive. Right?! Right. But no one said anything about coming back to the surface."

We laughed again.

"You are too kind!" Tatyana said in a funny tone.

So, unlike the senior guys who, wasting no time, were practicing in earnest, all we had was clowning around. Therefore I, as they say 'just in case', mentally reconciled myself with my upcoming role of Cinderella 'for a day'.

At last, Sensei and Nikolai Andreyevich approached. I thought that, watching our attempts, Sensei would turn the bet into another big joke, and on that happy note the whole thing would be over. But when he approached and declared in all seriousness, "Shall we begin?", my heart, as they say, immediately sank in fear. Afraid to show my fear to my friends, with a smile on my face, I started telling Sensei with lips trembling either from fear or from cold water,

"Sensei, I won't make it... I'll just go start cleaning now."

To which Sensei calmly replied, "You shouldn't give up. Chase your fears away. Remove all doubts. Have faith, for it is said, 'In faith, you shall find'."

I was still looking at him in confusion with a silent question, "But how will I make it?"

And then Sensei, looking into my eyes, replied,

"Just relax. Don't think about your breath. Your task is to achieve a deep state of meditation with a minimum of thoughts. Focus on counting from one to ten. After all, you can endure it for ten seconds, can't you?"

"Well, if it's for ten seconds, I can easily endure it," I replied with pride for such a small 'achievement' of mine.

"Then why do you worry? Count to ten and come up. Only don't count fast, like 1, 2, 3... but slowly, with pauses, the way you count three-digit numbers, for example, 501, 502, 503, and so on. Understood?"

"Yes."

These words not only calmed me down, but I even became curious. After

all, I had never done meditation underwater before. And, strangely enough, my curiosity grew into firm confidence that everything would be fine. This feeling was arising from some inner faith, from absolute trust in Sensei. Not even trust, but rather unrevealed knowledge of my soul about his Essence, which manifested itself only intuitively, at the level of feelings.

"So be it, if I have to dive, I'll dive," thought my persona after several preparatory sharp breaths in and out. My first 'opponent' Zhenya did the same. Once I was ready to start, on the count of 'three' I inhaled as much air as possible into my chest and, simultaneously with Zhenya, submerged under water. Sensei put his hand on my head in the area of the thousand-petalled lotus chakran and pushed on it slightly; as I thought, so that I wouldn't emerge before time. Instead of expected panic, on the contrary, I relaxed and started slowly counting to ten as Sensei had advised. Having easily coped with this task, I decided to stay under the water for a couple of extra seconds in order to add more time to my 'score'. But as soon as I began to count again, I felt strong hands, obviously Sensei's, pulling me out of the water. Frankly speaking, I was even a little upset, because I could have stayed longer. Ten seconds was nothing! Having come up to the surface, I immediately began to complain, even before I had time to open my eyes,

"Why?! I'm ready, come on... I can stay longer..."

But when I looked at the others, I couldn't comprehend anything. Everyone was standing around in some kind of dumb astonishment, looking at me as if I were an alien from another Universe. Zhenya and Stas, who were standing among the guys, also looked suspicious and amazed and didn't take their eyes off my indignant persona. I even had a thought that maybe they hadn't dived at all, maybe something had happened? Only Sensei was keeping an Olympian calm.

"That's enough for you," he said with a good-natured smile. "You've been underwater for ten minutes already."

"Who?! Me???" my persona chuckled, thinking that it was a joke.

"Yeah, well, anything can happen in life," said Stas, scratching his head.

"But it's a pity that this 'anything' doesn't happen to everyone."

"See how worried everyone is, especially some little braggarts," Sensei nodded at Zhenya who opened his mouth in surprise and was staring wide-eyed, either for fun, or because he was indeed struck by something. "Because now someone will have to clean, to turn into Cinderella."

Apparently, as a result of these words, Zhenya 'came to his senses' and, comically chattering his teeth, placed his jaw back in its normal position with the help of his hand. After that, he said in his invariable comic tone, "Cleaning is no problem! But as for changing my sexual orientation, there was no such agreement."

Stas began to 'appease' him, causing a whole wave of laughter.

"'Cinderella' is a type of individual labour activity, my dear, when you have to do the maximum amount of work in the minimum amount of time, and for free at that..."

"For free, for free," Zhenya mimicked him. "Why are you so happy? We dove together, so we'll clean together as well, Cinderella number two."

"Oh no, according to the staff list, we have only one Cinderella," Stas objected with laughter.

"Ah, so you've decided to become a Fairy godmother, a tax inspector of cleaning, so to say. You're a monster!"

The guys began to joke and at the same time, apparently, to recover from their stupor.

"Sensei, what have you done to her?" Volodya was the first to ask in earnest.

"Nothing special, I've changed her perception of time, her ezoosmos."

"Ezoosmos? What is that?" Victor wondered.

"I'll tell you some other time," Sensei waved his hand. "Well, the bet is over, let's go put our camp in order..."

"...To separate the wheat from the chaff, and cutlets from flies," Stas supplemented Sensei's answer.

"It's impossible that she could have stayed underwater for ten minutes!" Zhenya clamoured ironically, having glanced at the shore and, evidently,



horrified at the work to be done. "One cannot live that long without air!"

Sensei uttered in annoyance, "You, people, I'm so fed up with your lack of faith! You've seen it yourself, with your own eyes."

"Sure, but maybe she had some kind of a breathing tube underwater. That's cheating, a sheer setup!"

Sensei cocked his head to the side wearily and grinned,

"Of course, it's cheating! You were cheated the very day you were born."

Everyone laughed. While Sensei turned around and started getting out of the water along with Nikolai Andreyevich.

"Come on, let's go," Stas hurried Zhenya, laughing.

"Yes, Ober-Shturban-Fuhrer-Frau Fairy," Zhenya reported dully and, sighing with feigned sadness, added, "What a dog's life we, Cinderellas, have! Not a day passes without penalty works."

All the others moved towards the shore as well. And then, a whole torrent of 'verbiage' started. I was trying to find out from my friends whether I had really sat underwater for ten minutes. Whereas they, in their turn, ignoring my questions, were asking if it was really true that I hadn't had any additional breathing tubes. Generally speaking, the hubbub was worse than among seagulls when their roost was disturbed by an uninvited guest. In the end, no one really understood anything anyway.

The total cleanup of our camp began. Although Zhenya comically portrayed himself as the main character in this 'individual labour activity', he cunningly evaded work, creating just an appearance of active labour. But on the other hand, he was amusing the group with his antics and jokes to such an extent that we ourselves didn't even notice how quickly and amicably we had cleaned the entire camp territory. When the guys began to tease Zhenya that he actually hadn't been doing any work, he said with an important air that any fool could work, the main thing, in his opinion, was to control the process professionally. Everyone expressed their 'many thanks' to him for that and all together threw him into the water.

After such a 'ceremonial' completion of our 'labour feats', we began to sum

up our losses. Our food reserves left much to be desired, so a decision was made to visit the market. Because, even though our little ‘flying raiders’ had evidently eaten just a bit themselves, in their joy of having a ‘big party on the islet of civilisation’, they had mixed a lot of food, including cereals, with sand, and had done it so thoroughly as if they had a grand disco party and danced till they dropped.

When we composed a list of food, the senior guys decided to drive to the nearest market to get them. However, Sensei suggested leaving the cars and warming up our little selves by organizing a ‘little jog’ along the beach instead. No one objected, of course. Those who were really hungry fortified themselves with crackers. The rest decided to wait for the arrival of provisions, especially since Sensei said it's good to fast from time to time.

At first Volodya, Stas, and Zhenya were planning to go get food. But when Sensei joined them, having suggested the idea of exercise, Nikolai Andreyevich, Ruslan, Andrey, and I also expressed a desire to go for a run with them. Although the race was not going to be easy in terms of physical exertion, I still couldn't miss such an adventure with Sensei. For me it was not just a hike, but thanks to Sensei's interesting observations, it was a whole journey into the human world, and into my own world as well.

As Sensei had promised, he gave us a good physical workout along the way. First, we jogged along the shore at an easy pace and stopped only after half an hour. Then, headed by Sensei, we did a warm-up. Then we ran again, but this time with acceleration. Then there were push-ups, sit-ups, jogging in the water, and an obstacle course. All in all, Sensei didn't skimp on ideas, thanks to which this physical training turned for us into some kind of an unusual adventure of ‘marine paratroopers’. And despite the fact that strained muscles made themselves felt, when we reached the boundaries of ‘civilisation’, the inner pleasure was still much greater because we had been able to overcome it all.

It was decided to cut across boarding guest houses to take a shortcut to the market, so to speak. Having swum over the water barrier net which separated the first boarding house from ‘wild nature’, we went ashore like regular

vacationers, and slowly walked along the coast. People were habitually spending their vacation, idly lying on the beach, having replaced the home picture of TV contemplation from a sofa with contemplation from the sand of a motley crowd against the background of the monotonous expanse of the sea. Even if some conversations were heard, they were mostly about everyday matters. Someone was complaining to someone about something, someone was discussing someone else, someone was making fun of someone. In short, life went on in its usual human way, no more and no less. At first, this striking difference between the spiritual which Sensei recounted and the earthly material stuff being discussed by people was felt very clearly. Later on however, as we were getting immersed in the atmosphere of motley masses, we involuntarily began to get infected with its not quite pure air.

It's hard to say when provocative thoughts appeared in my head. Apparently, they started capturing my attention on trifles. Somewhere I got a glimpse of a beautiful swimsuit, and I thought about how it would look on me. Someone had beautiful jewelry that I also wanted to get for myself. My imagination immediately began to draw a picture of how I would look in that swimsuit with that jewelry on. As soon as I gave freedom to these thoughts, the image of Mrs. Envy immediately began to manifest itself. And most importantly, I only noticed it when she was already taking precedence in my consciousness in full force, eclipsing all of the brightest feelings with her insatiability and dissatisfaction. "What am I doing?!" I said to myself indignantly. "I'm trying on other people's images. But this is not me! As they say, I have rolled down the mountain on a sled, only it has become too heavy to lift. How should I get it up the mountain now?"

My sad reflections were interrupted by Andrey who also seemed to have got easily caught on the Animal nature's hook.

"Wow, look at the bodies of those fellows!" he said to our guys with admiration, pointing at the tanned guys playing volleyball. Apparently, it was a group of bodybuilders. "Look at their muscles..."

Judging by the way those guys were moving, it seemed that they weren't so

much playing volleyball as showing off for the crowd, demonstrating their muscles from the most advantageous positions. Naturally, they attracted the attention of by-passers who, in turn, were looking at their bodies with unconcealed envy.

“Sensei, is it possible to bulk up quickly and to grow such muscles as well?”

“It is possible,” Sensei said simply. “But what's the point? You will gain one thing, but lose another. Having pumped up such a mass of muscles, you will lose in terms of endurance and speed. How will that help you? Just to show off in front of girls, maybe.” Andrey was somewhat taken aback as if Sensei had guessed his most secret thoughts. “Do you know what the reason for your desire is? It's just ordinary human envy...”

These words even made me shudder as I had just thought about the same.

“...But it's not just your trouble, it's the trouble of many people. If you only knew what people really think about! Sheer greed, envy, and a desire to outdo each other, even in trifles. There's nothing in their heads but a desire to look better in front of others than they really are. Do you understand what the trouble is?! **People want to look worthy not before God, not before their Conscience, but before other people.** And the entire reason for this evil lies in human desire. After all, **a person values only that which he wants to see as valuable for himself. What he doesn't want to see as valuable for himself has no meaning for him. Envy, hatred, and spite grow not from an external stimulus, but from the inner root of self-love.**

Take these guys, for instance, who have spent a lot of time in order to pump up their bodies. After all, by and large, they have no need for this at all. But they have chosen the role of a bodybuilder and are playing it. What for? In order to achieve some spiritual heights? No. Just to stand out in the crowd. Some bulk up their bodies, others get tattoos, still others colour their hair in various shades. And they do this just to attract the attention of their fellow human beings, to satisfy their megalomania. It's an ordinary Animal desire.

People act in the same way as, for example, Japanese monkeys. Some monkeys from their herd collect nuts all day long just to scatter them in five

minutes in front of the whole herd in order to attract the attention of their relatives. Other monkeys pick fleas off a deer and put them on themselves just so that their relatives would then pick the fleas off them. Again, all this is done only for the sake of drawing the attention of the herd to themselves... So, these muscles, trinkets, fashion and everything else — all of this is done in order to attract attention. It's those very fleas on a monkey.

After all, a human is in no way different from that monkey, so to speak, by the nature of his Animal. Only it is intensified in him even more by his own megalomania. Because every person, if he is spiritually vile and odious, begins to exalt himself in his thoughts and desires, and he begins to put himself above everyone else. However, it is said, “So the last shall be first and the first shall be last; for many are called, but few are chosen.” Many cover up their secret thoughts of the Animal by external grandstanding, by a supposed aspiration for the spiritual. But in actual fact, this is just a plausible excuse for implementation of their Animal desires, for satisfaction of their megalomania, for self-exaltation and, again, ordinary, vain posing in front of other people. However, it's hard to find sincere, true love for God in their secret thoughts.

Christians would call such human desires the tricks of satan, which are designed to distract a person from the main thing — from the soul, from the Eternal. Just take a look at the model of modern civilisation. The whole world is working on evoking in a person as many desires as possible to acquire something that he supposedly lacks for complete happiness. **The whole world sells illusions. It is woven of lies, and its threads are held together by envy.** People themselves beget the illusion, feed it with the impurity of their thoughts, and live in this illusion themselves, taking it for true reality. Unfortunately, the fact of the global lie of the Animal is revealed only in the face of Death. But then it's already too late to change anything.

Because youth passes as if in one day, like a high-spirited horse that has broken free. You've hardly had time to pull the reins, and you are already an adult. In adulthood, you stop and look back. Reassessment of values begins. Your achievements no longer seem so significant, they are no longer worth the

time and energy they have been given. New desires and illusions appear in the form of self-assertion in the world of respectable people. A person begins to invent new ways to stand out in the crowd. You've hardly had time to blink an eye, and here comes old age, at which point much of the life lived seems already to be absolutely absurd and loses its meaning altogether. Along with old age, thoughts of death begin to come more and more often, which make a person think about the main thing — about his soul. For he is coming closer and closer to that boundary from which he came into this world in order to find his true nature and save his soul. But instead of achieving this goal, he has squandered time and energy on empty illusions. That's when a person begins to rush about, to invent new illusions for himself, to comfort himself that if he prays before he dies, then everything will be forgiven there. Whereas in fact, the whole life of a human is judged.

Human stupidity has no boundaries. People's megalomania pushes them to do bad things.” Sensei looked around and, spreading his arms, said with sadness in his voice, “If only you could hear what people are thinking about, guys, you’d be horrified! Although, actually, you don’t need to hear, just observe yourselves and what you secretly dream about.

Just recently, before Perestroika, people thought that they would save the world and build communism, I mean our idea-driven people. Now, after Perestroika, what do young people think about? About money, about capitalism. Everyone imagines himself to be a millionaire, Rockefeller or others like him. Everyone throws money around in their thoughts and dreams of wealth. Both those who make good money and those who are unable to earn enough, everyone tells stories of how cool they are, showing off their megalomania. Why? Because egoism flourishes in their heads. Mikhail Evgrafovich Saltykov-Shchedrin, a Russian satirist and writer, said wonderful words about this, “There is no man more dangerous than the one to whom humaneness is alien, who is indifferent to the destiny of his native land and of his neighbour, to everything except the destiny of a dime he has invested.” And he’s right.

Excessive wealth does not lead to anything good. For example, a person wasted years of his life, deceived a lot of people, because it's impossible to earn big money honestly. Everything is built on lies and deception. Let's say, a person made a lot of money. I don't mean honestly earned wages, normal money just enough to live on. This is small money. So, he's earned it. But he realises that there is no satisfaction. It turns out that something is missing. He understands that he needs power in order to conquer his own kind, so as not to show himself off any longer, not to put fleas from a deer on himself, and thereby attract the attention of the whole pack, including the leader. And not to throw money around, like that monkey throws nuts, but to seize this power, to become a leader himself. That's how leaders of parties, power structures, and nations appear. Then they see that they don't have enough power. So, what do they try to do? To conquer the world. And wars, aggression, and enslavement begin. That's how Napoleons, Stalins, Hitlers, and the like are born. They seize territories, expand the borders of their nation, but still don't achieve satisfaction. Why? **Because no matter what power a person has on Earth, he will never get satisfaction from it, because he still remains a slave of his desires. While the true power is power over oneself.**

In the history of humankind, there are many examples of the senselessness of such a path, of such a global lie of the Animal. One of them was Alexander of Macedon, a man who fulfilled his ambitions to the fullest. He conquered vast territories and established the largest monarchy of antiquity. And what was the result? On the day when Alexander of Macedon became the 'ruler of the world', he retreated from everyone and wept bitterly. When his military leaders found him, they were surprised, since they had never seen their commander crying. They had been with him in the most difficult situations of military campaigns, and to them, Alexander served as an example of courage. Even when death was very close, no one saw traces of despair or hopelessness on his face. That's why his military leaders were bewildered by a question, what happened to the one who had conquered entire nations? They asked him about it, and Alexander told them the reason for his sorrow. It turned out that when

he won, he realised that he had lost. And now he was in the same place where he had conceived his 'conquest of the world'. Only at that moment he realised how pointless all of it had been. Before, he had both a goal and a path. Whereas now he had nowhere to go and no one to conquer. And he said, "I feel a terrible emptiness inside me, for I have lost the main battle of my life."

Sensei walked a little distance in silence, and then repeated again, "So, the highest power is power over oneself. Remember what Lao Tzu said?"

'He who knows others is wise.

He who knows himself is enlightened.

He who conquers others is strong.

He who conquers himself is powerful.'

"Right, it's difficult to conquer one's own self," Nikolai Andreyevich uttered thoughtfully.

**"The entire complexity is in simplicity.** To do this, you must first of all control your thoughts. People are constantly guided by their mood, they live by that which incessantly pleases their megalomania. They are too lazy to watch the field of their mind. That's why various weeds germinate there. After all, a weed doesn't need to be specially treated and cared for. It will break through anyway, without your knowledge."

"So, how can this weed be removed?" Andrey asked, puzzled.

"It's simple. You just go ahead and pull it out by the root. After all, is it difficult for you to take control of your thoughts right now? No! While these 'nows' form your whole life. Live 'here and now' and don't yield to illusions drawn by the Animal mind. You are actually given the freedom of choice! So choose."

In the meantime, we reached the paved walkway of a shady alley.

"Well, it's clear about power," Nikolai Andreyevich began to reason, apparently pondering over something of his own. "It turns out that it's impossible to make big money while preserving Honour and Conscience."

"Yet, why isn't it possible?" Victor objected. "There was a round table on TV with the participation of business leaders. They are cool men."



Sensei looked at him and replied,

"These are dishonest people. They are liars and egoists who thump their chests and tell stories. Forgive me, guys, but if you wallow in luxury and are rich when there are so many hungry, poor and homeless people around, and you think only of increasing your profits — this is unworthy of the title of a Human. It's just unworthy."

"No, wait a minute," Victor couldn't quiet down. "How is a businessman at fault here? If he is smart and knows how to earn money, he does so and earns it. And when it comes to those who don't want to work, who are lazy, drunkards or whatever, is he obliged to feed them or what?"

"No, he's not obliged to feed them. **It is foolish to give fish to a hungry man, for he will eat it and get hungry again. It's much wiser to give him fishing tackles and teach him how to use them.** Please, understand me correctly, I'm not against wealth, I'm against poverty, I am for prosperity. Money has a certain equivalent of energy. And the laws of physics say, if energy increases somewhere, this means there is a place where it decreases. The world should be fair and accessible to everyone. But when the world is ruled by the devil's servants, I mean thieves who call themselves politicians, there will never be justice here. That's why it is doomed.

"Again justice," Zhenya said mischievously. "Sensei, this sounds like communism."

"Well, what can I do? In my childhood I received such an education that communism will be in my blood for a long time," Sensei replied jokingly. "But seriously, think of it yourselves, guys. For instance, nowadays there are oligarchs. At what expense do they get rich? At the expense of impoverishment of the people, at the expense of selling out our Motherland. Are they really so clever? Have they done anything good for the people, for their country? Yet, why is the country so poor? And how can rich people emerge in a poor country? Only by robbing it, by robbing those who are weaker than they are. Do you want to say that these are successful people worthy of the title of a Human? While I say that they are the devil's servants doomed to hell.

After all, these oligarchs even engage in petty charity for the sake of showing off in front of other people. But are they ready to do a serious deed in their life and to change completely? I doubt it. For it is said, 'Where your treasure is, there your heart will also be.' It's very difficult for such people to tear their heart away from the accumulated wealth. It was this way a thousand years ago and two thousand years ago, because people, unfortunately, don't change. Recall the episode in the Bible when a rich young man approached Jesus Christ and asked what he could do to have eternal life. To which Jesus replied to him that if he wanted to enter into eternal life, he should follow the commandments 'don't kill, don't commit adultery, don't steal, don't bear false testimony, honour your father and your mother, love your neighbour as yourself.' The young man said that he had been observing all this since his youth. So, what does he lack? And then Jesus said, "...if you want to be perfect, go and sell everything you own and give it to the poor; and you will have treasure in heaven; and then come and follow Me." Yet, having heard this, the young man 'left in sorrow, because he had great possessions.' So Jesus told his disciples, 'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God.'

Subconsciously, they do feel their worthlessness and the consequences that await them. That's why they build temples and monasteries, trying to rehabilitate themselves before God. Fools! They have forgotten the scripture. For it is said, churches built by thieves are a shelter for satan. They don't build houses of God, they build shelters for the devil. And if they hope that they will be absolved of their sins for that, they are mistaken. For this will add to their sins. Thus they damn not only themselves, but also their loved ones who use their wealth. After all, they haven't even asked their loved ones whether they need such a sacrifice. Are they really willing to share responsibility for their sins before God?

I will tell you a story that happened in the distant past, about how a thief and murderer, having met a Sage, radically changed his life and became a great human. Once upon a time, there lived a robber who robbed and killed people

without hesitation if they resisted. At the same time, a man named Narada lived in the world. He was a poet and a musician, and he was famous for his profound wisdom. People loved him for his good advice, cheerful temper, his jokes and enchanting music which he performed on his instrument.

Once, the Sage prepared to go to a neighbouring village. His road went through that very forest where the robber operated. People tried to persuade the Sage not to take that route as it was very dangerous. But Narada just laughed, "I want to look at the one who begot fear in your hearts and made you cowards. He's just one man, but he has stopped traffic along the entire road."

Having said this, Narada turned around and went into the forest, playing his instrument. Soon the robber heard music and came out onto the road. To his surprise, he saw one unarmed man who appeared to be happy, playing his tune. For the first time in his life, the robber felt indecisive. He addressed the musician, "Don't you know that it's dangerous to walk along this road?"

Still playing, Narada turned off the road and sat down next to the robber while the latter was sharpening his sword. After finishing his melody, he asked him, "What are you doing alone in this forest?"

The robber replied,

"I rob people. And now I will take your riches from you as well."

The Sage said,

"My riches are of a different kind — they are internal. I would be happy to share them with you."

"I'm only interested in material values," the robber declared.

"Material ones, you say?" the Sage asked and, taking a handful of soil, scattered it into the wind. "It's just dust, an illusion that immediately disappears. It is nothing compared to spiritual values that are eternal. Tell me, what do you need this for?"

The robber answered,

"For the sake of my family — my mother, my wife, my children. If I don't bring them money, they will starve. And I don't know how to do anything

else.”

The Sage inquired,

“But have you asked them whether they need such a sacrifice? Are they willing to share responsibility for your sins before God?”

For the first time in his life, the man who made his living by robbing became pensive.

“I don't know. Somehow, I've never thought about it before.”

“Then go and ask them,” the Sage suggested. “I'll wait for you here.”

And he started playing his beautiful melody again.

The robber did as the Sage had said. He went home and asked his mother. The elderly woman replied to that,

“Why should I share responsibility for your crimes with you? I'm your mother, and it's your duty to feed me.”

His wife also said,

“Why on earth should I be responsible for your sins? I haven't done anything, and I'm pure before God. I don't know how you get bread. That's your own business.”

Looking at the faces of his children, who were playing light-heartedly, the robber didn't even bother to ask them. Dejected, he returned to the Sage,

“No one wants to share responsibility with me. No matter what I do for the sake of my family, it looks like I'm the only one who will answer for everything. It turns out that I'm alone. What am I supposed to do now?”

He looked dolefully at the Sage's flawless face. And the Sage replied,

“Take off the mask of a thief and burn it in the flame of doing good deeds. Redeem the evil that you have done. Change yourself and become a Human.”

This man left the dark forest of delusions together with the Great Sage... Later on, people started calling him Valmiki, and he became famous throughout centuries as a legendary poet, the author of the famous ancient Indian epic poem Ramayana.

Sensei fell silent. We also walked in silence for a while, impressed by the story we had heard. Only when we were passing by a cafe, Stas, breaking the

silence, suggested that we go in and drink some soda. Everyone readily welcomed the idea as it was quite hot. Only Sensei refused and said that he would wait for us on a bench. He pointed to the bench in the shade where an elderly couple was sitting. We parted ways.

Having quickly drunk my glass of soda, I went outside while the guys were saturating their athletic bodies with additional portions of the beverage. Sensei was sitting next to the old people and talking about something. Meanwhile, Nikolai Andreyevich came out of the cafe, and we approached Sensei together, greeting the elderly couple and becoming involuntary listeners of their conversation.

“...thanks to his prayers.”

"Father Vasiliy is a good priest," Sensei agreed. "He has done a lot for people."

"Life has flown by so quickly," the old woman sighed. "We look at young people, although just recently we were the same ourselves. And the main thing is that in our souls we don't feel that our bodies are old."

"A human doesn't grow old in his or her soul," Sensei remarked and added kindly, "And there is no need to envy young people. After all, they still have their entire path to go through. While you are already standing on the threshold, and all you need to do is knock."

"Well, that's the trouble. It is not death that saddens, but the parting," the old woman said sadly, furtively wiping away a tear. "Vanya and I have lived together for fifty-three years in perfect harmony, we haven't heard a single bad word from each other." The old man nodded while the old woman took his hand gratefully. "And now, it seems, the time has come for us to part. That's the reason for sorrow in my soul."

"Your sorrow is futile. And what is it about anyway? Are you sad about the body?" Sensei spread his arms and, pointing to a young couple walking nearby, said with a smile, "My God, I understand it when you are young, but what is there to be sad about now?!" They laughed together. "Whereas the soul... **For as long as love lives in the soul, parting is impossible. Because the main**

**thing is that you know that you love this person. How can you lose him if he is really dear to your soul, if Memory and Love for him continue to live in you...**"

The guys began to come out of the cafe, and Sensei, rising from the bench, started saying goodbye to the old couple.

"Oh, thank you very much, you have comforted me so," the old woman began to wail as if she wanted to express to Sensei everything she had in her heart at once. "Truly, what can separate us? Even if I leave, I will love him on that side just the same as here. What will be lost because of this?"

"Nothing," Sensei uttered. "Here you stayed together in a moment, while there you'll be together in eternity. You should rejoice that eternity is approaching. Here you live in suffering and ordeals, while there you will find peace and joy."

"It was so pleasant to talk to you," the old woman babbled, touched.

"It was a pleasure for me to talk to you too."

"I don't know if we'll ever see each other again. Every day for me passes in anticipation. Of course, I'd like to see Father Vasily again and talk to you as well. You have comforted me so much. I feel so relieved in my soul. I would very much like to meet with you again."

"Don't worry," Sensei said affectionately, looking at the elderly woman with kindness and tenderness. "We will definitely meet, and we will have plenty of time to talk."

When we were already at a considerable distance from this old couple, walking together with the guys towards the market, Nikolai Andreyevich asked Sensei, "Are they your acquaintances?"

"No," Sensei said with a smile. "Just good people."

"Is that woman ill with something?"

"Yes. She doesn't have long to live."

"Is there really no way to help her?" I asked anxiously.

"There is. But this kind of help will only be harmful," Sensei replied. **"A human being is temporary. Death puts an end to old age and torments,**

**freeing one from the burden of existence. For loving souls, it's a reward. After all, by and large, we don't become different just because we die..."**

## 5

Finally, we reached the final destination of our journey — the local food market. In front of the entrance, there were shops where they sold all kinds of Chinese trinkets such as keychains, pens, watches, and other junk. Sensei glanced at all of this multi-coloured assortment and quietly said bitterly,

"They have completely lost respect. They shower all this rubbish on us as if we were a third-world country."

The guys began to look at all these various goods. Stas picked up a square trinket in the form of a watch, pressed a button, and the trinket started producing strange sounds, blinking and showing changing digits.

"Oh, what is this stuff?" Stas wondered.

"Just like a Geiger counter," Nikolai Andreyevich, who was standing next to him, grinned.

"What?" Zhenya squeezed in between Stas and the doctor. "What kind of a counter is that?"

"Geiger counter," Nikolai Andreyevich repeated. "There is such a gas-discharge particle detector."

Zhenya stared at Nikolai Andreyevich with a silent question in his eyes. While Stas, narrowing his eyes derisively, decided to speed up his friend's thinking process.

"Have you, country bumpkin, heard about a device called dosimeter?"

"Ahh, it's a device for radiation, isn't it?" Zhenya guessed on the second try.

"It's a device for measuring radiation doses," Stas said with a laugh.

"Well, that's what I'm saying."

Zhenya made a serious face of a 'learned man', took the blinking 'device' from Stas, and began to examine it.

"It's a stopwatch," the saleswoman explained. "Only it's... Hold on, I'll give you another one."

Stas winked at her and said cheerfully, pointing at Zhenya,

"Don't pay attention to him, it's just that he has studied for too long, that's why he's a bit mentally challenged."

We laughed. Whereas Zhenya shook his head and in a deliberately loud voice said specifically for Stas,

"Usually I don't remember bad things... mostly I have to write them down." And already addressing the saleswoman, he asked, "How much is it?" She named the price and began to rush around in order to exchange this 'broken thing' for another.

"No, no, I'm taking this one," Zhenya stopped her. "After all, someone has to buy defective goods from you with a 100% discount..."

Then Zhenya burst out with such a funny speech peculiar to a finicky buyer that we almost died laughing. After Zhenya's another clownery regarding the 'reduction of product price', even our psychotherapist asked Stas with interest,

"Is he like that in everything or just in particular cases?"

To which Stas replied,

"Both in everything and in particular cases."

"Well, then it's already a 'diagnosis'," the doctor stated with a laugh.

When a satisfied Zhenya, having bargained and bought this trinket for pennies, approached Sensei while being mocked by the guys, Sensei said,

"Aren't you ashamed of cheating people out of their pennies?"

"Why? It's they who should be ashamed of selling such rubbish for such a price." And, smiling his disarming Hollywood smile, he added, "You know, Sensei, my conscience is crystal clear..." Then, walking away, he added quietly, "Because I don't use it."

"That's exactly the problem," Sensei concluded to the loud laughter of the guys.

We entered the market and began to buy food according to the list. While Zhenya, as if having nothing to do, approached a seller of tomatoes and



cucumbers, who had obviously arrived here from more Southern lands. Our guy 'put on' a look of importance and inquired suspiciously,

“What locality did your vegetables grow in?”

The seller probably didn't quite understand him and, out of habit, started to praise his goods. Questions about the locality gradually developed into questions about the price which turned out to be unreasonably high. Well, it's understandable, nothing is cheap at seaside resorts. But apparently not for Zhenya. Assuming the pose of an inspector (at the very least, from the agency for consumer rights protection), our guy pulled out his 'dosimeter' and began to move it up and down the vegetables with a businesslike air. Naturally, the 'dosimeter' began to squeak and blink, displaying unrealistic numbers on its screen. The seller stared wide-eyed in surprise. The behaviour of such an overzealous customer, who had appeared out of nowhere, was obviously making an unpleasant impression on him.

“Wow, did you see that?!” Zhenya was indignantly showing the data on the 'dosimeter' to Stas who was standing nearby at that time and, with great difficulty, was trying to keep a serious expression on his face. "Wow, just look at this! This is even worse than in Chernobyl! What nuclear test site did you grow this at?" Zhenya turned to the seller, poking the 'dosimeter' data in his face. “You see, even the Geiger counter goes off-scale. It's really a nightmare! Soon, they will just feed us with nuclear waste...”

Hearing Zhenya's statements, people began to turn around. The seller, looking in confusion first at the device and then at the vegetables, and trying hard to figure out what was actually happening, began to exonerate himself and say that his food was of the highest quality. When Zhenya started boosting this story beyond recognition, the seller himself ate a tomato in front of everyone, trying to convince not so much our guy, but rather the onlookers who had gathered, that his vegetables were completely safe. However, this provoked Zhenya even more and, in response to the seller's actions, he started telling terrifying stories about how radiation affects a human body, with a detailed recital of what starts going out of order and failing in the body in the first turn

(in his opinion, of course). Eventually, he talked so much nonsense and gathered such a crowd of curious onlookers around him that, in the end, the seller thrust the vegetables at him, apparently even below their purchase price, just to get rid of this ‘panic monger’.

By that time, we had already bought some of the groceries. Having found us, Stas and Zhenya presented a full bag of tomatoes and cucumbers. Moreover, Zhenya was boasting nonstop of his ‘achievements’ and expressed a desire to buy the rest of the food at lower prices. To which Sensei just shook his head with judgement, “Oh, people... I keep explaining things to you...”

"Sensei, why spend more if we can buy at a reasonable price? All of them here are simply ripping people off! As an honest citizen, I cannot just pass by such disgraceful acts. I want to take part in them within my ability." The guys again roared with laughter while Zhenya continued to justify himself, smiling cunningly. "After all, I don't envy them. It's just that when I see a salesman, an acute sense of justice arises inside me."

"Ah," Sensei smirked. "Is that what they call this trait nowadays?"

"Aha," Stas nodded, laughing. "And this 'acute sense of justice' manifests itself in him in two forms: a selfish and an unselfish one. A selfish one is when he wishes to ‘also have it’, while an unselfish one is when he wants ‘others not to have it either’."

Sensei waved his hand towards Zhenya and Stas hopelessly, saying,

“Do whatever you want.”

Nikolai Andreyevich gave them the list and money. Our group split up. Some of the guys went together with Zhenya to have fun watching him buy foodstuff. While Sensei, Volodya, the doctor and I, having agreed where we would wait for the guys, went to the seashore.

The sky was cloudless. Half-asleep vacationers lazily walked along the streets, hiding from the heat in the shade of trees. We came up to the agreed-upon place. Putting our bags with food on the ground, we sat down on an empty bench in the shadow of a large tree. Nikolai Andreyevich decided not to waste time and began to question Sensei.

“Sensei, you touched on an interesting topic when we were walking here... I've been thinking all this time... Well, okay, you and I are not in danger of becoming rich, taking into account our profession and our country on top of that," the doctor uttered jokingly. “But in all seriousness, what should a person do? Everyone says that this is bad and that is bad, but what is good? How should we live?”

“You see, **every person doesn't actually live his real life. He chooses an image he likes and plays a role, and, as a rule, more than one.** For example, let's say, now you are playing the role of a student, you are trying to ask questions as if at a lecture, trying to get to the essence of my answers. Then you switch to the role of a psychotherapist, trying to analyse my words. But, in fact, it's just a game, nothing more. Because you yourself know exactly what I'm talking about. You need only to look deep into your soul.

So it is for every human. He is playing. One person likes the role of a doctor, another one likes the role of a tough commando, while the third one of a car mechanic. Someone chooses the role of an alcoholic, someone of a criminal, someone of a career seeker, while someone of a person who's been offended by life. Yet, no matter who a person is, this is basically only his role. It's just that he gets so into it that he thinks that this is actually his real life. Indeed, Shakespeare was right, all the world is just a stage.

**And like any actor, a person remains dissatisfied with his role, and he dreams of another role where he sees himself as more important. No matter what a person has achieved, it seems to him that he hasn't played the main role of his life yet.** Playing the one whom he invented, for example, poor, sick, rich, healthy, a locksmith or an astronaut, doesn't matter, a person dreams of a different role. He tries on an image of a president, an oligarch, a heroic rescuer, a fighter for justice, or someone else... **And all the time he lives in his dreams, he soothes himself with these fairy tales. However, isn't it easier to stop dreaming and to choose in your life a role worthy of a Human?”**

"Do you mean of a saint, a lama or whom?"

"Be it a lama or a saint, or just a decent, kind person, call it whatever you want. **I just call it simply — a role worthy of the title of a Human. And be who you are supposed to be. So that when you go to sleep, you would be sure that your conscience is clear. So that when you are dying, you wouldn't be ashamed of your thoughts and deeds. And so that even when standing before God, as Christians say, at God's Judgement, you would have something to say. So that your basket with good deeds would be full, while the one with bad deeds would be empty. That's what it means to be a Human.** And not just externally, but what's more important, internally. To put your mind in order. Not to dream of bad, stupid, empty things. Think more about God, think of your soul. If you have free time, use it with benefit for your soul, pray, meditate, practise your spiritual activities. **For life is too short, and it is given so that a person would prove to God that he is worthy of the title of a Human...**"

Sensei was talking simply and clearly. His words were filled with such sincerity, such sympathy, strength and kindness that my 'lotus flower' even started working spontaneously, pouring pleasant warmth over the body. I felt so good in my soul as if all the contrived masks had fallen off me, revealing my true Essence for a while. For some reason, precisely in this free state I really understood what Sensei was talking about, for this understanding was coming not through words, but through my soul.

For some time we sat in silence, contemplating the sea scenery. In this extraordinary state generated by Sensei's words no one apparently wanted to say anything unnecessary. Everything was amazingly clear and simple. This serenity of contemplation was interrupted by the guys who returned from the market.

"Look how much stuff we have bought!" Zhenya said happily, stretching out his arms and demonstrating the full bags that he and the guys were carrying. "Yet, why are you so sad?"

"Ah, we're just looking," Sensei said, gazing at the sea expanse.

For the sake of politeness, Zhenya also looked in that direction. Right at

that time, a motorboat was speeding along the sea. A rope was attached to it, the end of which was held by a girl on water skis.

“Oh, hot girl!” Zhenya said appraisingly, thinking that precisely this was meant.

“That’s right,” Sensei uttered. “I’ve just told them a joke about it, and they got sad.”

Zhenya hemmed.

“What kind of a joke is it that they got sad?”

“Well, two fishermen are sitting on a river bank, while a beautiful girl is water skiing in front of them. One of them says to the other, ‘Just imagine, now she falls and starts drowning. I will dive and save her. I’ll drag her out and then pretend that I’m doing artificial respiration, but I will actually be kissing and hugging her.’ As soon as he has said that, the girl falls down and starts drowning. The guy immediately throws himself into the water, dives and pulls out the female body. He starts doing artificial respiration, kissing and embracing her. Then he comes back to his friend and says, ‘I don’t understand. That girl was a beauty, while this one is ugly.’ His friend looks askance at him and says, ‘That’s right... Also, that one had water skis on, while this one has skates.’”

Under the tree, our group roared with laughter. Only Zhenya grinned somewhat listlessly and then asked, puzzled,

“I don’t get it, what do skates have to do with it? She was actually on water skis.”

We all roared with laughter, no longer so much laughing at the joke as at Zhenya. The guy tried to hide his gaffe and quickly changed the stream of laughter into the channel of his adventures at the market. The ‘eyewitnesses’ joined the story-telling, supplementing it with their own details. Finally, having laughed their fill, everyone came to the conclusion that it became dangerous to let Zhenya go to this market alone. He had caused such a commotion there with his ‘dosimeter’ that if he decided to go there next time, even without this device, he would no doubt feel all the ‘consequences’ of his joke on his bones.

We shuffled the food among the bags so that it would be easier for everyone to carry them. And when we were about to go back, Zhenya suddenly laughed loudly,

“A-ah! So it means that the one with the skates was lying there since winter.”

This was the last straw. Our laughter just turned into hysterics. Even passers-by, looking at us, began to smile as they were infected by the wave of good mood, even though they didn’t understand the reason for such a mass laughter.

Since we were loaded with food, we went around the boarding houses via a longer though more convenient route. When we were passing by another building, Zhenya suddenly stopped, gawking around. He put the bags down on the pavement and made a detailed search of his pockets which at one time designers of clothing had sewn abundantly both on his shirt and shorts.

"Where is it?" The guy was mumbling, puzzled.

Since Zhenya fell behind, some of us also stopped, waiting for him.

“Ah, here it is!” he finally exclaimed delightedly and pulled out a crumpled piece of paper.

"Do you keep it for an emergency?" Volodya grinned, watching the guy trying to smooth out the crumpled paper.

"Yeah, for an extrasensory one," Zhenya retorted in jest.

Grabbing his bags, he caught up with Sensei.

“Sensei, look at this ad I snatched at the market. It's a whole eulogy to the Pantocrator of the Cosmos and the entire Earth...”

Still holding the bags in his hand, the guy offered the paper to Sensei.

Sensei took it, scanned it with his eyes and gave it back, grinning.

“There is plenty of such stuff around. There, look... There is one hanging there, and there, and over there too...”

We curiously started twisting our heads together with Zhenya in the directions Sensei pointed to. Indeed, the same announcements were gleaming everywhere, written in big letters, "The great psychic, the honourable

international-level Master, the foreteller of oracles, the powerful mage and sorcerer whose gaze alone has healed many people, Vitaliy Yakovlevich... in response to numerous requests, will conduct an additional health improvement session that has no equal in the world. The session will begin..." And tomorrow's date was indicated along with an excessively inflated price for the tickets.

Looking at this multitude of posted ads, we burst out laughing again. Even a garbage container which we were passing by was 'adorned' with such a piece of paper.

"Damn it!" Zhenya spat in a fit of anger. "Like a fool, I carried this 'weight' in my pocket all the way from the market."

He crumpled the paper again, tossed it up and kicked it with his foot like a ball.

"Why are you littering?" Sensei chided him good-naturedly. "Purity of thought begins with your outward culture and tidiness. Go, pick up that piece of paper and throw it in the container."

This time Zhenya, in contrast to his usual excuses, acted out of character, apparently bringing diversity into his tireless humour. Putting his bags down again, he obligingly ran ahead of us to the piece of paper. He lifted it and even 'swept' that area on the pavement where it lay with his hand a couple of times. Then, like a real basketball player, he threw the crumpled piece of paper into the garbage container, just like a ball into a basket. After 'scoring a point', with a happy expression on his face, he spread his arms wide theatrically,

"What paper? There was no paper at all. It just seemed that way to you. The sun is too hot today. It was just a mirage."

"Yeah, sure," Stas uttered with a laugh. "And you are our genie from a bottle."

We laughed again. Zhenya apparently liked this idea of a new image, and he said,

"Why not? Make any wish, and I will be kind enough to fulfil it," and winking, he added cheerfully, "of course, taking into account modern self-

financing and self-service.”

“What do you mean by self-service?” Stas said, smiling. “Does it mean that we’ll make a wish and then fulfill it ourselves at our own expense?”

"You are so smart!" Zhenya patted him on the shoulder, returning for his bags.

We laughed, and Andrey said,

“Personally, I have only one wish — to be transported to our camp with all the food as fast as possible.”

"That's easy," Zhenya replied after he had caught up with us with his load, "Nothing is impossible for my magic. To fulfill this wish, there are two options."

"Please, announce the long list of yours, O great genie," Stas suggested humorously.

“The first option for us is to quickly accelerate right now and make a run to the camp with a substantial load of our heavy bags.”

“Oh no!” we yelled all together.

“Especially not in this heat,” Andrey grumbled.

“What kind of magic is that?!” Ruslan grinned.

“What about the second option?” Stas asked with a smile.

“The second option of magic is possible if we approach the matter sensibly. What is the main thing in the process of transportation?”

“Volodya's heel!” Andrey answered with a laugh.

Everyone laughed again, recalling Sensei’s joke from this morning.

"Well, that goes without saying for some individuals," Zhenya continued to play his part. “Think broader!”

"Wings!" Ruslan exclaimed.

Zhenya clicked his tongue and said with a pompous expression,

“That's for the high flyers. Think deeper!”

"Wheels," Stas uttered jokingly after seeing a passing car.

“Stas, man, you are flying so high.” imitating a drawling voice of a stoner, gestured Zhenya with his hand and then added cheerfully, "To think deeper



doesn't mean to go completely nuts. Well? No other ideas? You, people! The main thing, as our dear Sensei said, is to occupy the mind with useful things.” And, bending his head towards Sensei who was laughing along with us, he asked, “Am I right?”

"You are right," Sensei nodded.

"You see, unlike all of you, I amisilate... I mean, assimilate. Oh bother, assi-mi-late," finally the guy enunciated, “my lessons very quickly.”

“Of course, you are so far ahead of us, you are one of a kind,” Stas remarked ironically.

“Who would doubt that!” Zhenya declared complacently, thrusting out his chest. "After all, I'm a genie!"

"So, what will you offer us this time, Abdurakhman Abdurakhmanovich?" Volodya said with irony in his bass voice.

However, Zhenya seemed to be prolonging the pleasure of his pun,

"Patience, my friend, patience. What can you occupy your mind with so that time flies quickly and unnoticeably? With humour! So listen to the jokes..."

After another portion of Zhenya's jokes, when our mouths and stomachs were already aching with laughter from his ‘magic’, Nikolai Andreyevich decided to interrupt this endless laughter and use the time more rationally, having tactfully changed the conversation to the eternal subjects regarding a human and the ways of his spiritual quest. Warming to the topic, Sensei told us a legend.

6

***"Once upon a time, a Wayfarer lost himself. He ended up alone amidst a desert and couldn't remember who he was, where he was, and where he had to go. Everywhere the Wayfarer turned his gaze, there were sands and boundless dunes, and he didn't know where they ended and***

*where they began. The sun was burning his skin mercilessly. The wind was scorching him with blazing hot air.*

*The Wayfarer had been walking for a long time. And suddenly he saw a dry thorn. The Wayfarer thought that he was a thorn too. He sat down next to it. However, a sudden gust of wind drove it along the sands. It rolled easily, leaving a trail with its prickles. And he thought, since it was moving, hence it knew where it was going. Since it was leaving a trail, this meant it was showing him the way. So the Wayfarer followed it. But the wind abated, and the thorn stopped. A new gust of wind drove it in the opposite direction. And the Wayfarer again followed it, retracing his own steps. But eventually, he ended up in the same place where he had started his journey. And the Wayfarer realised that the thorn was dead, and the wind was just playing with it. He understood that it was pointless to run after a dead dry thorn, for it had no life. Only the elements rule over it now. He took it in his hands, but it pricked him painfully. That surprised him. Even dead, it continued to cause pain. And he threw it away angrily.*

*The Wayfarer moved on. He walked for a long time. He was tormented by thirst and hunger, but he continued walking. Seeing a big bird flying, the Wayfarer thought that he was a bird too. So he ran after it. He reasoned that since this bird was flying so high, it saw more than he did. It knew the way, therefore it would guide him to a place where he would be able to quench his thirst and satisfy his hunger, where he would finally find peace and get rid of his sufferings. The delighted Wayfarer ran, praising the bird's impetuous flight and rejoicing at his dreams.*

*The strong bird was flying beautifully and quickly. The Wayfarer was running after it as hard as he could. He got tired, but continued his run, living by hope for the better. The bird began to descend behind the nearest sand dune, and the Wayfarer sped up. He believed that only moments separated him from his dream. Having run up to the top of the*

*sand dune, he stopped, and the horror of deception seized him when the truth was revealed to his eyes. Behind the sand dune, a flock of the same kind of birds were tearing up a dead body, greedily swallowing the rotten flesh. The Wayfarer turned away in disgust and left. He understood that he was just food for the bird.*

*The Wayfarer walked for a long time. The sun was still burning mercilessly. The wind was scorching with its hot air. Unbearable thirst and hunger were exhausting him. His strength was draining away. Meanwhile, there were only boundless sands and the blue sky around. Suddenly, the Wayfarer saw a snake. It was moving confidently and without haste, as if it knew its path beforehand and enjoyed every moment of overcoming it. Peace was felt in it. Coolness was emanating from it, despite the intense heat. And the Wayfarer thought, "Since it doesn't hurry and coolness is emanating from it, that means it knows where the source is. If I follow it, I will find shelter from the sun and will quench my thirst."*



Fragment of the drawing "Continuum" by Anastasia Novykh

*The Wayfarer followed the snake. He felt his strength gradually returning to him. And the Wayfarer thought, "Maybe, I'm a snake?" However, at that moment the snake stopped and turned towards him. And he saw that the snake had teeth full of venom. His body started trembling with fear and carried him away. And it stopped only when it collapsed into the hot sand. He was angry with himself for being unable to resist; after all, just a step separated him from salvation. The body*

*betrayed him. While he had believed that his body was himself.*

*Standing up with difficulty, the Wayfarer dragged himself along the desert again. He was walking under the scorching sunbeams, recalling the coolness and peace of the snake. Anguish seized him. And then he saw a flickering shadow. He thought it was a mirage, a phantom of the snake. But the shadow flickered again. Looking closer at it, the Wayfarer saw a lizard. It seemed to him that coolness was emanating from it as well. And he thought, "Since coolness is emanating from it like from the snake, then maybe it also knows where the source is." And he rushed after it, trying not to fall behind. However, the lizard was moving deftly and quickly. Having exhausted the Wayfarer, it buried itself in the sand. And no matter how hard the Wayfarer dug in that place, he still failed to find it. But, having lost the lizard, he wasn't upset. After all, it wasn't the snake, it was just a restless lizard that only delusively resembled the snake, and its entire essence was just empty darting around.*



Fragment of the drawing "Continuum" by Anastasia Novykh

*Rising from his knees, the Wayfarer dragged himself aimlessly through the desert. He was disappointed with his encounters and angry at his disobedient, hungry body. He was tired of this vain wandering, senseless worries, encouraging dreams, empty fuss and boundless disappointment, lies, deceit, and illusions of this desert.*

*The heat was becoming unbearable. His body was groaning and languishing of thirst and hunger. However, the Wayfarer no longer paid any attention to it. He kept on walking as long as he still had some strength left. Completely weakened, he fell into the sand burning under the sun and could not even move a finger. Only his eyes still contemplated the endless expanse of the clear sky that merged with the*

*boundless sand dunes of the desert. The Wayfarer shifted his gaze to the multitude of various sand grains in front of his face. Every sand grain was somehow different from the others. But in the mass of sand, these differences were unnoticeable. The wind moved them easily.*

*And the Wayfarer thought, "I'm the same as this grain of sand. I don't know who I am. But since I exist, it means that Someone created me. And if Someone created me, then it was His will. So, my wanderings here are just a part of His plan, and this desert is just a place for the embodiment of His will. What has happened to me is what was supposed to happen. After all, the point is not in the external movement, but in the essence of the internal. If I die, what will change? After all, these sand grains don't need my life. Yet, why did He create me then? What a pity that I have lost the snake..."*



Fragment of the drawing "Continuum" by Anastasia Novykh

*The Wayfarer fell into oblivion. He was awakened by a bright light. He squinted and covered his eyes with his hand. It seemed to him that the light had dimmed. Then the Wayfarer removed his hand from his face. He saw that it was already night-time. A fire was burning in front of him, and near the fire a Wanderer was sitting and cooking food. The Wayfarer asked him, "Who are you?"*

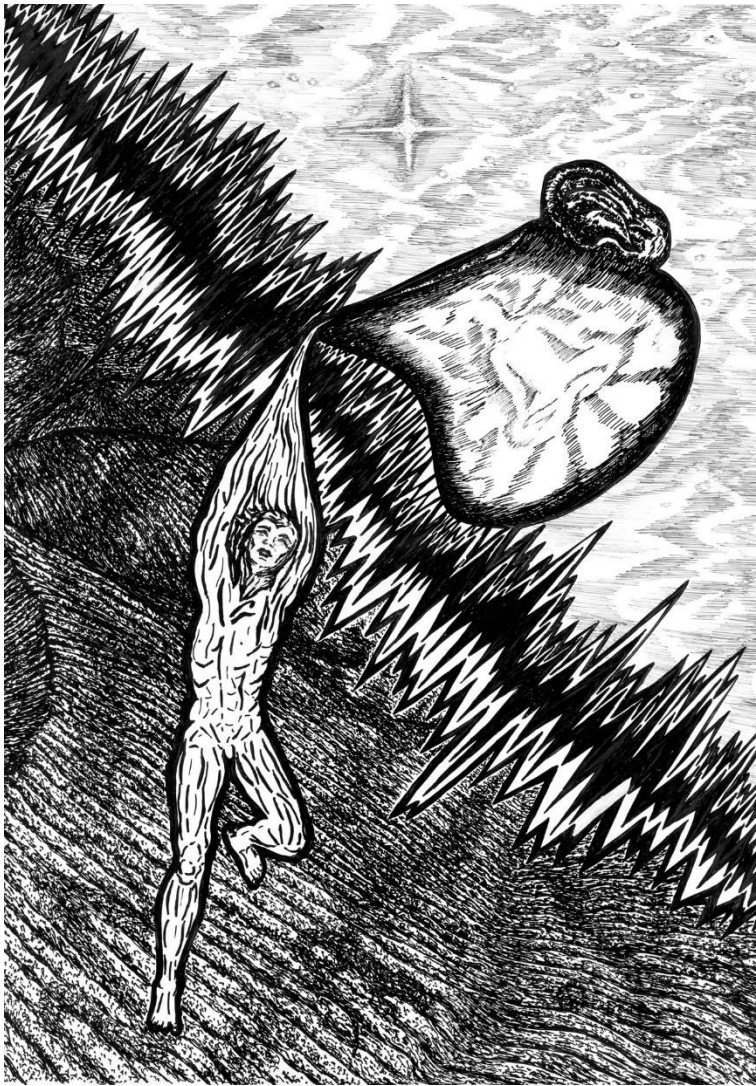
*"The main question is who you are," he heard in response.*

*"I don't know," the Wayfarer said. "I've been walking for so long that I've forgotten who I am."*

*The Wanderer offered him a jug full of water and said,*

*"You've been suffering from the desert heat for so long. Quench your thirst from my source."*





## Reality

Drawing by Anastasia Novykh

*The Wayfarer gratefully accepted the jug from the Wanderer and greedily began to gulp down the water. The vivifying liquid spread through his body. It seemed to him that he had never tasted such delicious water in his life. Having slaked his thirst, the Wayfarer gave the jug back to the Wanderer and asked,*

*"Where did you get such cool, clear water amidst the desert sands? Its taste reminds me of the purest mountain spring."*

*The Wanderer smiled and said,*

*“I can't tell you in words about the place of this source. For you can know it only by being in it. Words cannot convey experience.”*

*The Wayfarer pondered and asked,*

*“Why can words not convey experience?”*

*The Wanderer replied,*

*“You drank the water. You received experience. Before that, no matter how I would describe to you how delicious and wonderful this water is, you would only be able to understand and appreciate its taste when you try it. You are the only one who can determine for yourself what this water is like. You are the only one who can understand and feel the sensation of the water when your lips touch it, when it fills your mouth and flows into your body through your throat. And this experience belongs to you alone, for everyone drinks their own water. However, no matter how much you drink, you will be thirsty again and again. Only when you become a source, will you quench your thirst forever.”*

*“How can I become a source?”*

*“Become yourself, your Essence. Life and death are like a single flow. The Essence moves in the flow. In the movement, it gains the eternal. No one can really appreciate the raging flow without going into its waters, for this is the future. No one can enter the same water twice, for this is the past. There is only the movement of the flow, for this is the present. Sooner or later, any water reaches its source and becomes it, returning to its original purity.”*



### Continuum

Fragment of the drawing by Anastasia Novykh

*The Wayfarer was surprised at the wisdom of the answer and asked,  
"How do you know all this about water?"*

*"I was the Source of its moisture," the reply followed.*

*The Wanderer offered him food and said,*

*"You've been wandering in the desert for such a long time. Appease  
your hunger by tasting my food."*

*The Wayfarer gratefully accepted the food from the Wanderer and  
began to devour it with pleasure. It seemed to him so delicious and  
filling as he had never tasted before. Having eaten his fill of food, the*

*Wayfarer asked the Wanderer,*

*"Why is your food so delicious? I've never eaten anything like that in my life."*

*"You were hungry. Food is just a delight for the flesh. It satiates the flesh, but doesn't quench thirst. Those who consider food to be the highest blessing cannot refuse its accumulation. But no matter how much you accumulate it, it will rot. Food gives temporary pleasure of possessing it. It is useful only to maintain the flesh in which the Spirit abides."*

*"But why did such a small amount of your food fill me with more strength than ever before?"*

*"Because the power, which makes food such as it is, has no end and no beginning. It is the end of the endless and the boundary of the boundless. But the food itself is finite, it is limited within itself."*

*The Wayfarer was surprised again,*

*"How do you know this about food?"*

*"I was the Cook of this world."*

*Having satisfied his hunger and thirst, the Wayfarer took notice of his clothes. They were old and tattered. And he felt ashamed of his appearance.*

*The Wanderer noticed that and said,*

*"You shouldn't be ashamed of your clothes. Clothing is just a part of a single process of creation and destruction. There is nothing more stupid than pleasing the whims of your clothing. After all, that which is the essence of it locks you within its narrow space, distancing you from the world and plunging you into doubts and fears generated by this estrangement. It forces you to exist for the sake of its forms and external illusions which its image creates for others, drawing you into ever greater worries about it. After all, every form has its own rules. While rules are just an aggregate of contrasts.*

*Your clothes have a limit. They wear out. However, you are free not*

*to wear them. But, having worn out one piece of clothing, you put on another one. Yet, without destroying the limit, it is disastrous to pursue the boundless."*

*The Wayfarer was amazed again,*

*"How do you know this about clothes?"*

*"I was the Tailor of this world," the answer followed.*

*The Wayfarer looked around,*

*"Tell me, how did I get here?"*

*"You came," the Wayfarer replied.*

*"But I remember only heat and sand."*

*"And what did you see?"*

*The Wayfarer began to recollect,*

*"I saw a dry thorn chased by the wind. It was leaving a trail on the sand. I followed it, thinking that it would show me the way. But the wind changed direction. I came back and decided that it was pointless to run after the dead dry thorn, for it had no life. However, the thorn pricked me when I picked it up. Even dead, it continued to cause pain."*

*"You met the dead thing which has nothing to reveal itself with except its thorns. The dead defends the dead. The dead won't turn into the living because there is life, while the living won't become dead because there is death. Both life and death depend on something, there is something that binds them," the Wanderer uttered.*

*The Wayfarer continued,*

*"I saw a big bird. It was flying high. I ran after it, thinking that it would lead me to a place where I could find peace and become free of suffering. I praised its flight and pacified myself with a dream. However, the bird led me only to a flock of the same birds that were eating dead, rotten flesh."*

*And the Wanderer replied,*

*"It is foolish to praise someone who sees only its future food in you. You were attracted by the altitude of its flight, and you followed it,*

*thinking of your own benefit. However, the bird's aspirations during the flight were different. Although it soars high above the desert, it feeds on its victims. While a bird that feeds on carrion doesn't suffer when its 'meals' change. For its essence is rot. You have deceived yourself. You saw the reality, and your illusions vanished. But your reality is an illusion too. The big bird was just a shadow compared to the essence of things. Whereas things have a property of being born in the Formless and returning to the Lowly."*

*The Wayfarer said,*

*"I saw a snake. I felt peace in it. Coolness emanated from it. And I thought that it knew the location of the source. I followed it. But the snake turned towards me, and I saw its teeth full of venom. My body trembled with fear and carried me away. Although I had always believed that my body was me. I lost the snake, but I kept thinking about it."*

*"One who relies on the external can only surmise. One who relies on the inner has the true knowledge," the Wanderer uttered. "Body is dust. Its essence is ashes. While you could have gained the Wisdom of eternity. You just needed to take a step. But the fear of death of your dust turned out to be stronger. The dust ran away. You remained anguished, for Spirit always strives for eternity. The Wisdom of eternity cannot be perceived through the power of dust, for it will turn it into rubbish. To run away from fear doesn't mean to get saved. To kill fear in oneself means to achieve perfection. While perfection allows one to step on the verge. For only on the verge you become aware of the source of Wisdom."*

*The Wayfarer went on recollecting,*

*"I saw a lizard. I thought it was a phantom of the snake. It seemed to me that coolness emanated from it. I tried to catch up with it. But its movement was fast and agile. It buried itself in the sand, and I couldn't find it. However, that didn't upset me. After all, it was just a restless lizard, not the snake."*

*The Wanderer remarked,*

*“A phantom that looks like Wisdom only seems to be Wisdom. Empty fuss is a beginning of distemper. One who wants to look like a Sage in order to boast before others rushes about dolefully by himself, dreaming of glory. But his essence is emptiness in the shell of the Ego. When knowledge comes from ignorance, questions can never end.”*

*And the Wayfarer said,*

*“I saw the sun, the infinite expanse of the sky. I saw boundless dunes of the desert. I saw a multitude of various grains of sand. But they were indiscernible in their mass. The wind determined their direction.”*



Drawing “Continuum” by Anastasia Novykh

*To which the Wanderer replied,*

*“The sky and the sun direct the changes. They are capable of transforming so that all living beings would follow their nature. The sky and the sun augment the full and destroy the empty. The desert carries out motion in rest. It is dead, but is capable of generating mirages in order to deceive the living with its illusions. The desert destroys the full and fills the empty. While sand grains, in their mass, follow the movement of the sand, and so the elements determine their direction.”*



*And the Wayfarer confessed,*

*“I thought that I was the same as this grain of sand. Because I don’t know who I am. But since I exist, it means that Someone created me. And if Someone created me, then it was His will. So, my wanderings here are just a part of His plan. If I die, what will change? After all, these sand grains do not need my life. Yet, why did He create me then?”*

*“For you to become a Human,” the answer came.*

*“To become a Human?!” the Wayfarer was surprised. “But what is my life?”*

*At that, the Wanderer uttered,*

*“A stone fallen to the sand – rustle of sand grains.*

*A wave reaching the land – rustle of sand grains.*

*Your impetuous running,*

*A foot in the sand – rustle of sand grains.*

*Life is just a step,*

*And the years in it are rustle of sand grains.”*

*The Wayfarer pondered and then asked again,*

*“Yet, what does this mean?”*

*“You came where you were granted by birth,” the Wanderer replied.*

*“You grew up in what was pleasing to your nature. You have reached maturity in that which has become your destiny. And you will go wherever you are given by death. Death is just the beginning of life. Life is just a successor to Death. The advent of life cannot be rejected. Its leaving cannot be stopped.”*

*The Wayfarer was silent for a while and then exclaimed delightedly,*

*“To become a Human?! I’ve just remembered! I was looking for the Path in order to become a Human!”*

*To which the Wanderer replied,*

*“You were only looking for someone else’s trail, but not for your own*

*path. Someone else's trail doesn't look like your own. Trails appear where they are left. However, they themselves are not the one who leaves them. Following someone else's trail, you chased outward images without knowing their inner essence. But everyone carves for himself that path which corresponds to his true aspirations. With time, the desert erases all trails with its sands, so that a new Wayfarer wouldn't make mistakes of the past. That is why your own experience is important. In order to become a Human, you need to carve your own path.*

*A Human's foot takes up little space in the boundless Desert. But, in spite of this, it can step where no one has ever walked. Whereas, by walking where no one has ever walked, a Human is able to go far and to gain something greater. The knowledge of his mind is scanty, but by entrusting himself to the Unknown, a Human is able to reach the One Who created him."*

*Then the Wayfarer asked,*

*"And who is the One Who created me?"*

*The Wanderer uttered,*

*"He can be perceived, but cannot be described. He can be reached, but cannot be comprehended. He can be Loved, but cannot be embraced. He can be understood in the Beginning, but cannot be known to the End. For He is the One Who created everything. For He is the One Creating by His Will."*

*"How do you know this about Him?" the Wayfarer wondered.*

*"I am His Voice and Ear," was the answer.*

*"Yet, who are you? Tell me your name."*

*"The name is just a shadow of clothes, but I have a lot of them. While the Essence is one – Bodhisattva."*

After Sensei had told us this legend, we continued our walk in silence. Apparently, just like me, everyone was really impressed by what we had heard and tried to look, first of all, into ourselves, at our life choices. And when we were already approaching our camp, Andrey asked Sensei,

“Do Bodhisattvas visit only the East?”

Sensei grinned,

“No, they visit all places, including Rus.”

“Really?” Andrey was amazed. “Rus as well? Were there really Russian Bodhis? I’ve never heard of this. Sensei, tell us, please...”

Everyone perked up, evidently also eager to hear about this in more detail. However, Sensei, glancing at our camp ‘guards’ who came out to meet us, only uttered,

"A little later, in the evening..."

"Okay, let it be in the evening," my persona thought and focused my eyes on Tatyana who was waving to me.

At the camp, they were already tired of waiting for us. Unpacking the bags, we told the guys who had stayed at the camp about our adventures, while they told us about theirs. It turned out that my friends weren't too bored here either. At the time when our ‘guards’ decided to take a rest, the ‘domesticated’ seagulls attempted to make a second raid. Having decorated himself as an Indian, Kostya, together with Yura, decided to catch at least one ‘game bird’ at any price and ‘punish’ it in front of the others in order to teach them. They made a proper ‘ambush’ in the coastal reeds. However, this venture only turned into a comical story of how two city boys nearly brought the ‘noble bird’ to a heart attack by their sudden appearance with hooting, furious shouting and crazy running along the beach in pursuit of the frightened flock of birds. So, as Kostya put it, by their ‘civilised showdown’ in wild nature, our ‘Indians’ actually got nothing except feathers and bird droppings.

We finished with our lunch and went frolic in the open waters. For quite a while, we played water polo. And when half of our group had already stretched

out on the sand, warming their bodies, Stas and Zhenya decided to go scuba diving. However, something didn't quite work with their gear, so they set the aqualungs aside and decided to dive in the old-fashioned way with a mask and a snorkel not far from the shore. Kostya and Andrey tried their strength on a long swim, while Tatyana and I floundered in shallow water. For our cowardly female natures, a 'swim' was good only when we could feel the seabed under our feet from time to time.

So, the very moment when Andrey and Kostya were already quite far from the shore, Slava who was sunbathing on the sand suddenly started shouting in their direction and waving his hands,

"Sharks! Sharks!"

"Why are you shouting like that?" Ruslan, who was lying on the sand nearby, got jokingly outraged. "They won't fall for your prank."

"It's true, there are sharks, look!" Slava was shouting at him boisterously.

Slava really looked scared. Tatyana and I immediately assumed a vertical position in the water, feeling the saving bottom under our feet, and began to stretch our necks, peering into the sea. Yet, we didn't see anything particularly dangerous and turned our eyes to the worried Slava again. Sunbathing on the sand, Volodya and Victor raised themselves and looked into the distance with an unconcealed grin.

"Come on, Slava!" Volodya said, smiling. "What sharks can there be in this sea? It's not even a sea, it's just a puddle. How can there be predators here if no decent fish is even found in this area?"

"Really, there are sharks! Really, sharks!" Slava went on repeating like a worn record stuck on the same chord. "Look there! Look!"

Glancing in the direction where Slava was pointing, I did notice two black fins in the distance, approaching the shore and disappearing among the waves from time to time. And they were moving precisely towards Andrey and Kostya who, not paying attention to Slava's yelling, were calmly swimming in the water, clearly unaware of the danger. But when frightened Tatyana and I raised a whole 'alarm' with our high-pitched female voices, Andrey and Kostya began

to turn their heads in confusion, looking for the cause of our panic. Andrey was the first to notice the fins moving towards them and hastily swam towards the shore. Whereas Kostya, still obviously not seeing the source of the danger, as they say, decided not to tempt fate and hurried to catch up with Andrey.

The wild shouts threw our entire group into panic. And when our instinct of self-preservation ordered us to immediately get out of the water, Sensei with the senior guys, on the contrary, disregarded this internal alarm device and quickly began to enter the water, peering into the distance. Whereas we stopped, having run up to them, so to say, to the 'safety zone'. We were ashamed to completely get out of the water when our friends were still there.

Sensei first rushed ahead of everyone, but then slowed down and said to us, smiling,

"Hey you, panic-mongers. Those are dolphins!"

"Dolphins?!" We were unspeakably surprised, peering again at the approaching triangular fins.

With a smile, Sensei moved towards the unexpected guests. Kostya and Andrey apparently noticed Sensei 'hurrying to them', accelerated the pace of their rowing and literally slammed past him like bullets, working hard with their arms and legs, although, in fact, in the place where they were swimming the water was already waist-deep. They assumed a vertical position only when their arms and legs began to 'rake' the sand in the shallow water. Apparently not having recovered from shock yet, they quickly stood up, intending to run to the shore, but then they heard the laughter of our group behind them.

"Why are you still standing there?!" Andrey said in confusion, wiping water from his face and not understanding why we weren't on land yet.

The guy was even more surprised when he saw Sensei continuing to go deeper into the water.

"We are inedible," Zhenya answered for everyone, taking his water mask off. "We have an increased coefficient of laughableness. It makes us indigestible. Ones like us can cause intestines to get twisted. It's the same as swallowing a sea urchin and then suffering from colic for the rest of your life."

"Well, we are not that edible either," Andrey started coming to his senses as he approached the guys. "Look how bony we are." And he pointed to the shivering Kostya.

"Oh, no," Zhenya objected. "I saw how fast they were chasing you. Hence, what? Hence, in this matter the gastronomic criteria of these predators clearly don't coincide with your opinion about your personas."

We laughed. The 'heroes' joined the group, trying to understand what had changed here during their race. And when they were told that those were dolphins, they were as surprised as we were.

"Yet, why did they chase us like that?" Kostya asked, his teeth still chattering.

"And why were you rushing away from them?" Victor asked in his turn, laughing.

"They were chasing, so I was rushing away."

"They probably wanted to play with you," Stas suggested his 'version'.

"Nice game! I'm still quaking with fear."

"Why do you think that it's you who they swam such a distance for?" Volodya said in his bass voice, watching Sensei.

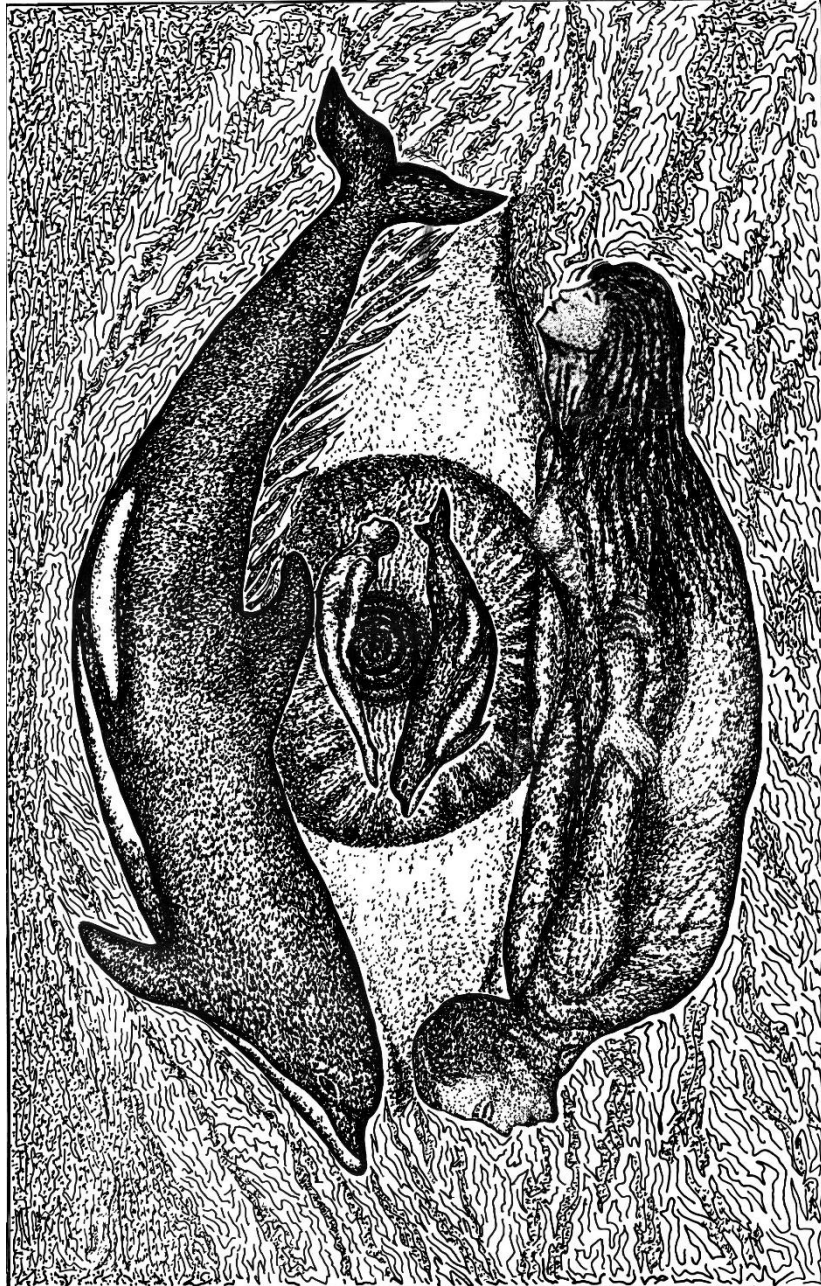
We stopped joking and fixed our eyes on Sensei with unconcealed curiosity.

A pair of black dolphins with contrasting black-and-white stripes on their sides stopped abruptly just a couple of meters from Sensei, even though they had been rushing at high speed. Sensei froze, too. At that time, the water was already up to his chest. One of the dolphins stuck his head out of the water in kind of a funny way, just like a human, and nodded his head amusingly, slightly opening his mouth and making funny sounds similar to a rattle mixed with yapping. The second smaller dolphin was behaving more timidly. It turned sideways to Sensei, not taking its eyes from him as if studying him carefully. Sensei gently slapped the water as if striking some beat. The first dolphin stopped making sounds and tilted his snout with interest. He apparently liked it, because he dove and came to the surface literally an arm's length from Sensei. Sensei stretched his hand slowly and stroked the animal affectionately

down his front. The dolphin swam closer, offering his snout for stroking with more confidence. But instead, Sensei gently drew some water with his palm and splashed it playfully at the animal. The dolphin ‘chattered’ cheerfully, then turned tail and fled, diving under the water. A few moments later, he unexpectedly kicked up his tail behind Sensei and slapped on the water loudly, showering him with a fountain of splashes. And then they started a whole game of ‘tag’ with Sensei, where the ‘chaser’ role changed from one to the other. The second dolphin quickly joined in.

Watching such water fun, we began to lose all our fear of these friendly animals. Obviously eager to participate in this game, we started getting closer to Sensei. Although, frankly speaking, at first we approached these sea creatures with some apprehension. It's no joke, such powerful ‘bodies’ were swimming near. And it's not just the ‘bodies’, but they were creatures with developed intelligence, given that Sensei mentioned that the dolphin's brain weighed about 1,800 grams, meaning, more than some people's. What if they are aliens from another world, who live their lives parallel to us here, on our planet, in our time? However, looking at their ‘everlasting’ good-natured smile and a slightly squinted cheerful gaze, it's hard to believe that they can hurt you.

The dolphins circled around us, and though they were representatives of wild nature, strangely enough they were not afraid of us. They even let us ‘stroke’ them, although only when Sensei was near us. And while they only ‘allowed’ us to touch them sometimes in intervals between playing ‘tag’, they were delighted to let Sensei ‘scratch’ their bellies, especially the bigger dolphin. By the way, Nikolai Andreyevich was the first among us to notice that this dolphin had a long wound on the side of his body, a little below his head. The wound was exactly in the same place as that of the dolphin whom we had ‘buried’ in the sea this morning.



**Drawing “Harmony of Spheres” by Anastasia Novykh**

“Oh! Is this really our old friend?” Nikolai Andreyevich looked at Sensei with astonished excitement once he had discovered this ‘similarity’.

Sensei only smiled enigmatically.

"No way, it's a different dolphin," Ruslan said doubtfully. "Can wounds really heal so fast?"



"Who knows?" the psychotherapist shrugged his shoulders, glancing at Sensei with a cunning smile. "The environment is special here... After all, that one also had long-healed scars in the same places. There, look..."

On the black upper part of the animal's body, white lines were clearly visible, as if left by the teeth of a huge comb.

"It's definitely our dolphin!" Volodya grinned happily. "He's a fighter! I also noticed those marks last time."

"Did fishermen do that to him?" I asked Sensei.

"No. These are traces of the teeth of his kin. It's a result of him showing his obstinate character in his youth."

"No, it can't be, it's not the same dolphin," Ruslan continued to convince us, or rather, himself. "All these dolphins look the same."

"Don't offend them," Sensei objected with a smile. "Only an inattentive person can think that dolphins, like army recruits, all look alike. In fact, dolphins don't have identical faces, almost like people. Each one is individual in its own way, and they differ from each other by facial expression, body build, and the form of dorsal fins."

"Really?" Ruslan said and tried to examine the dolphin 'more attentively'.

Meanwhile, someone got the idea to bring a ball. The playful dolphins liked it so much that it led to a whole brawl for its possession, accompanied by quite comical situations at that. Zhenya especially got the brunt of it. For some reason, the 'marked' dolphin disliked the guy at the very first 'telepathic examination', and later on, all the time, he tried to make trouble for him. Sometimes the dolphin as if deliberately managed to slap its tail in front of the guy and splash him or, when he swam too close to Sensei, the dolphin tried to 'butt' Zhenya and shove him away from Sensei, to which the guy became indignant, "Sensei, why does he dislike me so much?"

"What do you mean why?" Nikolai Andreyevich grinned, swimming nearby. "Wasn't it you who wanted to bury him alive in the sand?"

"Me?!" Zhenya made an innocent face. "How can you say that?! I love nature..." At that moment the dolphin jumped out of the water near Zhenya

and loudly flopped back, soaking Zhenya with a whole wave of water that covered even his head. You should have seen the guy's face after this unexpected shower. It looked as if Zhenya had been spat at from head to toes, and in the most insolent way. The guy finished his speech angrily, shouting after the diving dolphin, "Like I said, I love nature!" And wiping the water from his face, he added, "Well, almost love it, except for a few specimens."

All the guys burst out laughing, and Sensei warned him with a smile, "Be careful, dolphins like elephants remember offenses for a long time."

However, when it came to the ball which Zhenya took away from the dolphins and decided to tease them with, 'the Marked one' took up a totally threatening pose. The dolphin started shaking his head excitedly from side to side and opened his mouth wide, exposing his conical teeth, no worse than those of a tiger. Then a sharp click of the teeth followed, which was a bad sign. The guy immediately let go of the ball, having no desire to try the dolphin's patience anymore, and quickly swam to the shore. He was followed by a whole cacophony of sounds, very similar to Zhenya's sneering laughter which he had previously imprudently displayed in the dolphins' presence. We couldn't even believe that we were hearing such funny 'laughter' from the dolphins with our own ears. To that Sensei replied that dolphins were able to imitate various sounds. Indeed, when we were swimming together with them, we heard a lot of sounds, from a sound similar to the creak of an ungreased gate up to sounds resembling human laughter and even mosquito whine.

Exhausted by the long swim, we came out of the water following Sensei, while the dolphins still continued to frolic, dashing about with the ball and chasing it farther and farther out into the sea. We already gave up on it, having decided to leave this small present for them as a keepsake. So they took it with them into the open sea.

No other day in our lives was so saturated with unforeseen events as this one. After the colossal water exercises, we simply zoned out, falling into deep slumber. We woke up only in the evening, when the sun was setting over the horizon. Heat finally subsided. It was quiet all around. The sea was calm. It was sheer bliss!

Those who woke up first gathered twigs and firewood for the evening bonfire. Then we cooked dinner together. When we completed our household chores and settled down near the fire for our favourite teatime, the first stars appeared in the sky. We were enjoying sitting in a close friendly circle, waiting, as always, for a conversation with Sensei, so interesting and so useful for our souls. After we had talked about everyday topics, Volodya was the first to turn the conversation in the direction of 'eternal topics'.

"Sensei, you promised to tell us about a Russian Bodhi," he reminded.

"Well, since I promised...," said Sensei, and after a short silence he asked, "Have you heard of a saint by the name Agapit?!"

Some of us shook our heads.

"No," Victor answered for everyone.

But for some reason, the name Agapit seemed familiar to me. So, I started searching my memory, trying to recollect where I could have heard it, and not too long ago.

"Agapit... Agapit," Nikolai Andreyevich said thoughtfully, apparently also recalling something. "Wait a minute... Is this, by any chance, somehow connected with ancient medicine?"

"Ancient Russian medicine," Sensei clarified. "He was a distinguished monk of the Kiev Pechersk monastery, who healed people in the 11th century. The fame of his gift of healing serious illnesses went far beyond Kiev. But this isn't the most important fact in his biography."

Sensei paused, lighting a cigarette. And then, as they say, it dawned on me where I could have heard that name. My uncle's acquaintance had mentioned Agapit. At that time, my mother and I were staying with uncle Victor in Moscow, when I was undergoing examination at the Moscow clinic.

"I know who he is, too!" my persona said excitedly, to the great surprise of my friends. "My uncle in Moscow has a good acquaintance — a scientist who was a member of the scientific group that studied Pechersk relics. He told us that they had conducted some kind of biochemical, radiological, bacteriological, and other... I don't remember what it is called in science... In short, some kind of research that allows you to reconstruct the appearance and constitution of a person on the basis of his bones..."

"Morphological and anthropometric," Nikolai Andreyevich suggested.

"Exactly," and addressing him directly for help, I said, "And also these... when they find out who was sick with what..."

"Aetiological."

"Right," I nodded. "So, thanks to these studies, they reconstructed the true appearance of some Pechersk saints from the Near Caves, including those of Agapit. At that, his relics caused quite a stir among the scientists. It all started when scientists discovered that Agapit's relics emit some sort of strange background or field, basically, an unknown kind of energy. Later they conducted various experiments. For instance, water placed near his relics changed its structure, and plants accelerated their growth, they even became more robust and 'healthy' afterwards. They identified some protective properties against the effects of radiation. Even in the premises where the relics were located, they discovered something that had a very strong bacteriological effect on air. Plain water, placed near Agapit's relics for a while, changed its properties. Moreover, in subsequent experiments on animals and humans, this water had a therapeutic effect as a result of which people's wounds healed faster, various illnesses went away, and sick animals recovered quickly. And most importantly, they discovered a strange cyclic recurrence of the relics' 'field'. On certain days, this 'field' intensified sharply, many times over at that. Basically, it behaved like a living organism... That's what I know!"

Having delivered all the information known to me at the moment, I fell silent.

"Wow, cool!" Andrey gave a whistle.

"What do you expect?" said Sensei, "Agapit was a Bodhisattva."

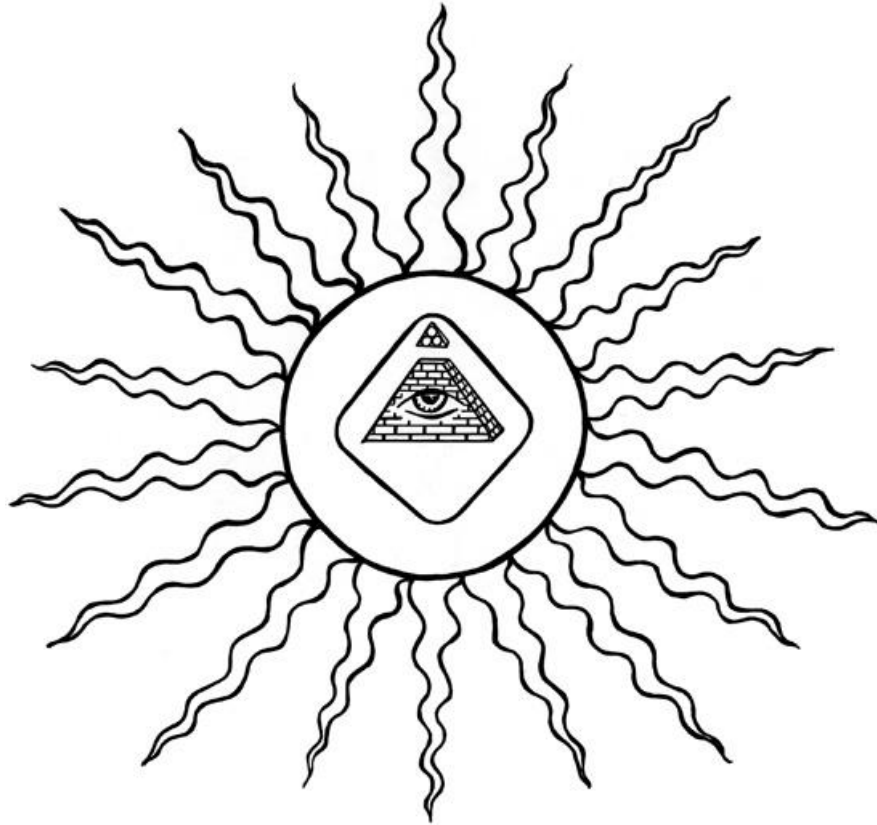
"Hold on," the psychotherapist said, "but he belonged to the Christian religion, while Bodhisattva seems to relate to Buddhism of the East."

"I once explained to you the original meaning of the word Bodhisattva, remember? This word comes from Shambhala. Just like a human being, a Bodhisattva belongs to God. While religions and division of beliefs are just a business of people who trade on the name of God."

"Alright. Then I have another question. If Agapit was a Bodhi, then, in theory, given the level of his knowledge... I mean, in such a case, why is Anthony considered to be the founder of Kiev Pechersk Lavra, this first spiritual centre in Ancient Rus, and not Agapit who lived in his time?"

Sensei grinned,

"It would be more correct to say that Anthony lived in Agapit's time... As for your question, you forgot a little detail. Bodhisattvas rarely act as leaders of human society unless it is connected with a certain specific mission, such as the one Bodhi Issa had. Usually their disciples and followers become such leaders. Whereas a Bodhisattva, as a rule, remains invisible to the broad masses."



**Fragment of the drawing "Agapit" by Anastasia Novykh**

"But why?" Tatyana was surprised.

"Because a Bodhisattva, given his non-interference in human affairs, can only advise how to transform society in a better, spiritual direction. While the transformation itself is a matter of the will and work of people themselves, for example, of his disciples and followers."

"Are you saying that Anthony was Agapit's disciple?" Nikolai Andreyevich finally understood.

Sensei nodded. The doctor thought for a moment and then asked perplexedly, "Yet, what about the established opinion that Agapit was Anthony's disciple? Wasn't it actually based on something?"

"Its 'basis', as you say, is just a church version which, in its turn, was built on the basis of such books as *Paterikon*."

"*Paterikon*?" Volodya asked.

"Yes. It is also called the *Kiev Pechersk Paterikon*. This book is about the lives and activities of the holy fathers of Pechersk, written in the 13th century. It is also based on the *Lives of the Saints* by the Pechersk monastery monk Nestor the Chronicler or, for example, his book *The Tale of Bygone Years* known to you from the school curriculum." Sensei paused and, looking at our young group, remarked good-naturedly, "If you studied in school, of course, and didn't just serve time there from opening to closing bell."

"Of course, we remember," Kostya boasted. "I even remember the date it was written." And he said with an expression, "1113-1115 from the birth of Christ."

The guys broke into smiles.

"That's right," Sensei remarked. "Meaning, a certain time after the real events took place, taking into account the political situation in the country, as well as preferences and sympathies among the higher clergy."

"Well, yeah," Victor said sarcastically. "It's hard to find out who was right. As they say in our circle, after hearing two witnesses in court about the same road traffic accident, you lose confidence in historians."

We burst into laughter, and Kostya added his humour to our laughter.

"It's like when Bernard Shaw was asked after one of his speeches: 'What will history say about this?' And he replied: 'History, sir, will lie, as always.'"

"Why so categorical?" Sensei objected to the guys' laughter. "It's just that when describing the past, every person is guided, first of all, by his own personal considerations. While personal considerations depend on the degree of his spirituality and self-interest, as a result of which objectivity is affected. Give an assignment to ten people to describe the same event and, you can be sure, everyone will present it in their own way. For example, a politician will describe it in a way that is favourable to him in the light of events taking place in his time. A physician will describe it from the medical point of view. While an ordinary man will use an everyday life position, emphasizing those elements which are interesting to him personally. That's how it turns into a different

history. Although, in any story, one can catch the main gist of events. As they say, you need to get to the root."

"Overall, you are right," Nikolai Andreyevich agreed. "In many cases, our view of the current history is really one-sided, not to mention the distant, almost forgotten past..."

"And if we take into account that people, unfortunately, don't change, or rather don't want to change..." Sensei said with a touch of sadness.

"...history, therefore, repeats itself," Nikolai Andreyevich finished his thought.

"It is sad, but true."

Sensei looked pensively at the fire. There was a brief silence. As for us, we didn't dare break into the dialogue between the 'gurus' with our questions.

"So, what actually happened a millennium ago?" Nikolai Andreyevich asked animatedly.

"This is certainly a long story..."

"We are not in any hurry," Volodya answered for everyone, settling in more comfortably and getting ready to listen.

"Okay, since you're not in a hurry," Sensei replied in the same tone, "then listen... Perhaps, I should begin the narrative of the time of Bodhisattva Agapit's stay in the Russian land with a story about Anthony. Later, you will understand why..."

It was a warm summer evening. Complete silence reigned all around. Barely audible sea waves were lapping at the shore with their monotonous, melodic splashing, taking us away into the tunnel of time, into that remote past which, strangely enough, did not in fact seem to be so remote at all.

"...Before becoming a monk, Anthony was called Antipiy. He was born in Chernigov land, in the town of Lyubech in 983, five years before the christening of Rus, during the reign of Vladimir I Svyatoslavich in the capital city of Kiev."

"Is he by any chance the one who was called the Fair Sun in the Russian epic poems?" Kostya inserted.



"Yes, that was him, the grandson of Princess Olga and Kiev Prince Igor," Sensei clarified and continued, "Antipiy's youth took place during a turbulent time. It was right when the Old Russian state was being established, and the Eastern Slavic tribes were forming an alliance. Wars with neighbouring countries were waged in the south and in the west. Moreover, internal strife and confrontations between various religions were stirring up additional trouble. At the same time, replacement of multiple pillars of paganism with new Christian canons was actively going on, so to speak, by a 'decree from above.' At that, for both parties, it came to 'fire and sword.' In short, the usual chaos or, as we would say today, 'mayhem of the times of change'."

"Right. As the saying goes, you wouldn't wish on your enemy to be born during the time of change," Volodya said in his deep voice.

"Exactly. Though Antipiy somehow managed to..."

"As all of us did, too," Victor added quietly.

"Generally speaking, Antipiy's youth was quite 'lively'. Events that were taking place greatly contributed to the fact that he began to make attempts to understand not only the external, but, in the first place, his own self. And not just understand it, but understand it thoroughly. At that time, many people believed in God. He also felt that there's God. Yet, why was there such a turmoil going on all around? Why did God allow such evil? There was some kind of confrontation and unnecessary bloodshed. People were suffering, their children were suffering; diseases, poverty, and death raged. Antipiy had an opportunity to listen to preachers of various religions. All of them taught belief in their God, worshipping Him, and praying to Him. But the paradox was that they themselves lacked that pure faith which they spoke about, and they themselves didn't fulfill what they demanded of others. Neither did Antipiy trust those who came with a sword, talking about God. Yet, on the other hand, he was tormented by thoughts, 'Why, if there's God who loves, there is so much grief around, so much blood is spilled senselessly? Why does God allow such grievous suffering?'

There were many questions, but, as always, not a single sensible answer in

the swarm of thoughts. However, one day, a wanderer who stopped at their place for the night told a story that really intrigued him. The wanderer told him about the life of Jesus Christ. Antipiy was astonished, for it turned out that people killed even the Son of God Himself. Why didn't the Almighty God stop those people? Why did He not intervene when His own Son was suffering from impious people and His body was dying on the cross? But when Antipiy understood that the essence lay in the human choice, the choice of each person in the eyes of God, he realized that the cause of the chaos happening around was not in God, but in people themselves, including himself.

This insight turned his personal views on life upside down so much that he began to look differently not only at long-bygone events that had happened millennia ago, but also at the present. He sincerely came to love Christ, for the latter was akin to him in his suffering. Antipiy really sincerely, truly came to love God and started pondering, who was he actually in His eyes?

Antipiy was also struck by the fact that there were people living in the world who had truly devoted their lives to God. For the first time, he heard from the wanderer that there was a holy place on Mount Athos in the land of Greece; and that people who lived there were different, not like everyone else. They abandon this worldly life and seclude themselves for God's sake, for the sake of praying to Him for salvation of their souls. They wear black clothes and take three vows: obedience, celibacy and poverty. Those people are called monks.

Antipiy got a burning desire to become a monk and to be in an incessant prayer to God. Only he didn't know how to get to that mount in the foreign Greek land or how to pray to God so as to be heard by Him. So, Antipiy began to appeal to God with his simple, sincere words and to ask God to give him a wise teacher who would teach him true prayer leading to salvation of his soul. His desire was so strong, he thought about it so persistently and asked God so sincerely for many months and even years, that ultimately, the following happened.

It happened in winter, at dawn, on February 12th according to the old style (the Julian calendar) or on February 25th according to the new style (by the

Gregorian calendar which we use nowadays). That night, he couldn't sleep, once again reflecting on God. He became so absorbed in thought that he started addressing Him as a loving son would address his own Father, begging Him, the best he could, for a soul-saving prayer. He intuitively felt that he needed to ask God only for spiritual things, and not for temporal and earthly ones; that he had to ask sincerely, with pure faith in his soul. So, when Antipiy once again went deeply into his mental appeal to God, suddenly unnatural heat flared up in his chest, and it seemed to intensify every second. In the end, it became so strong that it was unbearable to endure. Antipiy got dressed hurriedly and went outside.

Being out in the cold, he felt a little better. A cold, piercing wind was blowing. It was snowing. Antipiy decided to find a shelter from the weather in a nearby haystack. Watching the raging elements of nature from his shelter and feeling intense heat in his chest, Antipiy began to appeal to God with even greater sincerity. He was so imbued with the prayer that he forgot about the weather, the place, and the time he was in. He was overcome by an extraordinary feeling of God's closeness. It was the closeness of the Being nearest and dearest to his heart, as a result of which his soul felt warm and light.

It was already dawn. The wind suddenly abated. It stopped snowing. On the horizon, the first rays of the sun began to make their way through leaden clouds, enlivening the dazzling white space with a play of sparkling light. And then Antipiy saw not far from him a peculiar old man in black clothes. Greyish blond hair and a snow-white beard fringed his unusual face. A soft friendly smile played on his lips, while his extraordinary eyes, as if looking into the very soul of Antipiy, radiated deep sympathy and unfailing kindness.

The elder began to approach, his bare feet stepping imperceptibly and silently on the snow. Surprisingly, Antipiy heard his friendly words, his melodious voice caressing the ear, even though the elder never opened his mouth. He stopped very close, so that Antipiy could even smell the delicate, fragrant aroma emanating from him. All of a sudden, a bright bluish-white ball

began to emerge from the elder's chest. Its light was of extraordinary purity and brightness. However, it didn't blind or hurt the eyes. Quite the opposite, it attracted one's gaze with its soft glow and mesmerizing play of blue iridescence. Golden letters began to appear in this stream of pure light, turning into a single text. Antipiy rather understood what was written there, for at that moment the elder's melodious voice sounded in his head with the words of a soul-saving prayer: **"My True Father! In You, the One, I trust and I pray to You, Oh Lord, just for salvation of my soul. Let Your holy will be my strengthening..."** At that point, Antipiy felt so good and so tranquil in his soul, as if through this prayer, God Himself turned His attention to His child and offered him a helping hand.

After proclaiming the prayer, the elder directed him to go to Tsargrad..."

"Tsargrad?" Slavik asked timidly, apparently not wanting to interrupt Sensei on the one hand, but at the same time, burning with curiosity. "Where is that?"

"It's the present-day Istanbul in Turkey, located on both banks of the Bosphorus Strait between Europe and Asia, connecting the Black and the Marmara Seas," Sensei gave the full answer, probably to avoid more questions about geography.

"Wow, he sent him a long way," Kostya interjected. "What did he need the Turks for?"

"Don't be stupid," Andrey hushed him, displeased with Kostya's meddling questions and disrupting the flow of the story that captivated him so much. "You were already told, back then it was Tsargrad."

"Ah-ah, so, there were Russians there?" Kostya wouldn't stop, trying to get to the bottom of it.

"No. It's just that back then, the Russians called Constantinople this way, the capital of the Byzantine Empire," Sensei explained patiently.

"Constantinople?" Kostya exclaimed happily and, apparently in order to rehabilitate himself, uttered rapidly, "Was it by any chance a tribute to the emperor Constantine who founded the religion of Christianity?"

"Exactly. A tribute to the Roman emperor Constantine." But as soon as Kostya opened his mouth with another question, Sensei forestalled him. "A tribute to the Roman emperor, because this city became the capital of the Roman Empire in 330 AD and then was the capital of the Byzantine Empire from 395 to 1453. But actually, it was founded in 659 BC and was called Byzantium."

Having received such an exhaustive answer, Kostya immediately hushed, especially since Andrey gave him a slight nudge, clearly signalling him to be quiet. Meanwhile, Sensei continued the story,

"So, the elder ordered him to go to Constantinople, and from there to the Holy Mountain where God would honour him with a meeting with the One in Whom the very Holy Spirit truly abode, and He would be like a Luminary for him on his way to God. Having said this, the elder vanished. The wind rose again. The sky became cloudy, and heavy snowfall started again. However, Antipiy no longer paid attention to the raging weather. He was happy and determined to fulfill the behest of the elder whose kind face got engraved in his memory for the rest of his life. This vision became a key to his entire future destiny. It can be said that from this moment, the moment of his personal choice, Antipiy's life had changed dramatically.

For a whole week, Antipiy was in an unusual state of elation, constantly repeating the prayer given to him by the elder. It was as if God Himself was next to him and indescribably gladdened his soul with His presence. It was precisely in those days that Antipiy gained a new, incomparable feeling towards God. For the first time, he understood what true God's love is. This feeling could not be compared to his previous reflections on God, a naive comparison with ordinary human emotions that existed among people. This was something much greater that couldn't be described in human language. This was precisely *That* which the soul joyfully trembled of, being in unearthly rapture.

Yet, exactly seven days after the unforgettable vision, this extraordinary sensation of the Presence disappeared, leaving in memory only pleasant recollections of the truly divine feeling of the soul rejoicing. Without hesitation,

Antipiy packed up and went on a long journey, not really knowing which way to go. But, as they say, you can get anywhere if you know how to use your tongue. Antipiy's tongue brought him to Constantinople. The way was not easy. However, incessantly repeating to himself the soul-saving prayer which he had heard from the elder, Antipiy felt that God Himself was helping him. Miraculously escaping the dangers of his journey, Antipiy was at the same time extremely lucky to meet good fellow-travellers as well as kind people who showed him the right way, gave him alms and temporary lodging or shelter for the night.

When he finally reached Tsargrad, also known as Constantinople, Antipiy roamed around the capital for a long time. Although the city was beautiful, everything was foreign there: foreign language, foreign people, foreign customs. He was there for many days before he met a fellow-traveller to Athos."

At that point, Volodya, coughing politely into his fist, said, "I heard about Athos, but frankly, I don't even know where it is located." And stretching his lips into an awkward smile, he added, "It's definitely not a military 'hot zone' of the planet."

"That's for sure," Sensei agreed with a smile and began to explain. "If you look at the modern map, Athos is located in present-day Greece. It's a narrow mountainous peninsula, more precisely, the eastern arm of the Halkidiki Peninsula in the Aegean Sea. It ends at Mount Athos that has a height of a little over two kilometers. It is this mountain that gave the name to the peninsula."

"Well, it looks like we all have big gaps in our knowledge of geography," Victor grinned.

"It's okay, we can bridge them since they are big," Sensei said good-naturedly and continued his narration. "By the time Antipiy came there, Athos was already recognized as an independent monastic state, officially subordinated to the Byzantine emperor in terms of administrative division. But, in actual fact, it was ruled by Protos, a respected elder who was elected to the leadership by all the Athos monasteries for a year. At that time, such

monasteries as the Great Lavra, Protaton, and Moni Iviron were already on Athos. But Antipiy wasn't admitted there right away.

So, following advice of an old monk, Antipiy settled in one of the caves located in a secluded spot in the south-western part of the island. It should be noted that despite food scarcity, the entire two years that he lived in the cave were for him some of the best years on Athos. He was happy to have finally reached Athos as the elder in the vision had told him. He was happy to have the opportunity to fervently pray to God with the prayer given to him in his vision, to live for this, and to be one-on-one with Him amid the magnificent nature. During the day, he visited monastic churches, learned the new language, and the rules of monastic life. While in the evenings, he prayed earnestly, often seeing off the sunset and greeting the sunrise in prayer. It was only two years later that Antipiy was admitted by the hegumen of one of the monasteries and took his monastic vows, having received a new name of Anthony, in honour of the Saint Anthony the Great of Egypt who had lived an ascetic life and stayed alone in caves for a long time.

Anthony took the hegumen of this monastery for that very 'Luminary' whom the elder had mentioned in the vision. The hegumen, in his turn, as befitted him according to his spiritual rank, began to teach Anthony monastic life. In a few years, Anthony reached such spiritual growth and made such 'progress in virtue' that many already addressed him for spiritual help. Even the monks were amazed at such rapid strengthening of his spirit and will. Then the hegumen had a vision that Anthony would be involved in the rise of the Christian faith in Rus, that Anthony was destined to prepare the Abode for the Holy Spirit Himself. The hegumen regarded that as a sign and hastened to send him off to Rus, to Kiev.

At that time, Anthony was about thirty years old. Upon reaching Kiev, he visited the monasteries being built by Greek monks who came with Metropolitan Michael for the Christening of Rus. However, he decided not to stop in any of those monasteries and started walking around the mountainous local neighbourhood. In the end, he found a small cave, which the Vikings had

once dug up, and settled in it. But he didn't live there long. As soon as Sviatopolk came into power upon Prince Vladimir's death, bloodshed and persecution started again. Anthony went back to Athos, where he lived until his old age in earnest prayer.

Although Anthony lived according to the monastery order, he still had a special holiday of spiritual zeal. He noticed that every year, on the day that he had had the memorable vision of the peculiar elder, from the very early morning, Anthony began to feel an unusual burst of energy. The same state of spiritual elation, which he had experienced after the vision, returned to him. It lasted for exactly a week and then disappeared again. Anthony began to regard those days as a special holiday for his soul. During this week, he tried to seclude himself, to fast, and to pray even more diligently to God. The outcome was amazing. This extraordinary feeling of inner elation strengthened many times over, and every year it grew stronger and stronger.

Studying the church literature afterwards, Anthony increasingly came to the conclusion that in the memorable vision the Archangel Gabriel Himself — the proclaimer of joy and salvation, the first messenger and servant of the Divine omnipotence of God's wonders and mysteries — had come to him, although in a vision somewhat unusual for the church notion.

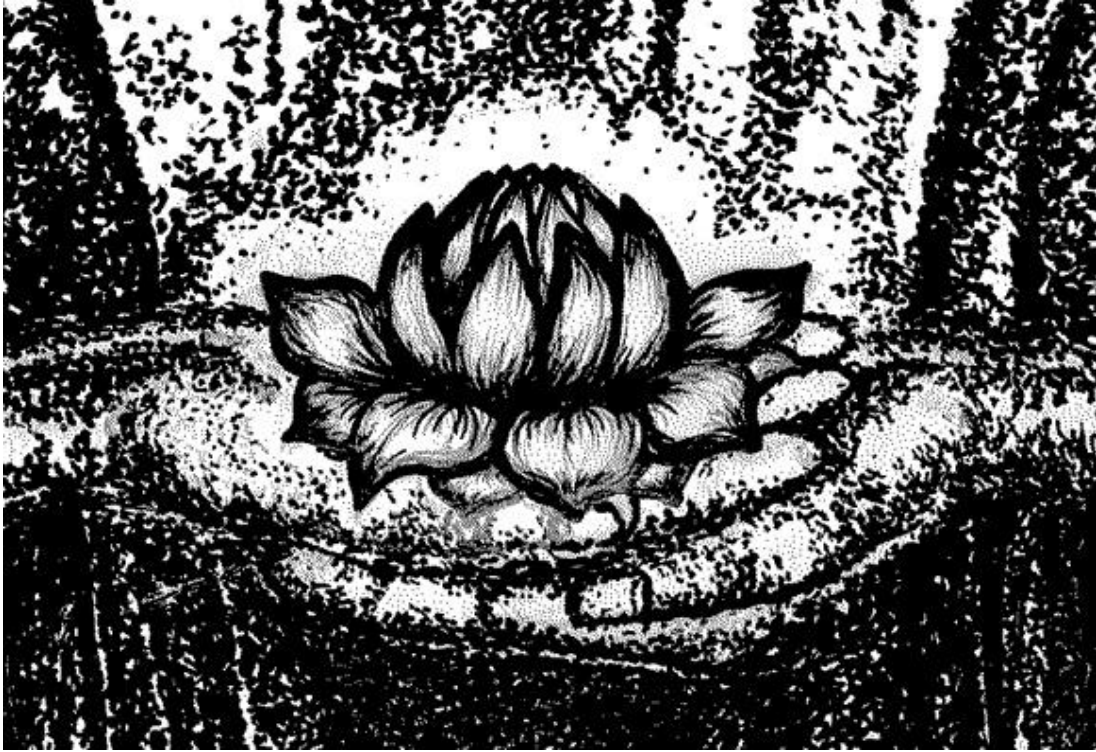
Yet, the most important events in Anthony's spiritual life began when he was already past sixty. One day, a rumour went among the brethren that a certain mysterious person would soon visit their monastery. Judging by the elders' orders, they were indeed preparing for the arrival of a spiritual guest who was apparently very important to them. As Anthony later told Agapit himself, he had thought that they were expecting the arrival of some spiritual elder of high authority. Thus, it came as a surprise when, instead of an elder, he saw a young man with a pleasant appearance and light blond hair. The only unusual feature was his penetrating eyes, glowing with some profound wisdom and spiritual brilliance beyond his years. But most of all, Anthony was struck by the reverence and deep respect that some of the Athos elders displayed towards this young man. He couldn't fathom why his stay there was covered



with some kind of a veil of impenetrable mystery. Who was this guy that the elders showed him so much honour and attention? He didn't seem to be a monk, but gave such spiritual speeches that even their wise teachers listened to him spellbound. Moreover, this guy turned out to be quite an enlightened person. He had perfect mastery of several languages. And what pleasantly surprised Anthony in particular was that the respectable guest was a native of the Russian land and, as it turned out later, knew Kiev and its environs quite well. The name of the young man was Agapit.

Even when Anthony was personally introduced to him, at first he couldn't get used to the guy's simple manner of communicating with him, despite the importance of his persona to Athos and the reverence which their elders treated him with. But perhaps the most striking was the simplicity and clarity with which Agapit explained the spiritual wisdom of the holy fathers. And when it came to his interpretation of the Teaching of Jesus, Anthony could listen to him for hours because Agapit spoke so simply and clearly, and gave such examples and details, as if he had actually been present at those events of a thousand years ago. These stories urged Anthony to reread the available ecclesiastical writings again and again.

During the period of time when Agapit stayed on Athos, Anthony became close friends with him. Despite his young age, Agapit had quite a significant store of knowledge, including that in the field of medicine. He imparted some of this knowledge to Anthony as well. Agapit was also well-versed, speaking our language, in physics, chemistry, knowledge of natural phenomena, and in the fields of human life such as philosophy, politics, and religion. It was a pleasure to converse with him on a variety of topics, and those conversations left some kind of an inexplicable, pleasant feeling in the soul.



**Fragment of the drawing “Agapit” by Anastasia Novykh**

Anthony became friends with Agapit despite such a significant age difference. In this friendship, Anthony discovered for himself a completely new and amazing Personality of Agapit when the latter began to initiate him into the mysteries of the great Bailian Jiao science (the Art of the White Lotus). It was from Agapit's mouth that Anthony first heard about the previous human civilization of Alt-Land (Atlantis), about the underground Lotus Temple built in those days in the Kiev land, and about the package which Jesus had given to Apostle Andrew the First-Called for those places. Agapit conveyed much to him and taught him a lot.

After a while, they parted. Agapit had to go to the capital of the Byzantine Empire and from there to the East. But he promised that he would definitely meet with Anthony again, and ‘foretold’ their meeting in the Kiev land, in a place marked at the time of the Alt-Land.”

"Is there really a marked place there?" Kostya inquired, clearly wanting to

hear more.

"Of course," Sensei replied. "This place is even mentioned in the Gospel of Andrew the First-Called..."

"Andrew the First-Called?!" Andrey roused himself excitedly, as if he had just heard this name.

"Who is that?" Ruslan asked lazily, scratching his side.

Sensei grinned and said, looking at him,

"Andrew was one of Jesus' closest disciples. He was among the first whom Jesus took as His disciples while preaching in Palestine."

"Hmm... is there really such a gospel by Andrew the First-Called?" Nikolai Andreyevich was surprised. "I've read the Bible and heard about Andrew. As for his Gospel... I don't recall it. Maybe, this book just wasn't included in the Bible? Because how many Gospels are there — four, five?"

"Four," Sensei answered and added after a pause, "Of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John." Although even those were written..." but leaving it unfinished, he continued, "Indeed, there is no Gospel of Andrew the First-Called in the Bible. Not all the gospels were included in the Bible, but only those selected by the Emperor Constantine and his assistants to help them achieve the tasks set for them. The rest of the gospels were simply rejected because interpretations in them were far from what was needed or beneficial. And even those that were selected were sizably edited in accordance with the situation of that time and the establishment of Christianity as a state religion.

Since the year 364, when the New Testament was approved as such, and until the first edition of the Bible was published, the text had been edited repeatedly as well. Moreover, inaccuracies in translation played their part. After all, the Bible was written in ancient Hebrew with a small part in Aramaic, while the New Testament was written in Greek. Therefore, the first printed book published in 1455 was already significantly different even from the one that had been edited in the year 364. Plus adjustments were made afterwards. As a result, we have what we have. Nonetheless, a lot of information, valuable and necessary for people, has reached our times," Sensei emphasized. "Again,

speaking of the Gospels, in addition to the ones canonized by the church, there are dozens of apocryphal gospels."

Ruslan frowned and asked in a businesslike tone, "What is apo... apo.... well, this... critique?"

"Apocrypha are works of literature unrecognized by the church or priesthood as sacred books. But in general, the word *apocrypha* originates from the Greek *apokryphos*, which means 'mysterious', 'secret'. Originally, it was attributed to the works of one of the Christian groups who called themselves Gnostics and tried to keep their teaching in secret."

"That's right," Nikolai Andreyevich nodded. "By the way, I read that in 1946 a whole library of works by Christian Gnostics was found in the south of Egypt."

"Absolutely right," confirmed Sensei. "It was precisely there that, among other literature, they found the so-called Gospel of Thomas, of Philip, of the Truth, and apocrypha by John. Moreover, some time earlier, excerpts from unknown gospels written in different versions were found on papyri in Egypt."

"Wow, such a nuisance for priests!" Zhenya giggled. "These little books are unrecognized, yet they keep on finding them. What a nuisance with this ancient 'wastepaper!'"

Sensei and the guys grinned.

"Another problem is that even the apocrypha are split up into 'allowed' and the so-called 'renounced'. Of course, they tried hard to destroy the 'renounced' ones. By the way, the first official list of 'renounced' books was compiled in the Eastern Roman Empire in the 5th century AD. Naturally, after such 'vandalism', descendants got only names and citations, quoted in their works by Christian writers of the 2nd-4th centuries, who were arguing with those very books... Though, everything is the same as always," shrugged Sensei.

"Yes, it is sad," Nikolai Andreyevich uttered. "After all, it's the history of humankind. Why destroy it? A book could have just lain there until its time. Let the descendants judge it objectively."

"You see, the problem is," Sensei began to explain, "that some of those books were indeed valuable because they reflected the true Teaching of Jesus in the form in which he had given it. That's why they left no single human soul indifferent, for the true Teaching of Jesus enabled people to become really free from all fears of this world. They began to understand that the body is perishable, while the soul is immortal. People stopped being hostages and slaves of the illusion of existence in the material world. They understood that only God was above them. They realized how short life was and how temporary those conditions were which their present body was constrained in. They knew that this life, no matter how long it seemed, was just an instant in which their soul resided. They understood that any earthly power, be it of political or religious structures, was limited only to power over their bodies. Rulers, however, worship their own 'god' who's given power on Earth, over its matter, but not over the soul. For the soul belongs only to the One true God. Thus, the first followers of Jesus who professed His Teaching (and not the religion that it later became) lost fear of this life. They began to feel and understand that God was very near to them, closer and dearer than anyone, and that He is eternal... Such true freedom of people terribly frightened those in power. That's why the latter started collecting and thoroughly remaking the written sources about the Teaching of Jesus already available by that time. A lot of them were destroyed after selecting the information they needed in order to create a new religion, which was then imposed by the authorities, as it is said, from the top downward.

Therefore, many written sources containing the true words of Jesus simply didn't fit into collections of the 'new ideology for the masses.' Yet, despite all the conscious omissions, the tricks and selfish ambitions of people who were in power in the religious elite at various times, these written sources have existed and still exist!

So, in the Gospel of Andrew the First-Called, it is said that after Pontius Pilate's people had saved Jesus following the crucifixion, Jesus talked to Pontius Pilate, and it was specifically at Pilate's request that Jesus decided to go

to the East. Before leaving, he allocated regions to the apostles of where to go and preach the Teaching."

"I thought the apostles drew lots of who would go where," Nikolai Andreyevich remarked.

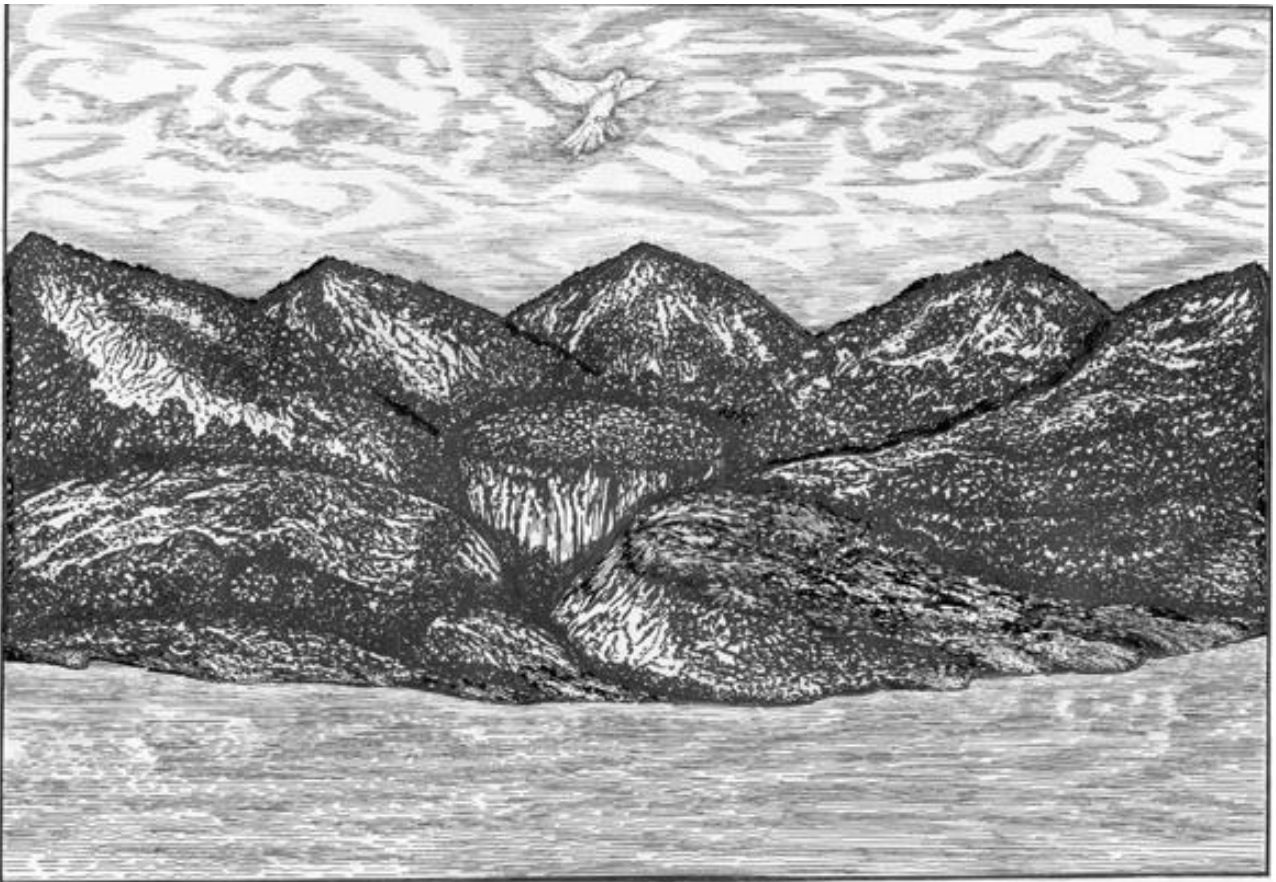
"No, there were no lots drawn as such. That's already people's guesswork. The apostles... By the way, the word *apostolos* is translated from Greek as 'messenger'. So, Jesus' disciples-messengers were very different people, and, naturally, they didn't have the same degree of spiritual development. Jesus allocated to them different regions with the corresponding peoples and tribes, based on the spiritual maturity of the messengers themselves. Those who were somewhat stronger got more difficult places or regions which were especially important for the future spiritual revival of humankind, while the weaker ones got less difficult 'areas'. Thus, all in all, everyone was assigned a load according to his strength." Sensei paused and then said, "It was too important for many human souls, both at that time and in the future, to trust the dissemination of this Teaching to simple lots drawn by the human mind..."

As for Andrew who was one of the strongest disciples, Jesus instructed him to travel and preach in Thrace, Scythia, and Sarmatia. But his main task was to get to the mountains of Borysthenes and lay a blessing there on those lands where the Holy Spirit Himself would descend in a thousand years and establish His Abode. Jesus gave Andrew lotus seeds and ordered him to lay them into that land as a gift to the Holy Spirit. His words became a puzzle posed by Jesus, both for Andrew himself and for those who came across this description afterwards. Few people understood why Jesus had given him precisely the lotus seeds, even if those seeds were just a symbol."

"Indeed, why?" Andrey asked with surprise.

Sensei only smiled enigmatically and, avoiding a direct answer, said,

"Any seed is, first of all... Well, to make it clearer for you, I'll put it figuratively, it's a 'microchip' that has a huge memory. It is able to carry not only the matrix of a future plant, but also a huge amount of other information. Some time later I'll tell you more about this. In addition to everything else, these seeds had been in the hands of Jesus Himself — the Son of God. Moreover, those were the seeds of a lotus, the germinating ability of which is preserved for millennia... Hence, make your own conclusions."



**Drawing “The Place Jesus Indicated to Andrew the First-Called” by  
Anastasia Novykh**

Sensei fell silent, while we sat there, looking at him and stupidly trying to latch with our little wits onto the ‘conclusions’ of what was actually so special

about that event. Then Andrey, obviously trying at his mental level to put two and two together in a disorderly tangle of questions, asked,

"So, how did Andrew the First-Called find the place that Jesus indicated?"

"Easily," Sensei said simply. "In the *Good News*, or *euangelion* in Greek, Andrew described not only the true life of Jesus, but also his own journey while fulfilling the mission. He specifically mentioned there that when he got to those places by the river Borysthenes (the Dnieper was earlier called Borysthenes), Andrew immediately recognized this place because it turned out that Jesus had described it with detailed precision. It seemed that Jesus knew those mountains very well, although he never mentioned that he had been there.

"Had He really been there?" Yura asked.

"He's the Son of God, after all," Sensei replied with a smile. "While God is everywhere." And after a pause, he continued the narrative, "So, the Gospel of Andrew the First-Called was rejected exactly because it in no way fit in with the 'cutting and sewing' of the new religion 'with a white thread.' Basically, there were two reasons for that. Firstly, it was too freedom-loving and truthful, since the true words of Jesus were written in it, as they say, firsthand. Moreover, the very narration style of Jesus' Teaching was too simple, wise and straightforward. Andrew also described details of his Teacher's real life, told about Jesus staying in the East in his youth, which again didn't fit into the church dogmas. Besides, the mention of the lotus seeds left their 'majesties censors' completely perplexed. After all, it was reminiscent of such religions as Buddhism and Hinduism. Nobody wanted to mix such vivid foreign symbolism into his own religion. So, this became another stumbling block and led to disputes and strife among those who were deciding in which 'colours' the ideology of this religion had to be designed. That's why they put the Gospel of Andrew the First-Called as far away as possible, so to say, 'out of sight.'

Of course, there were versions of the Gospel of Andrew the First-Called circulating among various early Christian groups, but those were mostly



records made by the followers of Andrew the First-Called about Jesus' Teaching itself."

"And what happened to this Gospel of Andrew? Did they destroy it, or what?" Andrey asked.

"They certainly tried," Sensei chuckled, apparently recalling some funny occasion at that moment. "Yet, as they say, such things can neither be drowned in water nor burnt in fire, even if human foolishness desires it very much... But it's all nothing, just minutiae of life... Many years after Andrew the First-Called had fulfilled the Teacher's request, Jesus' words came true. A city of Kiev emerged in that place — 'the mother of Russian cities', the capital of the Slavs' union cradle — of Kievan Rus. And at the site where Andrew had laid the lotus seeds, a thousand years later the Holy Spirit Himself descended in a human body and established His Abode there."

"What do you mean by 'the Holy Spirit descended in a human body'?" Kostya asked.

"Well, simply put, the head of Shambhala came in Agapit's body."

"The Lord of Shambhala Himself?" Andrey was amazed.

Sensei smiled.

"Yes. At least once every twelve thousand years, he has to visit the human world, so to say, in an official capacity. And even more often during important events for humanity, almost every thousand years, especially at the initial and the final stages of every civilization."

Kostya hardly opened his mouth to ask something when Sensei, looking at him, anticipated with an answer,

"'Civilization' is meant from the point of view of Shambhala... But perhaps we got a little off topic. Let's go back to those events that occurred a thousand years after Jesus... Several years after Agapit had left Athos, the hegumen received a message from God again. Archangel Gabriel Himself appeared to him in a vision and ordered him to send Anthony to Rus. This happened in the year 1051.

This time, upon arriving in Kiev, Anthony no longer visited Christian

monasteries, although none of them would have refused shelter to the venerable elder from Mount Athos. Anthony purposefully came to the place where he had accidentally stayed when visiting Kiev for the first time and where Agapit had told him to return before he left. He settled on a hill near the Dnieper, in the same cave. And he began to live, waiting for Agapit and staying in constant prayers to God, especially the one that had been guiding him since his young age. Although he was often in need of food and worked physically every day, deepening the cave, still he was again truly happy. For he was one-on-one with God like before, in his distant youth, when he lived in the caves of Athos.

Soon the locals got to know about him. Anthony became renowned among them for what Agapit had taught him on Athos — miracle-working, the gift of foresight, and healing with prayers. People began to visit him: some for treatment, others for blessing, while still others wanted to stay with him in attainment of spiritual feats. So, by the time Agapit arrived, several people were already living in the cave with Anthony, initiated by the elder at their request into the monastic order. By that time, they had enlarged and deepened the cave by joint efforts and made monastic cells there for themselves.

Anthony greeted his old friend with great joy. Seeing such a respectful attitude of the elder towards Agapit, the rest of the brethren also treated him with reverence. Agapit kept surprising Anthony with his mysterious and, in many respects, enigmatic personality. Upon Agapit's arrival in Kiev, Anthony witnessed his secret meeting with Yaroslav the Wise himself. Agapit presented four valuable handwritten books and three manuscripts for his 'book depository'. At that, three of the books were decorated with expensive jewels, while the fourth one, although looking modestly decorated, was obviously very ancient. Anthony was astounded because every book was a real masterpiece and worth a fortune. As for the manuscripts... Even one manuscript in those days was valued extremely high. And only a person no less than of 'royal blue blood' could afford such a luxurious, truly kingly gift. However, that was not the only thing which amazed Anthony back then. Above all, it was how openly

Agapit and Yaroslav communicated with each other! Yaroslav talked to him as if he had known Agapit well for a long time, as if they were good old friends, and that was despite a considerable difference in age and Yaroslav's high princely position.

After that memorable meeting, shocked by what he had seen, Anthony hastened to propose that Agapit lead the brethren for whom he was the elder. However, Agapit wished to leave everything as it was and to be a simple monk. He asked Anthony not to tell anyone about his meeting with Yaroslav. And he wished to take monastic vows so as not to stand out among the rest of the brethren.

"Wow!" an exclamation escaped Kostya. "But he was a Bodhisattva! And he chose to become a simple monk?!"

Sensei looked at him intently and said crisply,

"For a Bodhisattva, any power is but an empty word. A Bodhisattva serves only God. Unlike humans, he knows what it means to dwell 'here' and what it is to dwell 'there'."

Kostya got a little embarrassed and said, shamefaced,

"No, I didn't mean it that way... I meant..." and then, apparently, he found an appropriate argument, "I meant, a person should rest sometime. Otherwise, it's work all the time. As far as I know, simple monks worked very hard in those days."

To which Sensei replied,

"For a Bodhisattva, there is no such a concept as rest in the human understanding. He knows the meaning of time and knows how to value it. Of course, Agapit was an influential and strong personality. But he deliberately got away from power and control over the brethren and devoted all his free time to really helping people. By the way, later, when the number of brethren increased, Anthony handed over management to Barlaam and followed Agapit's example of being a simple monk."

"What kind of help did Agapit render to people? Healing?" asked Volodya.

"Yes. In addition to his other merits, Agapit was also a good physician. His

heartfelt, caring attitude towards his patients gave rise to unprecedented fame and respect for him among people, even far beyond Kiev, although Agapit himself almost never left the monastery area. He became one of the most famous healers of the 11th century. People called him 'the Healer from God.' He cured illnesses which were so severe that none of the famous physicians of that time attempted to treat them. Take, for example, such a historically known fact when Agapit healed the Chernigov prince Vladimir Vsevolodovich Monomakh who was at death's door. The doctor by the nickname 'Armenian', who was considered to be the best doctor of noble people at that time, could do nothing to help the prince. But it was enough for Agapit to send with the prince's messenger a 'miraculous potion' prepared with a prayer to get Vladimir Monomakh on his feet in a matter of days. Later on, the prince came to Pechersk monastery to thank Agapit and brought with him gold and many expensive gifts. However, Agapit rejected everything both from the prince himself as well as from a boyar whom he later sent on his behalf. That's because Agapit treated both ordinary people and noblemen with equal zeal free of charge, for which they called him Agapit the Unmercenary Healer. Naturally, this evoked common human jealousy, bordering on anger, in such doctors as the Armenian. But if we take the Armenian himself, he eventually realized who Agapit really was, and it was thanks to this that the Armenian later became a monk at the Pechersk monastery."

"So, he didn't even take money for treatment?!" Kostya was surprised again. "Then how did Agapit live?"

"Modestly. In a spiritual feat." And smiling, Sensei added, "His cell evoked pity even in thieves, for the only thing valuable in it was Agapit himself, his experience and knowledge."

"Yet, what did he feed on, the holy spirit, or what?"

Sensei laughed.

"No. He definitely never ate himself."

"Well, this way, it wouldn't be too long before you... eh, kick the bucket."

"Sooner or later, all of us will kick the bucket," Sensei said, either in jest or

seriously. "But that's not the point."

"Well, that's clear... But he didn't steal this money, he earned it with honest work. Especially since people brought it to him themselves. Why didn't he take it?"

"You see, Agapit taught monks true service to God. He used to say that *gold* and *monk* are incompatible things. A person cannot serve two masters: he serves either God or earthly riches, meaning, the devil. There is no third option. A monk truly expects reward for all his deeds only from God in *that* world, and not here from people. **Gold is indeed dirt for the soul and temptation for thoughts. It is the filth that many crave, but which is actually a phantom deception. For a monk, true value lies in sincere prayer for his soul. It is not the satiety of one's belly and health of one's body that a person should care about. For no matter how much you eat, sooner or later you'll become hungry all the same. And no matter how good your health is, sooner or later your flesh will die anyway. While the soul is eternal and the only one worthy of true care.** As Agapit used to say, a monk prays for all people because of his heartfelt desire, but the whole point of monkhood is to serve God and, through prayer, to obtain from Him salvation for one's soul."

Sensei stopped talking. Silence fell. But soon it was disturbed by Victor's thoughtful voice:

"Not everyone is capable of that..."

However, the guy's train of thought was interrupted by Kostya's 'conclusions',

"So, speaking modern language, Agapit was a folk healer?"

Sensei answered with a grin,

"Well, speaking modern language, Agapit was rather an academician. As I've already said, he had complete mastery not only of medical knowledge, but of other disciplines as well. He knew several languages and fluently read original treatises by ancient Roman authors. He translated books into the Slavonic language. He made translations not only of books from the East, but

even of the ancient Egyptian manuscripts which he had brought with him for Yaroslav the Wise's book depository.

Later, Agapit also helped... or rather, consulted Svyatoslav who was compiling the 'Collection of 1073' which, in addition to encyclopaedic articles, contained detailed medical information. Specifically, the ways of recognizing diseases, various tips for the preparation and use of medicinal plants, information about human physiology and anatomy. For a long time afterwards, this book was used as a textbook.

Agapit was certainly instilling culture and a thirst for knowledge among monks as well. He taught some of them medical knowledge, and in his spare time he helped others study up on books. By the way, later on, it became mandatory for monks and was officially adopted into the monastic bylaws to read books in their spare time. It was on his initiative that a book depository of the Kiev Pechersk monastery was established."

"A book depository?" Ruslan repeated the word that sounded so foreign in its antiquity.

"Yes. A library as we call it."

"Ahhh..."

"So, Agapit helped some gifted monks master the art of healing," Sensei continued his story. "The learning was based on special prayers pronounced in a particular state of consciousness, usually over food or liquid. Owing to this, the liquid, for example, would get filled with power, after which it was used as medicine and given to a patient for internal or external use. Simply put, Agapit's students learned to change not only the physical parameters of a liquid, but also the structure of molecules, embedding the necessary information. Of course, they didn't know the whole process that took place in the microworld of a molecule of liquid structure in such detail, nor exactly how it influenced a macro object. But they didn't really need that. Monks simply used the general postulates of the knowledge which Agapit taught them as we, for example, use electricity today. People use the energy of electric current every day, even though, to this day, no one really knows what it is.

For instance, monk Damian, whom Agapit was teaching, was good at treating people, especially children, by means of anointing with chrism."

"With what?" asked Slava who seemed not to have caught what Sensei had said.

"With chrism."

"What's that?"

"Chrism is olive oil, or wood oil. Christians, for example, have a whole rite, the so-called unctuous devotion — a sacrament that is performed by seven priests or, if it's not possible, by one priest over a sick person. It is also called unctioning with oil. Again, the essence of it is that certain prayers are pronounced over a patient, and he is anointed with the consecrated oil. This is done seven times."

"Why exactly seven priests and seven times?" Andrey asked.

"This is associated with spiritual power, the power of the seven Archangels who are intermediaries between God and people. In other words, the seven Bodhisattvas... As for the use of anointing oil in such a way, it's a very ancient method of treating sick people, since the healing process is based precisely on the knowledge that I've told you about — a person's ability to influence the world around him through liquid. That is why something similar can be found in different religions and ritual ceremonies of the peoples of the world."

"Indeed," Nikolai Andreyevich sighed. "People gradually lose the essence, leaving only its external form."

"Unfortunately," Sensei uttered. "There were times when people knew what they were doing. Whereas now, they merely imitate the external form of this knowledge. Take, for instance, one of the seven sacraments in Christianity — Baptism, which signifies a person's initiation into this religion. Nowadays, it's a solemn, intricate rite, the main action of which is triple immersion of a person into consecrated water, recitation of prayers, anointing with chrism or myrrh oil. Yet, sometimes, even those who perform this rite do not know what a tremendous power is behind this external action. Even believers themselves truly underestimate and don't fully realize the true effect of this water that has

been prayed upon." After a pause, he added, "Even the very rite of ablution of the newborn didn't appear in Christianity right away, but came much later, as Christian ritualism was developing and evolving.

However, the origins of Baptism are deeply rooted in the pre-Christian cults. Such water rituals were also performed in many religions of the ancient world, which, in turn, were based on the ancestors' beliefs about the 'purifying' power of water. But the meaning of the Baptism practice that was given to people originally lies even deeper, beyond the water element that people see in the external."

"Very interesting, so what is its meaning?" Nikolai Andreyevich asked hastily, just as intrigued by the topic of conversation as we were.

"The meaning of the genuine Baptism practice is to immerse a person into the depths of his consciousness, all the way down to the soul. The very word *baptism* in Greek sounds as *vaptisis*, which means 'immersion'. Remember, in the morning I mentioned the yogi practice of immersion, which they call Pranayama? From a modern point of view, these seem to be two completely different practices, between which people have drawn a chasm by their ambitions. But in fact, Baptism, Pranayama, and a number of other water-related practices and rituals are only remote echoes of the true knowledge and ancient practices that were adapted by people themselves for the masses. At the basis of the original knowledge, there were practices that altered the state of a person's consciousness and led him to a certain frequency which enabled him to grow spiritually and come to God as a mature being. In other words, thanks to these practices, a person basically got to know the true reality. He knew what he was doing and where he was going.

A long time ago, the practice of 'Immersion' was given to people and was intended for those who were already at a certain stage of spiritual development. With its help, a person entered an altered state of consciousness and gained an ability to immerse himself in his innermost hidden depths, where he was able to unite with God. Naturally, there was no place there for any Animal nature, for it was associated with the essence of the Soul. And this practice really gave



the secret of knowledge, of that very knowledge which cannot be expressed in words, for it was obtained from a particle of God — the omniscient Soul."

"Yes, we have lost a lot of valuable knowledge with time," Nikolai Andreyevich remarked sadly. "We often don't understand what we are doing at all, or why we are doing it. We attribute everything to traditions, reassuring ourselves that it's the way things are done, it's been done this way since time immemorial, that we are just paying tribute to the customs of our ancestors."

Sensei smiled ironically and said,

"Well, when you get right down to it, it's better this way than nothing at all and complete oblivion. Because sooner or later, there will be those who will get to the bottom of it."

"Somehow, I didn't pay attention to such things before," Nikolai Andreyevich spoke again. "But now, when you were talking about Baptism, I remembered a conversation with one of my long-time patients. He's a believer, let's say, to the point of fanaticism, who takes every word of the Church literally. So, in one of our conversations, he told me the ideology behind the Baptism rite for Christians. I myself have been baptized, though it happened in my childhood. But it was the first time in my life that I heard such a thing. According to this ideology, only the one who has been baptized, and no one else, is cleansed of original sin associated with the very fact of the birth of a human. It is only after Baptism that a person becomes a member of the Church, partaking of its blessings, which is life Eternal. Prior to Baptism, a person supposedly carries a diabolical seal on him, meaning, he's not detached from what is satanic. But after undergoing this sacrament, satan is banished from his heart and remains outside a person forever. And thanks to Baptism, a person can be freed from all sins and in the future abstain from falling into them again. Is that really possible?"

"Of course not. Baptism certainly has a power. But for an ordinary person, it's just an impetus to spiritual awakening. However, this doesn't free him of the Animal nature which in Christianity is called 'satan'. A human remains in the body of the Animal. The mind of a human is the mind of the Animal. It's

impossible to throw it outside or to get rid of it completely. To think this way is tantamount to reasoning of a person who's driving a car and tries to convince himself that he's not driving it, but is simply flying in the air.

Even Bodhisattvas, when born in a human body, are subject to trials by the Animal and to temptation with everything human. Take, for instance, Jesus, the Son of God, born in a human body. He didn't escape this fate either. For forty days he fought with 'satan'. In other words, to put it simply, he was going through his personal Armageddon. He subordinated his mind of the Animal to his Spiritual Essence, having 'chained up' his Animal. Though it still 'barked' and 'whined' from time to time, making itself felt throughout his life. Because Jesus, although a Great Soul, was in a material body. And there is no escaping that. That's the Law. Such is human nature."

That's when Kostya said with a smile,

"I recall myself getting baptized in the fourth grade. The priest was asking us something, and we were answering him in unison. Then he told us to turn to the west, blow and spit on satan with all our might. I remember it well, because I gathered up all my saliva and did my best."

We laughed, and Sensei said,

"You underwent one of the rites of Baptism — the banning of evil spirits and renunciation of satan.

"Well, I understand that," Kostya smiled, imitating Nikolai Andreyevich's rhetoric. "But why did we have to spit?"

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"It is believed that with this spittle a Christian shows that he's not afraid of satan and his intrigues because God gives him the necessary protection," Sensei explained. "Basically, this is the way a person expresses his utmost contempt for satan."

"What a culture! Sheer Middle Ages," Kostya grinned.

"Culture has nothing to do with that. After all, people don't change. They remain as they were."

"So, why did we turn to the west?"

"It's just that in Orthodoxy, the west has always been associated with the forces which oppose God. When a person turns to the west in this rite, churchmen believe that in this manner the baptized person renounces satan directly and declares this, so to say, right in his 'face'. After that, he turns

towards the altar, to the east. It is believed that this cardinal direction connects a human with God."

"Well, if we take into account that Shambhala is somewhere over there, they are right in a way," Volodya remarked, and then, after a pause, said in his deep voice, "And about the west, probably, too."

"I remember that the priest was reading prayers in the Church Slavonic language," Kostya was reminiscing. "Although half of the words were incomprehensible. Then he sprinkled us with water and oiled us with something. Ah! He also cut off locks of our hair, we wrapped them in a cake of wax and dipped them in water. Why is it so complicated?"

"When you grow up, you'll understand," Victor interposed.

Sensei smiled sadly and said,

"You see, for some people, these rites are a show, while for others it's a rethinking of life."

After these words, Kostya grew quiet, and Nikolai Andreyevich seized the opportunity to address Sensei again, recalling the conversation with his patient.

"So, when we talked with that man, he also mentioned that only a baptized person can go to heaven, while an unbaptized one can never get there. That the grace of other sacraments has no effect on an unbaptized person. Supposedly, such a person should neither be prayed for nor commemorated either during his life or after death. He mustn't even be given a requiem service. However, after Baptism, supposedly it can all be done. Hence, an unbaptized person doesn't exist for the Church at all?"

Sensei listened attentively to Nikolai Andreyevich and then said softly,

"Well... for the Church of this particular religion, he might not exist. But for God, all people are His children! Since the eighth day after birth, as soon as a soul settles into a body, a person becomes His 'child', a little human with a small letter h. Yet, whether he will be able to become a Human with a capital H and come to God as a mature being — this already depends on him, on his will and choice."

"Does a person's soul settle in a body on the eighth day?" Ruslan asked.

"It does."

"And who is this child before that?"

"It's just a living organism, like any other animal," Sensei replied. "Again, in this issue, we also encounter the fact that knowledge about this has been lost, only traditions have remained from time immemorial. By the way, in Rus, there are still echoes of knowledge that the soul comes on the eighth day after birth. In Rus, a child's name was often chosen depending on which saint was honoured on the eighth day of the child's life. By the way, back then, it was not birthdays that were celebrated, but name days — the days of remembering a saint in whose honour a person was named, lest the person glorify his pridefulness, but so that he would remember why people come into this world and whose name he bears... Generally speaking, the tradition of giving a name to a child on the eighth day goes back to the times of the Old Testament..."

"So, it means that nowadays we celebrate the birthday of our Animal nature?!" Zhenya made a discovery for himself. "Now I get it why people always gorge and drink so much on their birthdays, just like pigs, to the point of bursting! And they want bigger and more expensive presents at that! This is where our whole piggish essence is revealed!"

Everyone laughed.

"No, we have to stop this self-indulgence," continued the guy. "That's it, Stas, on your next birthday, I'll come to you a week later, without any gifts, with just a candle. For my gifts only harm your soul, whilst feeding your Animal more and more, with each passing year awakening the appetite of a big swine..."

Stas didn't hesitate to answer him with even more constructive suggestions about Zhenya's birthday, to which his friend immediately responded with a joke. Our whole group rolled with laughter at their clownery. Later, when everyone calmed down, Nikolai Andreyevich continued his reflections aloud.

"Indeed, wherever we look, there are mere formalities and no knowledge. That's what we've come to — our so-called 'progress'... Well, I can understand that psychologically, the rite of Baptism, if it is performed on an adult person, helps him to gain confidence in his own abilities, to assert himself somehow,

to protect himself from his own fears at least in this way. It turns him to the good, obliges him to live according to universal moral criteria. All this is understandable. Yet, why separate baptized and unbaptized people so categorically? What if a person, for example, was born in a family where parents belong to different religions? By having these restrictions and categorical frameworks, they push a person into an inner conflict."

"Well, what do you expect? Religious leaders are people too... As the saying goes, one cannot get into the heaven of one religion without falling into the hell of the rest."

"Indeed," Nikolai Andreyevich drawled. "Everyone wants to eat, as they say."

"Exactly," Volodya said in his deep voice. "Everyone dreams of driving someone else's sheep into his own flock."

Everyone laughed, while Sensei said,

"Well, joking aside, regardless of all the religious trumpery, for an ordinary person all these rituals of consecration with water are quite important since they beget in him an impulse to take the first step towards God. Actually, all these rituals, with their appearance, intricacy, and incomprehensibility, bring a person into a certain state of trance. At that, both the person who conducts the ritual and those who participate in it enter this state. And if the thoughts of all those present are really focused on prayers to God, and not on thinking about any of their material problems at that time, this begets spiritual power which each of the participants receives as an inner surge of their agathodemon. For ordinary people, that's great! At least in this way to draw their attention to the fact that material existence is not the only thing out there, and that, by and large, they don't come to this world for the sake of becoming their Ego's lifelong slaves.

In other words, via the rite, a person finds hope which serves as a stimulus to faith. While the main sacrament itself arises from his own faith. Do you see the difference? If for a spiritual person the power of faith and will is enough to change in himself his state of consciousness and work on spiritual practices,

an ordinary human lacks even an elementary faith in his strength. He needs entertainment and massive scale to tear him away from material existence for five minutes and convince him that there are higher values.”

"Why for five minutes?" Ruslan asked.

"Because after all these impressions and positive surges he goes home, and there he finds nothing but problems of material existence. As a result, his consciousness returns to its usual course. He just doesn't have enough grey matter to change himself in a better, spiritual direction with his own willpower, that's why he dumps all his inner problems onto external ones."

"Hence, pure knowledge doesn't impress people?!" Nikolai Andreyevich drew an unexpected conclusion.

"Absolutely right, as paradoxical as it sounds," Sensei agreed with him. "Pure knowledge doesn't impress people. Because of its simplicity, it is difficult for them to understand it. After all, there are no visual shows, bright impressions, no emotionally stressful experiences. Yet, what do people want in the first place? Bread and circuses, because it corresponds to most people's understanding of the essence of life.

People complicate their own lives, and this applies not only to ordinary people living by their worldly concerns. There are some individuals who, trying to follow the spiritual path, take their first steps, gaining initial knowledge on their way. But instead of doing serious work on themselves, practising this knowledge, mastering the essence and moving on, they spend years examining its exterior form and attaching importance only to the fact of possessing it.”

"What do you mean?" Yura didn't understand.

"Well, it's the same as, for instance, a person who has a chocolate bar, instead of just eating it, first goes to America and for five years studies there how to open the outer wrapper. Then he goes to Japan and for five more years studies how to unwrap the foil. Then he travels to the North to the Chukchis and learns how to bite the chocolate properly. Afterwards, he studies for five years in France and then in England to evaluate the taste of chocolate in his mouth. Finally, he comes home, picks up his chocolate bar, eats it up in two



minutes, and realizes that it's not quite what he expected or has been preparing for with such pomposity for such a long time. How is it possible — he ate it in a couple of minutes, and that's it? Did he really spend years of his life to come to such a simple result? Such a reaction is natural because, in fact, he has been making no headway. You don't need to go far to acquire knowledge. You just need to look inside yourself and understand who you are and what you really want in this life."

Sensei fell silent, raking an ember that had fallen out back into the fire with a stick. There was again a brief pause.

"There is something else I wanted to ask you," Nikolai Andreyevich suddenly recalled. "About the Holy Spirit. As far as I understood from my patient's stories, in the rite of Baptism, everything is mostly built on the descent of the Holy Spirit onto a person's soul. For example, when the water is consecrated, a priest asks that the water in the font be sanctified by the power, action and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He's also mentioned when a person is anointed with oil and baptised. When parts of one's body are anointed, while performing these actions, the priest repeatedly says, "The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit." At that, every part of the body symbolizes something. For instance, the face is anointed to consecrate thoughts, legs — so that a person follows the path of Christ, hands — so that a person does God-pleasing deeds. Is this also a tradition, or does it have any kind of a meaning?"

"You've partially answered this question yourself. There is certainly symbolism here, but the sacrament of the Holy Spirit itself is here too. For whoever appeals with faith, will be given. But in general, one can come to know God only through the Holy Spirit. For He is the first helper and mediator between God and a human. He's numerous in his manifestation, but His Essence is one. It's very hard for a person to fathom what the Holy Spirit really is. However, no sacrament in any religion, which awakens in a human love for and faith in God, can happen without inspiration of the Holy Spirit. For He is the power of God to people, His Hearing and His Voice." After a short pause, Sensei went back to the story of Agapit again. "By the way, we digressed a little

from the story about Agapit's disciples. So, Damian healed people with prayer, anointing the sick with chrism. While, for example, another disciple of Agapit, Alypius, used paints instead of oil. He was an icon painter. While still a young man, Alypius helped the Greeks to paint the Assumption Cathedral in the Pechersk monastery. Later on, he himself began to paint icons. As for Agapit, he taught him how to cure people's skin diseases, such as those very ulcers and festering wounds, with the help of prayer and paints."

"Yet, how can they be cured with the help of paints?" Kostya marvelled.

"Well... Paint has a liquid base. It's the same oils that are mixed with dyes. Plus, the dyes themselves have additional healing properties, which naturally enhances the overall healing effect. As a matter of fact, in the past, they used natural dyes, not the modern chemical ones. Some dyes have good antibacterial properties, for example, that very blue-coloured indican obtained from an indigo plant. In addition, in those days, red and yellow colours were used quite often, which, thanks to their components of plant and animal origin, had antiseptic, anti-inflammatory, and wound-healing effect."

"Do you mean, Alypius combined the profession of an artist with the profession of a physician?" summed up Nikolai Andreyevich.

"Absolutely right, in order to bring maximum benefit to people," Sensei confirmed. "By the way, Agapit also told Alypius many secrets about his first 'profession'. He told him about the combination of colour palettes, their impact on human psyche, as well as about the system of depicting spatial and temporal correlations..."

"Wait a minute!" Nikolai Andreyevich marvelled. "You mean that, in the eleventh century, Agapit revealed to Alypius the nuances of the psychology of colour perception and the system of depicting spatial and temporal correlations?"

"I think Alypius would be surprised too if he found out that these simple truths would become science only after a thousand years," Sensei smiled. "However, all that colour perception is, by and large, not essential. The main thing Agapit paid special attention to was how to create an invisible effect from

an image. For Agapit asserted that an icon shouldn't idealize the image, so as not to create an idol for blind human worship out of this image. But it had to be spiritualized. The main thing was not how and on what surface an image was painted, whether it was on a piece of wood or a fresco on the wall, but the spiritual state that the person who painted it was in. For, while being in a special state of consciousness, when a person disengages himself from his Animal nature to the utmost and maximally manifests his Spiritual, a special power is embedded into the icon. It can bring a beholder of this icon into a special state of consciousness, arouse sensations of the reality of divine presence, and engender in a person a spiritual surge or, as they say today, accomplish 'recharging'. And the purer the thoughts and aspirations of the artist are towards God, the stronger this effect will be felt, which, thanks to its positive charge, can change a person spiritually, not to mention restore his physical health, because physical health primarily depends on the spiritual one. Moreover, such a surge of power generated by the artist's Faith will be consistently preserved for thousands of years."

"Thousands? Why does it happen this way?" Tatyana asked.

"Because for true spiritual power neither time nor space actually exist."

"Does this only apply to icons?" Kostya asked curiously.

"This applies to any work of art. After all, it's not the wooden board covered with paint that matters, as Agapit said, nor the canvas, or the sculpture, or the book, but the inner power that was embedded in this work."

"Yes, an amazing effect," Nikolai Andreyevich said. "Once I was fortunate enough to visit the Hermitage in Leningrad. The grandest collection of heritage of ancient Oriental, ancient Egyptian, Asian, antique cultures, and much more of great interest is presented there. And also of the Russian culture from the 8th to the 19th centuries. Oh, what wonderful paintings are exhibited there!"

Sensei nodded in agreement.

"I don't know if you noticed, but people can admire some paintings for hours even though the picture doesn't actually mean anything in and of itself. While they practically don't even stop by the other paintings which may be

painted with much better details. That's because a painting also has a memory, and the artist, creating it, as if puts his feelings, emotions, and thoughts into his work. A person who is looking at the painting feels this intuitively."

"Does a person's photo have such an effect?" Stas wondered.

"Certainly. Moreover, a photo maintains a constant connection with the object, meaning, with a person. It's easy to find out from it whether the object is currently alive, where he is at a given time, as well as his emotional state. Through photos, it is possible to directly influence his psycho-emotional sphere, his physical health, and so on. Even with multiple replication of a photo, it retains an almost unchanged connection with a living object. As for a painting, it's completely different. Even when photographed, the information stored in it is preserved in the original form. It is almost impossible to change or influence it because the information in it is constant."

"As I understand it, people as if charge paintings with their faith," Nikolai Andreyevich said.

"Absolutely right. Inner faith means a lot. For example, returning to our conversation, let's take Agapit himself. He really worked miracles of healing, and this was largely due to the inner faith and positive aspiration of people who came to him. He put those who believed on their feet quickly, no matter how severe their illness was. As for those who came to him embittered and without faith in their soul — fortunately, there were very few of them — he simply didn't undertake to treat them, although their ailment could be easily cured. After all, faith is not an empty word. Even Jesus Himself, when He came to His fatherland '...did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith..."

"Power of suggestion?" Nikolai Andreyevich asked quizzically, thinking out loud. Then he shrugged his shoulders and added, "But you cannot cure a serious disease with suggestion alone, that's a fact."

"Suggestion has nothing to do with it," Sensei objected. "The reason why Agapit and Jesus didn't undertake to treat such people was not because they couldn't handle their illness. It all has to do with the phenomenon of faith. If

a person is open to light, he perceives light. But if a person is closed, meaning, there is no faith in him, it's equivalent to him getting into a cellar, closing the door tightly, and in this complete darkness, waiting for someone in that cellar to cure him by means of daylight. Such expectations will naturally be in vain. After all, the human brain works as a computer, and faith is a certain program. If it is installed on a computer, one can actively work with it and get a result corresponding to this labour. However, if there is no faith in a person, this is equivalent to an absence of a corresponding program in the computer. Naturally, you won't be able to work at full capacity until you install the necessary program on your computer.

What is the phenomenon of Agapit's healing success? After all, he healed not only with herbs or with his hands, chiropractic as it is now called, or with the help of words. Often, he simply gave a patient something to eat from his meal or a drink of water. But all the food was certainly enchanted with his prayers. After that, the person felt much better, and he really recovered later on. Why? Because Agapit treated his patients with true faith. And it's a great, real power indeed! True faith is by no means fanaticism, reaching the point of absurdity, it is not 'beating yourself in the chest' in disputes and empty rhetoric. True faith is the degree of purity of your personal spiritual power. At that, Agapit's personal spiritual power was enormous. By his blessing of food or water for a sick person, which looked like a spell by prayer, Agapit actually embedded a certain program into the liquid with his personal spiritual power. Then this liquid entered the patient's body where it interacted with his fluids, meaning, a new program was actually installed, which was activated by means of the person's own faith.

By the way, Agapit always prayed before his own meals as well, blessing the food. And he taught others to do the same. He ate mostly plant food. In his hands, even a bitter blade of grass that he prayed over turned into sweet medicine for a patient.

"So basically, if we consider it figuratively," said Kostya with a slight tinge of scepticism, "then yes, as a medicine, you will swallow anything, even

something bitter and nasty, just to recover."

"Why figuratively? said Sensei, sincerely perplexed. "I meant it literally."

Kostya suspiciously looked at Sensei and then assumed a thoughtful pose, trying to comprehend what Sensei had just said. During this 'great-Caesarian' contemplation, as he liked to say about himself, his gaze fell on the dry twigs we had gathered for the campfire during the day. They were lying right next to him, and amongst the other blades of grass that got stuck to them, there was a twig of wormwood. Seeing it, the guy somewhat livened up, apparently thinking of the 'proof by contradiction' that just occurred to him.

"What do you mean, literally?" he said doubtfully. "What if it's wormwood, for example?" he pointed at the twig. "I mean, it's bitter like I don't know what! It's literally a stinky weed! How can it be a sweet treat?"

Sensei looked at Kostya, squinting merrily, and said, "Give it to me."

Kostya took the twig, squeamishly holding it with two fingers, and passed it to Sensei, carefully brushing off his hands afterwards. Noticing his cautious moves, Zhenya, who was chewing a cracker, didn't miss the opportunity to make fun of him.

"Well, bro, the question remains who here is the stinky weed!"

Everyone laughed while Sensei, picking up the plant carefully, lightly shook dirt off it. Then he put it on his palm and stroked it gently as if it were alive.

"Why do you call it a weed? It's a medicinal plant. It contains essential oils and alkaloids. This is quite a valuable set of substances for medicine. As for its taste..."

Sensei smiled enigmatically. Then he again started to run his hands over the twig of wormwood and whisper something very quietly. There was complete silence among our group. Even Zhenya 'put the brakes' on his jaws, which prior to that were enthusiastically crunching on a cracker. Although I was sitting near Sensei, no matter how hard I tried to listen, I still didn't understand any of his whispering. Then Sensei fell silent and, glancing at Kostya, handed him the wormwood twig.

"Here, taste it."

At first, Kostya instinctively held his hand out, but then, apparently thinking that it was a joke, he jerked it away and declared, laughing,

"Am I insane to eat wormwood?"

Curious, Nikolai Andreyevich got up from his seat and, going around the sitting guys, walked over to Sensei. While walking by Kostya, he patted him on the back and remarked, in passing, to the guys' laughter,

"Everyone's insane, Konstantine. There are no sane people. Only underdiagnosed ones..." The doctor reached for the twig. "May I?"

"You're most welcome," Sensei uttered with a smile.

Nikolai Andreyevich took wormwood from Sensei's hands, sniffed it first, and then, pinching the tip off its top, carefully tasted it. Meanwhile, with unconcealed curiosity, we were waiting for his reaction. But our psychotherapist's face remained impenetrable just as always.

"I don't get it," he merely said and tasted it again, nipping a bigger piece of the plant.

His mysterious 'I don't get it' intrigued us even more, and the most impatient of us, including myself, even jumped up from our seats, crowding around Nikolai Andreyevich.

"Well, well, well," Zhenya stretched his hand businesslike for the twig, hastily finishing up another cracker. "Let's taste it... Hmm, it is sweet like molasses."

After such an 'advertisement', we began to quickly rip little twigs off the wormwood and taste them. I got a small part of this plant as well. The taste was really unusual, rather tartly sweet. Kostya still hesitated to taste Sensei's 'treat', although, judging by his eyes, he obviously wanted to, but as they say, pride got in the way. Watching our excitement, he declared with his usual sarcasm,

"You are just some kind of wormwood maniacs. Perhaps, I should go gather some toadstools for you too?"

"Toadstools don't grow here," Andrey said comically, giving him the last 'portion'. "Here, taste it. It's really sweet."

At first, Kostya turned his nose away defiantly. However, when Andrey said, "Okay, as you wish," intending to eat the last part of the stalk, Kostya quickly changed his mind,

"Hey, give it to me, you glutton!"

Laughing, he took the remains of the plant from Andrey. Then, hunched over, he began to scrutinize it meticulously, sniffed it, and finally decided to taste it.

"How is it?" Sensei asked cheerfully, seeing his confused look.

Kostya smiled sheepishly and gestured with his hands,

"What can I say? As Goethe used to say, when performed by me, 'Whatever you cannot understand, you cannot possess!'"

"Sensei, really, how did you do that?" Victor asked curiously.

"It's elementary. Have faith — and you will do that, too. There is nothing complicated. Faith and purity of thought — that's the main reason. As for the effect on the liquid structure of plants, that's already a matter of technique, so to say."

"Yet, why exactly liquid?" Nikolai Andreyevich seized on the word. "It's not the first time I hear you say this tonight."

"That's because any aqueous medium has peculiar cells in its molecular structure, something like mini-computers. Their micro-size contains global memory. Almost all information about matter is contained in them. If there is an impact on the water structure, starting from a simple mechanical, chemical, or electromagnetic impact, and up to..." Sensei paused, trying to pick the right words, and then said, "well, let's put it simply, up to the energy of thought, then the water molecule can be reshaped into a needed combination.

For water retains the memory of all substances which have ever been in it, or which water has ever been in or has touched via its energy states, for example, even such simple states as electromagnetic oscillations. And if we consider that water is the most widespread substance in nature, that it contacts with everything in this material world in one form or another, retaining the acquired information in each of its molecules, and if we take into account its



interaction within itself, then you can imagine what kind of memory storage it possesses."

"So, does it mean that even this wormwood can not only be made sweet, but also turned into something peculiar?" - Ruslan said?

"Of course, it can, if you know the molecular structure and the energy content of 'something peculiar'," Sensei replied with a smile.

"Even into a bug?!" Ruslan was surprised.

"Why not? Without water, no living organism on Earth can make a move. On our planet, water is an essential part of all living organisms, varying in content from 45% to 98%, including the human body where it makes up to 80% of the total mass. Water is a widespread component of nature. Even in the fire, there are elements of water in the form of hydrogen and oxygen, due to which combustion takes place. Even a stone contains liquid."

"A stone?" asked Slava, surprised.

"Yes, a stone. Under high pressure, all stones emit liquid, albeit in small quantities. And, no matter how paradoxical it may sound to you today, even in the centre of the Earth, inside the molten core, there is a nucleus of enormous density and mass, and there is liquid in it as well.

The Earth is actually a living being, which also consists mainly of liquid. I don't mean just the surface layer, where 70% are oceans and 30% are various matter modifications with inclusion of water, but the inner liquid as well. And we, humans, are also similar to it."

"Does the Earth have a mind too?" Kostya still couldn't figure out this question for himself.

"Certainly, and a human is connected to it because this mind is in the memory of the liquid structure, and information about everything, including each of us, accumulates in it. Since, as I have already said, most of our body consists of liquid, all the data about us, starting from our thoughts and emotions, and ending with our health and our DNA matrix, is stored in this memory."

"Is it stored there for long?"

"Yes."

"So, it turns out that it is possible to learn about anyone who ever lived on this planet, like Napoleon or Genghis Khan..." Kostya fantasized.

"Huh, what a strange choice!" Andrey teased him. "There are surely more interesting personalities."

"I was just saying," Kostya hastened to justify himself and looked at Sensei.

"This is a lot more serious than you think," Sensei replied. "And only very few among the entire humanity have such an ability."

"And is there a higher mind than the mind of the Earth?" Kostya was unstoppable.

"Of course. There are higher information structures all the way up to the global one. But all of them are controlled only by the One Whom we call God."

"And who are those few who can read information from water?" Zhenya asked slyly.

"Well, for example, truly holy people. How did they work 'miracles'? By purity of their faith. It seems incredible to other people, but for them it was quite doable. Purity of thought and faith — that was the main thing. For there is actually nothing miraculous in 'miracles' as such. It is just elementary knowledge, including the science of water, which, fortunately, this human civilization knows much less than one percent so far."

"Why fortunately?" Kostya said in a complaining tone.

"Because, having this knowledge, people would turn even a watermelon into a nuclear bomb. You just can't imagine the power contained in water. A person who has knowledge of it can destroy the whole world with just one drop."

"What do you mean 'destroy'?" Zhenya didn't understand. "Does it mean, one could use a drop of water to short-circuit wires of the button to a nuclear bomb?"

"Nuclear energy is nothing compared to the real power of human thought."

Zhenya picked up his mug with the remaining tea, looked at Sensei, and stated ambitiously, beaming with his Hollywood smile:

"Well, I understand everything, but with one drop of water?!"

The guy looked expectantly at Sensei, clearly provoking him into a demonstration. To which Sensei replied,

"Alright, doubting Thomas. Go, bring me a mug of the sea."

At first, Zhenya was alarmed, but then he said with a comical expression,

"A mug of the sea? Do you mean seawater?"

"Exactly," Sensei chuckled.

Zhenya lazily glanced towards the sea.

"Well, I don't mind giving you snow in the middle of winter... There is plenty of that stuff around... But what a feat I have to perform in order to get up, walk over there, then, on top of that, to get into that water and wet my feet unnecessarily." He looked into his mug and suggested, "Maybe, just tea will do?"

"Come on, move," Sensei urged him with a grin. "Such walks are good for your brain."

Zhenya rose reluctantly, groaning like an old man, and headed for the sea. Following the guy with his eyes, Nikolai Andreyevich uttered,

"Have courage, Zhenya. It's a sin not to go for a walk in such weather."

The evening was indeed magnificent. The sea was completely calm. The sky was strewn with stars. A bright moon was shining. Peace and quiet, sheer bliss.

Having scooped up the water, Zhenya slowly waddled back, trying not to spill the mug full of seawater. Yet, apparently feeling our eyes on him, he cheered up and, when approaching Sensei, handed him the water with a bow like a skilful waiter.

"Here's your order, sir. It's a gift to you from the Neptune Company. Every hundredth mug, with all the bacteria, bacilli, microbes and excrements from the nearest city, is absolutely free of charge! Meaning, at no cost to you!!!"

"I appreciate it greatly," Sensei replied in the same humorous tone.

While the guys were laughing, building on this hilarious theme, Sensei put the mug in front of him, covered it with his hands and concentrated. Hardly anyone was actually paying attention to his actions, as Zhenya had already

completely switched to the image of a comical waiter and began to tell the group some funny anecdote, after which all of us exploded with laughter. I laughed with everyone, but suddenly felt unwell. At first, I felt a strange discomfort in my body, and this state began to grow in waves. I couldn't even understand what was happening. I became nauseous, my head started spinning; I felt weak, and my bones began to ache. The first thing that occurred to me was a thought that I had food poisoning. Or maybe, it was the sun, the heat. But the symptoms were rather unusual, and this confused me. It was as if I not only poisoned myself, but had also ridden on a dizzying swing to the point of nausea. Yet, most importantly, some kind of unnatural fear began to rise from the depths of my consciousness. Momentarily I was seized with panic, from which I wanted to run anywhere my feet would take me, although there was no apparent reason for such fear, at least it wasn't visible to me.

In less than a minute, Sensei handed the mug over to Zhenya who was still amusing the group with his jokes.

"Here, go and pour it back into the sea."

Zhenya looked at the water and asked, obviously hoping to see something greater there,

"That's it?! Well, it's always like that! The most interesting thing passed right by my straight brain gyros."

Ruslan, who was sitting not far away, craned his neck curiously, trying to look into the mug. Zhenya reacted immediately,

"What are you staring at, child? There is no algae growing in it and no bacteria swimming belly up." And, pulling Ruslan's cap over his eyes, added to the guys' laughter, "So you can turn the light off, there will be no movie."

Stormy laughter accompanied Zhenya's walk to the sea and his safe return with the empty mug. As for me, frankly speaking, I was no longer in a laughing mood. My fear was growing. My whole body was turning inside out. I was already holding on to the last of my strength, afraid to make any extra moves. I felt that if this continued for just one more moment, I would pass out altogether. Then, suddenly fresh wind blew from the sea and brought me a bit

of relief. I perked up, turning my face to the wind, naively thinking that since I felt a little better, soon my body would recover and get better too. However, that was not the case.

The wind began to intensify. The sea became loud. In the light of the moonlight path, I saw with horror that emerging waves were not only driven by the wind, but each time they increased and grew larger. Everyone fell silent and began to look around.

A sharp gust of wind flapped our tents. Light plastic bags immediately flew up and began to whirl along the coast in a wild dance. With every moment, the wind grew stronger and stronger. The tents began not to simply flap, but it seemed as if someone, in a frenzy, was trying to tear them out of the ground together with all the iron stakes. A new onslaught of unexpected hurricane wind scattered the fire in all directions. Napkins caught fire instantly. The burning paper lumps were thrown toward the cars. While the big fire, like a furious beast, pounced on the dry reeds, devouring their stems greedily.

Horrified, we jumped up from our seats. The senior guys and Nikolai Andreyevich rushed to put out the scattered burning napkins. Volodya, Stas, and Andrey began to put out the ‘double fire’. Frightened, Tatyana and I grabbed someone's things, rugs, and towels, basically, everything that came to hand near the fire, and started running back and forth with this stuff, not knowing what to do with it. Because of fear and panic, all my malaise fell away into the background somewhere. For the first time in my life, I understood what real animal fear in the face of raging nature felt like.

The wind became so strong that only its horrible howling and the growing noise of the coastal waves were heard. Something inconceivable was going on. The water, in turn, swiftly retreated far from the shore, then with an incredible crash fell upon it again, trampling more and more new areas of land under itself. In the cold moonlight, it looked like the sea was boiling. With its raging jaws, it was ready to swallow anyone who was in its way. Giant ‘tongues’ of water were inexorably approaching the site of our recent ‘gatherings’ with an eerie hissing.

Nikolai Andreyevich, justifying his nickname 'Common Sense', ran to his car and tried to start the engine, shouting to us, while running,

"Leave it all! It's about to flood! We won't be able to get out later!"

Everyone began to rush about in panic. As for me, I was in a stupor. In fear, my legs grew weak and became like cotton. Then, in the middle of this disorderly commotion, I saw Sensei. My persona thought that he was putting out fire or was somewhere near his car. However, as it turned out, he was sitting in his usual place this whole time without even changing his position and was observing our fuss as if he were watching an action film in a movie theatre. To say that I was shocked by this is to say nothing.

Meanwhile, Zhenya ran up to Sensei. Trying to outshout the roar of the hurricane wind and the outrageously rising surf, he yelled,

"Sensei! The tents are about to fly away! What should we do? We need to get out of here! Water keeps coming..."

To which Sensei, to my great surprise and, judging by Zhenya's face, not only to mine, shouted back,

"Bring me a mug of the sea!"

"What?!" Zhenya didn't understand, thinking he misheard.

"I said, bring me a mug of the sea!" Sensei shouted to him again.

Zhenya was looking at him, bewildered and not trusting his ears.

"A mug of the sea??? But I'm gonna be washed away together with that mug... You're about to be washed away too! Look at the waves behind you..."

The waves were indeed already quite high, and each new one came closer and closer to the place where Sensei was sitting. Striking against the shore, they splashed around loudly. Carried by the gusts of wind, these large cold drops were slapping our faces and clothes like hail. Sensei, however, although all wet, didn't even make a move to turn around and look at the really horrifying black waves. In response to Zhenya's tirade, he only smiled like a master who was satisfied with his work. While Zhenya, realizing that Sensei wouldn't be shaken by pity, and any kind of threats or arguments were powerless, only said in a fit of temper,

"Oh, mama mia!"

Apparently, desperately resisting his screaming logic, he began to hurriedly search for the mug among the utter chaos. Everyone else continued to rush about in panic. Some were trying to save the tents, some were running around with random belongings, others were busy by the cars, throwing stuff into the trunks. Zhenya started asking those bustling about if anyone had seen the mug. Yet, they seemed unable to comprehend what he wanted of them. When Zhenya asked Stas about the mug, he just shook him instead of answering, shouting almost right into his ear,

"Zheka! Have you lost your marbles?! What mug? We are about to be washed away!" And not letting go of Zhenya, he turned towards Nikolai Andreyevich. "Doc, should we knock him out and put him in the trunk? I think he's losing his marbles!"

"Stop fooling around!" The 'Common Sense' rumbled in response. "The shoal is getting flooded! Hurry, everyone, get into the car while we can still get through..."

Zhenya, escaping his friend's tenacious hands, in turn yelled at Stas,

"You're the crazy one! My marbles are in place. It's Sensei who lost his!"

The word *Sensei* had the effect of a cold shower on Stas. Instead of running to the car as Nikolai Andreyevich urged, Stas stopped as if rooted to the spot and stared at Sensei in jaw-dropping astonishment. That's when I accidentally noticed that I was holding this wretched mug among other belongings. It was as if I was shocked by an electric current.

"I got the mug, I got it!" I yelled at the top of my lungs and, dropping the rest of the 'junk', ran with it to Zhenya.

The guy, taking the mug as if accepting a baton, rushed to the sea which was already near Sensei. However, the sea clearly didn't want to give him its water. Hitting him with a wall of cold spray of one wave, it then knocked the uninvited guest off his feet with another one. However, after the fall, Zhenya, rising quickly, nevertheless managed to scoop up water from an escaping wave, though along with sand and the rest of the storm dirt. As soon as Zhenya

scooped up the water and took off to escape another wave, I saw with horror that a huge wave, which was inexorably approaching us, appeared at a distance on the moonlit path. I wanted to shout to everyone about this danger, but in an instant, my throat became dry. Instead of screaming, some hoarse, inarticulate sounds came out along with helpless hand gestures in the direction of the sea. By this time, having run up to Sensei, Zhenya handed him the mug, trembling like an aspen leaf, either because of the cold shower or from fear. In great agitation, I looked again at the big wave. It was approaching inexorably with its terrible destructive power of a famished predator, intending to swallow the entire coastal prey at once. Apparently, the guys also noticed its frightening blackness because they started to frantically shout something to Sensei. This heart-rending cry mixed in my ears with the wild roar of the surf. It was scary to even think what might happen now.

Meanwhile, Sensei calmly took the mug from Zhenya and, paying no attention to anyone, laid his hands on it, concentrating for a few seconds. For me, those seconds stretched into forever. The wave was swiftly approaching, but Sensei didn't move. The others kept shouting something near the cars. Suddenly, I felt that my ailment began to vanish at a suspicious rate. Meanwhile, Nikolai Andreyevich, Victor, and Volodya, apparently realizing that they were not heard, ran up to Sensei. Then Sensei opened his eyes and just as calmly gave Zhenya the mug back, saying,

"Pour it into the sea."

When Zhenya took the mug, he didn't have to run to the sea, for it was already at his feet. He simply poured the contents of the mug perfunctorily into an escaping wave, staring spellbound at the approaching large roller.

"Sensei, we need to run," said Stas who was also not taking his eyes off the dark mass of many tons of water.

Instead of Sensei, we heard Zhenya's doomed voice,

"Too late now, it'll catch us anyway."

The others who just ran up, hearing Zhenya's words, also stopped, realizing all the senselessness of their actions. Only now did Sensei turn his head towards



the sea. Yet, unlike the others, he didn't seem to be simply looking, but was admiring the formidable force of nature.

At that instant, I felt that everything in me somehow fell into place. Nausea and dizziness passed. The body came back to normal again. Even fear disappeared. Extraordinary clarity arose in my consciousness. I felt so good, so inspired, as if those were the best moments in my life, although the real picture was rather saying something else. Even this huge wave, instead of horror and panic, began to provoke in me a feeling of genuine admiration for such an inimitable scene of the power of nature.

Suddenly the wind began to subside. The waves grew smaller and smaller, as if some giant iron had pressed the black sheet of the sea along the moonlit path, smoothing out creases. The huge wave missed reaching the shore by literally several hundred meters and began to decrease in size rapidly, breaking all the laws of physics. Only by an echo of a slight splash did its waters reach the edge of the shore. Water reluctantly left the conquered land, returning to its usual boundaries. The wind died down, and complete calm, by now unfamiliar to our ears, again recommenced on the sea.

I turned my gaze to Sensei, and it dawned on me. I understood what had actually caused this sudden storm. It was by no means an anomaly of nature, as my mind believed while panicking. It was definitely done by human thought! Although somewhere in the background, my mind continued to resist such a conjecture; something deep inside me, that knew much more about this world than my material brain could express, made it possible to understand the true cause of what was happening. I was simply amazed at how powerful the will of a Human who has knowledge really is, for whom even the forces of nature become obedient! What enormous potential and capabilities God has instilled in each one of us. Yet, can we fully appreciate His gift by choosing the life of a worm in the darkness of our own egocentricity? Are we really able to comprehend His true Love for us if we take no notice of anyone other than ourselves? Everything is just for show, sheer deception, and one's entire life passes in this. A worm is a worm indeed. There it was, and now it's no longer

there. There is no need even for raging nature, life will smash it under its heel anyway.

Nature calmed down. However, none of us moved, apparently greatly shocked by the phenomenon we had just experienced. The moon illuminated the chaos left by the storm along the coast with its eerie, cold light. In this silence that seemed totally unreal to us, we suddenly heard Sensei's voice.

"It would be nice to light a fire and warm up a little..."

Such simple everyday words brought us out of our state of stupor. Everyone turned to Sensei in surprise. Meanwhile, he took off his soaked-through shirt and began to wring it out, squeezing out trickles of sea water.

"I said, it would be nice to light a fire and dry out a little," Sensei repeated, seeing our astonished faces.

This phrase brought us back to our senses for good, as they say. Senior guys silently began to move, found flashlights in the surviving tents, and scattered along the shore in search of dry firewood, as all our stock was either burned or wet. The rest of the group crowded around Sensei as if it were the safest place on the whole coast.

"Maybe, we shouldn't make a fire?" Nikolai Andreyevich cautiously expressed his opinion. "Maybe it would be safer to go to the city? There is obviously a squall front somewhere at the sea, and those were the initial gusts. It's possible that they will happen again."

To which Sensei responded good-naturedly,

"Relax, doctor. We'll make some tea now, dry up a little, and then we'll see."

"Well, you know better," Nikolai Andreyevich said with a tinge of doubt in his voice.

Soon, our wet things were already hanging on the ropes of hastily fortified tents. We changed into dry clothes and sat in a new place, farther away from the sea, warming by the fire and waiting for the kettle to boil. Strangely enough, in spite of the circumstances, my mood was simply excellent. It was as if I got a second wind. Some kind of inspiration came upon me, thanks to which it was so nice and peaceful that my soul was simply singing.

As soon as the water boiled in the kettle, Tatyana and I brewed a fragrant marjoram and balm tea. At our doctor's insistence, we took linden honey out of our remaining edible supplies as a means of cold prevention and concocted a little supper with this treat, or more precisely a night picnic.

When the first drops of the gratifying tea began to flow through our bodies, spreading its warmth, Nikolai Andreyevich was already relaxed and said,

"What a hurricane it was! What a force of nature! How fascinating human psychology is in extreme situations. Theory is one thing, but practice is quite another, especially your own one."

"Yeah," Sensei grinned. "Talking is not acting."

"And the main thing is how quickly a person's values change," the psychotherapist went on excitedly. "When you see the slightest chance to save yourself and others, life becomes the only value. But at the last moments, as soon as danger became inevitable... strangely, the value of life, the value of this body disappears! While inside... it's amazing... there is clarity and complete peace, some kind of extraordinary, amazing feeling of consciousness expanding..."

Sensei smiled contentedly and interrupted Nikolai Andreyevich's story at the point most interesting for me. It turns out I wasn't the only one who experienced such feelings unsuited to this extreme situation.

"Doctor, leave self-analysis alone. Let the soul satiate itself with this 'here and now' moment."

Nikolai Andreyevich took a long look at him and nodded with a smile, as if understanding what had not been said out loud.

For some time we sat in silence, prolonging the pleasure of a cup of hot tea. I still felt some inexplicable inner pleasure in this silence. Indeed, you only begin to truly appreciate this tremendous sense of 'heavenly' tranquility after you've been in the very bowels of 'hell'. As people were coming back to their usual state of consciousness, the interrupted discussion was resumed.

"Unbelievable! What a storm, such a nightmare!" Victor couldn't calm down just like everyone else.

At that moment, while peacefully sipping tea, Sensei said as an afterthought, "It was just a drop of water."

These words didn't reach people immediately. The first ones to 'see the light' were Nikolai Andreyevich and Volodya who stared at Sensei in astonishment. A bit later, the others got it too.

"What do you mean... a drop?" asked Victor in perplexity. "Do I get it right, you mean that very drop in the mug of water which Zhenya was arguing about?"

Sensei nodded contentedly. Zhenya nearly choked on his tea, staring at Sensei and trying to figure out whether he was joking or not.

"It's a provocation, I object!" Our doubting Thomas rebelled jokingly just in case, when a large part of our group gave him an unambiguous look. "It was a mere coincidence, the hurricane was purely accidental..."

"Accidental?" Sensei grinned, raising his eyebrows in surprise. "I can repeat it."

"No, don't do that!" Stas anticipated Zhenya's answer. "You sit, Sensei, I'll kill him myself."

With these words, he threw himself on top of Zhenya, grabbing him jokingly by the throat, and began to shake him. Zhenya floundered about comically and, latching onto a white napkin lying next to him, began to wave it as a flag of reconciliation.

"Okay, okay! I surrender! I believe, I believe..."

"Don't you dare," Stas 'threatened', letting him go.

The guys laughed, while Zhenya, rubbing his throat, asked Sensei timidly,

"No, really, did it truly happen because of the mug of water?"

"That's it!" Stas stood up resolutely, but before he could pounce on his friend, Zhenya took off like the wind. Jumping to the side, he began to explain hastily, waving his hands in soothing gestures.

"No, no, that's not what I meant. I wanted to say, oh my, what a force!"

"You should have just said it..." Stas murmured, returning to his seat to the guys' laughter.

When the wave of joking had passed, Sensei explained,

"Human thought can do much more than that. Both destruction and creation are within its power. It's just that people don't possess real knowledge about this force, while knowledge will not be given until a person changes for the better. Otherwise he will, like any other animal, remain dependent on the whims of the elements of nature. After all, the Earth is a living being as well, and it won't tolerate the glut of humanity in which the Animal prevails. For it, the manifestation of massive human negativity is like a gaping wound on the body, to which additional forces are pulled like leukocytes in blood that can absorb bacteria and other foreign bodies. Then the process of purification simply occurs, and that's it... Humankind as a whole, as well as every person individually, unconsciously makes changes in the memory of water with their thoughts. And then, I'm sorry to say, we get what we deserve."

"So, water can be programmed in a certain way," Nikolai Andreyevich summarized. "And with that program, it's possible not only to destroy, but also to create?"

"Absolutely right. What you just saw is just a trifle. And now imagine what power Agapit possessed, for example, since the Holy Spirit Himself abided in him, call this Being whatever you like — Gabriel, Rigden, Jabrail — He has many names. How powerful his creative thought was if, even after his death, many people continue to be healed, both physically and spiritually, by being near his relics, and especially in the days of the so-called increased activity of the 'field'." Sensei looked at me with a smile, using my not quite proficient lexicon.

"Even during his lifetime, many different people visited Agapit, regardless of their religious affiliation at that. Muslims, Buddhists, and people of other faiths also came to him, as well as Christians. They came to him not just for treatment, but also because he was a Sage, a Human who knew the true path to God. Many religious leaders disliked him because of this pilgrimage. After all, he didn't force people to change their faith, as they did in order to expand their power. He conveyed the true words of Jesus that God is one and there

are many paths to Him. So I'm not even surprised that all the mentions of the pilgrimage to the Russian Sage were thoroughly removed from the chronicles. It was because Agapit talked about the true Teaching of Jesus, which by that time had already been transformed into religion. He talked about the freedom of choice and about the eternal soul.

Despite the fact that Agapit cured people, relieving them of various ailments, both mental and physical, he also edified them, **'It does not befit you to disturb God with anything except salvation of your soul. Ask not for your body or health; it's not your belly you should care about — all of this is empty dust, insatiable in its desires. For there is no supplication more deserving than supplication for the salvation of your soul.'** Thanks to Agapit, many people really came to believe in God because he was always an example of true service to God in his spiritual purity. So strong was he in the inner spirit that nothing was impossible for him. Agapit repeatedly proved this both in words and in deeds.

### ***Agapit drawing by Anastasia Novykh***

Made in the pointillism technique

Spiritual people were drawn to him, while gold-lovers feared him. Agapit taught people to preserve purity of their thoughts because any bad thought gives rise to doubt. While in doubt, there can be no pure faith. Doubt can ruin everything. Agapit constantly repeated, **'Believe, and according to your faith it will be done to you. This is simple, but it's difficult to comprehend. The whole complexity is in simplicity.'**

As an example of Agapit's spiritual power, I will cite one incident from his life. Prince Izyaslav's seriously wounded warrior, Ratimir, was once brought to Agapit's monastic cell. He had fractures of both legs, and everyone considered him to be not long for this world. However, not even an hour passed when the warrior left the cell on his own feet, accompanied by Agapit. Back then, this incident astonished many people.

"But you've said he had broken legs?" Victor was amazed. "How did Agapit manage to heal the bones so quickly that the warrior was able to walk on his own?"

"Well, it's very simple. Agapit gave him a drink of his decoction."

"Decoction?! Nikolai Andreyevich was even more surprised than Victor. "I mean, well, I understand using it as an anaesthetic... But to heal broken bones?" The doctor said doubtfully. "Sensei, please forgive me, of course, but no matter how good herbs are, a bone is a bone, and it can't knit together so quickly."

"What do herbs have to do with it? Herbs are herbs, and bones are bones. By the way, doctor, they consist of water too," Sensei emphasized with a smile.

"So what, can they be knitted so quickly?" Nikolai Andreyevich uttered incredulously.

Sensei grinned at something and said,

"With such a healing power as Agapit possessed, with his knowledge of true properties of water, any bone can be knitted much faster than you think."

"Really? How is that?" Victor was curious as well.

At that moment, Slava apparently decided to get more comfortable and made a crunch, breaking a half-burned reed lying under his feet. He didn't even pay attention to it, but Sensei noticed it and asked him,

"Let me have that broken reed."

At first, Slava didn't understand what was required of him. He started turning his head and looking around. Finally, his eyes found the broken reed; he hastily picked it up and gave it to Sensei.

"For example, let's take an ordinary reed. By means of that very water and the power of faith, it can not just be fused, but also can be made much stronger than any steel..."

Sensei was clearly in a good mood today, disposed to conversation and demonstration of unusual experiments. Perhaps, we had never experienced so many amazing minutes next to him as we did today.

Sensei handed the mug to Zhenya and said with a smile,

"Go ahead, pour some seawater into the mug."

Everyone became alarmed, looking at each other in fright, while Zhenya actually recoiled from it as if from fire.

"Oh no, Sensei, I've had enough. I have an unlucky hand," he said, hiding his hands behind his back, and then added hastily with a nervous smile, "Both hands! Actually, I've been 'disabled' since childhood in all parts of my body."

"Relax, I'm just kidding," Sensei reassured him, chuckling. "Mineral water will do."

We heaved a sigh of relief, while Zhenya pretended that he was relaxed too, although he continued to keep Sensei's hands in sight. Sensei poured mineral water into the mug and covered the water with his hands. Everyone watched these gestures and involuntarily tensed again, afraid not just to move, but even to say a word. After such a 'purifying' hurricane, first of all in our thoughts, all doubts about Sensei's real abilities disappeared as if into thin air. So, our group was watching his actions with bated breath.

Meanwhile, Sensei, as usual, concentrated for a few seconds. Then he broke the stick of reed completely into two halves and dipped one end at the site of the fracture into the mug with water. Then he did the same thing with the other half. After that, he joined them together into a single stick. To our amazement, the reed became absolutely solid. Finally, Sensei took a handful of mineral water from that same mug and wiped the entire reed tube with it. Satisfied with the result, he offered us to test its strength.

Surprisingly, for all its lightness, the reed turned out to be as solid as steel. At first, the guys carefully tried to break it in two, but they couldn't even bend it. That excited them even more. Everyone exerted themselves to the utmost, trying to break the reed. However, all their efforts were in vain. They tried to do everything with that stick. They attempted to break it with their hands, jumped on it with their feet, and hit it with all their strength against the tree trunk lying nearby. By the way, it wasn't clear what kind of a sound it made: either of super-strong plastic or some kind of special metal. In the end, Stas and Volodya held the reed by both ends like a horizontal bar, while Zhenya hung on it with all of his powerful body and started jerking as hard as he could,



trying to break it with his entire mass. However, it was all to no avail. Having fooled around with this stick quite enough and losing hope of breaking it, almost everyone calmed down and settled in their places, once again surprised at yet another fact that had befallen their unfortunate logic. Only Zhenya, like a doubting Thomas, persisted in continuing his experiments accompanied by the guys' jokes. He sat down by the fire, working on that reed tube.

"Damn it!" the guy said with annoyance, looking at the stubborn stick.

As soon as he said that, the stick immediately broke into two halves, even without any effort applied to it. Everyone froze. Zhenya himself was at a loss, looking at the two reed sticks and then at Sensei. But Sensei only smiled. Then Zhenya, growing bolder, took one of these sticks and easily broke it into two more parts.

"Oops," he said guiltily, bending his neck.

"Well, there you go," Sensei said in a tone that wasn't devoid of irony, "a real example of how just one fly can ruin a whole batch of ointment..." That's exactly why Agapit taught purity of thoughts. For one bad thought can spoil everything."

After saying this with an unconcealed smile, Sensei continued the story of the Russian Bodhi.

"All in all, Agapit performed many miracles. By the way, he had an excellent sense of humour. He often poked fun at those in whom human vices clearly predominated. Once, a noble merchant from Kiev, who was tortured by an ailment, was brought to him. The merchant started promising Agapit the best of his valuables, if only he would save him from the disease. He was constantly shaking two money bags with gold pieces, as if showing that he would spare no expense. At that time, gold pieces were an object of great luxury. Those were gold coins on which Prince Vladimir Svyatoslavich was portrayed on one side and the ancestral symbol of the Rurik Dynasty in the form of a trident with the inscription 'Vladimir, and this is his gold' was depicted on the other. These gold coins were the eminent merchant's source of pride, indicators of his close connections with those who stood at the control levers of the Old

Russian State. Back then, not everyone could boast of such valuables. Yet, when a disease overcomes a person, everything loses its meaning. The merchant was ready to give away even this, just to regain his former health.

Agapit cured the merchant, but the latter was overcome by greed. Yet, on the other hand, he himself had promised in front of everyone that he would repay Agapit's kindness. So, the merchant decided to deceive the Saint by replacing the gold coins with cheap silver ones. After all, no one had seen what was in the bags back then. So that's what he did, putting one gold coin in there to clear his conscience. He was happy that he managed both to recover and, thanks to his cunning, to save so many valuables. To honour his word as a merchant, he and his retinue again went to Agapit to pay the debt. Agapit only grinned, looking at his proudly held-out money bags, and said, "I've never taken payment from anyone, and I won't take it from you. But you will keep your word. Go outside and give all this gold to the poor." The merchant rejoiced even more and went off with his retinue to carry out the Saint's order. Yet, when he opened one of his bags and started taking money out, all the coins turned out to be gold, except for one.

The merchant got upset and thought that he must have mixed up the money bags at home. Nonetheless, he fulfilled the Saint's order given in front of his retinue. However, upon coming home, he became truly horrified, for all his jewels and money had turned into cheap silver coins. And among this pile of small trinkets, he found only one gold coin."

"Hmm, it appears there were swindlers even in those days," Volodya uttered in his deep voice.

"There are plenty of them around at any time," Sensei uttered with a sad smile. "Greed is the favourite vice of the human's beast. Not just among laypeople, but, unfortunately, among monks as well. Even in Agapit's time, many of the monks at the monastery where he lived had a much greater love for gold than for God, and they used their monastic rank for coaxing money out of simpletons..."

During Agapit's life, many of them were afraid of him, although Agapit

himself never judged anyone. After his death, however, the underhanded gold-lovers breathed a sigh of relief, for the One who didn't give rest to their Conscience was no longer near them. Later on, describing the monastery life, they concealed many of Agapit's true deeds. In an effort to raise their self-importance, they attributed his miracles to themselves. They also concealed the Teaching which Agapit had conveyed speaking in the true words of Jesus, for it went against their desires for power and money. As for the monastery's public fame, which it acquired thanks to Agapit and his disciples, those people used it for their own enrichment, inventing more and more new ways of making money and achieving their political goals.

Yet, by and large, there was no more holiness in those kooks, who appropriated the labour of others, than in a stingy hawker at the market." Sighing, Sensei said, "People remain people, no matter what clothes they wear... Although, among everyone to whom the human mind attributed holiness, Agapit truly was the Holy One, for the Holy Spirit Himself abode in him."

A brief silence fell.

"When did Agapit die?" Tatyana inquired.

"In October of 1095."

"What about Anthony?" Victor asked.

"In 1073... By the way, before Anthony's death, there was a rather unusual conversation between Agapit and Anthony who was on his deathbed, which was witnessed by a young novice who was looking after Anthony. It was he who, having subsequently gone to Athos, left there a record about this event in his memoirs. So, when Agapit came in, Anthony was lying there semi-delirious, continuously whispering one and the same prayer. Only some of its words reached the novice's ears. Agapit looked at Anthony, smiled, and added to his words: "...And I pray to You, Oh Lord, just for salvation of my soul. Let Your holy will..." At these words Anthony shuddered and opened his eyes. His gaze met Agapit's, and his eyes lit up. He began to hoarsely repeat, "Gabriel! Gabriel!" and stretched his arms towards Agapit. Tears streamed down the old man's cheeks. Agapit approached and took him by the hand. In rapture,

Anthony uttered, "My God, Agapit, it is You! How could I have failed to recognize You before? How blind I was in the radiance of Your rays?!" He began to mutter hastily as if he were afraid he wouldn't have enough time to say everything he felt in his soul at that moment. He talked about his youth and the elder who had given him the prayer; he said that he had waited for Him his entire life, while He turned out to be near. And now, having just met, they were to part. To which Agapit responded, **"Thou hast been by my side all thy life here. Do thou really think that I shall leave thou *there*? As thou hast been in incessant Love for God during thy lifetime, who will now bereave thee from this heavenly fruit created by thine own faith and heart? Thy faith hast never diminished in the earthly times, thy mind has not yielded to the temptations of dust, while thy pure conscience craved goodness. Thou hast not asked Him for anything hitherto save for salvation of thy soul, whilst uttering words of the prayer from thy soul. Thou hast opened thy soul to God, and now God hast opened His Gate afore thee. Thus, enjoy God's grace. Verily I say unto thee that during this lifetime thou hast attained the eternal treasure — the kingdom of God, where I shall now guide thee to."**

Agapit and Anthony closed their eyes for a moment. While Agapit was whispering a prayer soundlessly, Anthony took his last breath with a blissful smile on his lips. And his soul, accompanied by the Holy Spirit, went to the heavenly garden. For Archangel Gabriel Himself was praying for him at that moment."

Sensei became thoughtful and then said, shrugging his shoulders,

"Although I don't understand why they divided the whole into parts... Well, it doesn't matter." Sensei waved his hand slightly. "They are to live with that." Then, as if awakening from his reflections, he continued the story, "So, when Anthony died, his body was left in the cell at Agapit's insistence. And as long as Agapit was alive, Anthony's body lay there as if alive, there was even an unusual fragrance emanating from it..."

Yet, an even more remarkable story happened after Agapit's death. As I've

already said, even during Agapit's lifetime, there were plenty of those who envied his popularity among people. So, when Agapit foretold the day of his death..."

"Foretold the day of his death?" Ruslan asked in surprise. "Is that really possible?"

"Of course it is, all the more so for Agapit... Agapit was a Bodhisattva. Death wasn't a problem for him like it is for an ordinary person who tumbles through reincarnations. As a Bodhi, he could have left his body at any moment. However, according to the rules of staying among people, a Bodhisattva must live his life in a body to the end of its term, be it short or long. And it surely wasn't difficult for him to calculate when Prana would run out in the body..."

"Ahh," Ruslan drawled.

"So, when Agapit foretold the day of his death, it was not only Agapit's disciples, listening to his last spiritual precepts, who began to prepare for this day, but also his enemies. They decided to remove the Saint's body from the monastery after his death and bury it somewhere far away in a remote location, so that no one would ever be able to find it. Yet, they failed to implement this plan right away, because after Agapit's death his fame didn't fade as they expected. On the contrary, it grew manifold. A mass pilgrimage to his body began. Four months had passed, but Agapit's body lay without decay, as if he had died only the day before. The flow of people didn't cease. So the foes, consumed by their hatred and extreme jealousy towards the Saint, decided to steal Agapit's body.

They prepared for this event meticulously and came up with a plan that involved loyal people, two of whom were monks. On that fateful day of February twenty-fourth according to the new calendar, despite severe frost, their people were burning fires all day long and hollowing out a grave in a chosen remote location not far from a deep ditch. In the early hours of February twenty-fifth, they finally managed to carry out their plan. However, when the executors of this truly barbaric order, having completed their 'black deed', returned to the monastery in the morning, they found a great

commotion there. Yet, the commotion was not at all due to the loss of Agapit's body as they supposed. It turned out that one of the monks had found... Agapit's body, not lying however, but sitting in his cell in an unusual pose. In addition, there was a sheet of parchment in front of the body, on which a strange inscription was carefully made with fresh ink in Agapit's handwriting.

Those who had personally buried Agapit's body just a little while ago were doubly horrified. There were three of them. Two of them were the same monks who actually stole Agapit's body that night by the order of the higher-ups, threw it into the grave, buried it, and covered up that site. Now then, at that moment, the following happened to those people: the first one, upon seeing the sitting Agapit, went mad. The second one lost sleep forever. For the rest of his life, he didn't sleep a wink, diligently atoning for his sin by praying. Thereafter, this monk became the most ardent of Agapit's followers and the most zealous guardian of his body. The third accomplice, who was a layman, rushed to inform those who had hired him to implement this insidious plan. Together with his 'patrons', he hastily returned again to the place where Agapit's body was hidden. They opened the grave and verified that it was empty. There were no extraneous footsteps on the snow around the grave. The body simply disappeared from the grave and inconceivably reappeared in the cell. After this incident, no one ever dared lay a finger on Agapit's body again.

"So, what was written there, on that parchment?" inquired Kostya.

Sensei only smiled enigmatically and, without answering the question, said,

"By the way, this sheet of parchment had extraordinary power and was secretly used for a long time before it was 'withdrawn'. When the parchment was laid behind an icon, it began to exude chrism, and people were miraculously healed from it. And when..."

"Why was it used secretly?" Ruslan asked, interrupting Sensei's story.

"Because they wanted to hide the inscription left by Agapit from people."

"Who and why 'withdrew' this parchment?" inquired Stas in turn.

"That's another story, and it is not related to this topic. I will only say that this temporary 'withdrawal' of Agapit's parchment from human habitat had to

do with the danger of its complete loss due to human envy and stupidity."

"But still, what was written on it?" Kostya continued to stubbornly question.

"The truth," Sensei replied and continued his account of the unusual spiritual power of Agapit's parchment.

At that moment, a 'brilliant idea', as Kostya liked to say, came into my head. It would be so great to paint a portrait of Agapit (especially since my uncle has an acquaintance who participated in the restoration of the Saint's true image) and to put this parchment behind the portrait if, of course, I could find it. Then, the portrait would probably gain extraordinary power. Then it could be donated to Lavra, and there it would be available to everyone in the world! So many people could then be healed, find hope, and strengthen their faith! After all, I myself recently went through the horror of inner turmoil when my life was hanging by a thread, while I was unable to either save myself or understand why I was living in this world. I surely understand those who are suffering and looking for true values for their spiritual salvation. An illness makes a person think about death, and death — about God. The search for God brings one face-to-face with unexpected people and circumstances that change one's destiny drastically, revealing a completely unknown side of reality.

These thoughts inspired me so much that I began to dream of how nice it would be to make this idea a reality. And while there was no problem with Agapit's image (my uncle would help me there), that was not the case with Agapit's parchment. Where in the whole wide world could I look for it, if it had been 'withdrawn from human habitat'? At that moment Sensei, who was continuing his story during my turbulent thoughts, suddenly stopped talking and gazed at me intently. Then he said with kindness in his voice,

**"...Nothing is impossible for a thirsty soul."**

I didn't quite understand what that was all about. Either, judging by his look, he responded to my thoughts, or it was the way he finished his story which, unfortunately, I missed hearing because of my pondering. Well, one way or another, I didn't dare ask him about it in front of everyone. Especially since

at that moment Nikolai Andreyevich asked,

"They say, there is a special microclimate in the Pechersk caves, therefore the relics don't decay. Is it a special characteristic of that location?"

"It *is* special," Sensei emphasized with a mysterious intonation. "But the whole point is that not all the relics were imperishable in the Lavra caves. There were a lot of remains there which decayed just like bodies of ordinary dead people."

"What are 'relics'?" Ruslan suddenly came up with a somewhat belated question.

"Look who's awake!" Zhenya snickered.

We all laughed, but Sensei answered quite seriously.

"In Old Russian and Slavonic languages, *relics* meant bones. Yet, in the past, there were two concepts — 'relics' and 'body'. For example, when speaking of some saints, people said that they 'lay in relics', while about others they said that they 'lay in body'. Before, in Ancient Rus, undecayed bones were called 'imperishable relics'. There were also cases of natural mummification of bodies. It's only in modern times that the church began to call both bones and mummified bodies of saints 'relics', as they say, without putting any extra emphasis."

"But why?" questions kept pouring out of Ruslan.

"What do you mean why? Suppose, for example, that a highly ranked clergyman, who held a high post in the religious structure during his lifetime, is proclaimed a saint after his death. Yet, he ended up rotting, despite the fact that he was, for example, buried in the Lavra caves, as you say, with a special microclimate," Sensei pointed out to Nikolai Andreyevich. "Well, they couldn't take back their words since holiness was already proclaimed to the public. So, they extricated themselves as best as they could, smoothing out some moments in history, so as not to cause confusion among the flock. For example, as it happened with Theodosius."

"And who is Theodosius?" Ruslan grew bolder.

"So, what happened?" we joined in as well.



"Theodosius? That's the greatest joke in the history of glorification of Russian saints. Theodosius of Pechersk is called the father of Russian monasticism," Sensei said with a grin. "He is presented as an ideal of monastic life, and all Russian monks are considered to be among his children. However, this false glorification is through no fault of the present-day religious pastors, for they are guided by the 'historical documents' that have reached their time and in many respects are not reliable. I don't mean the fact of the documents themselves, but the information contained in them. The roots of this substitution go much deeper, precisely to Agapit's era.

In those times, the fame of Agapit's deeds, miracles, and healing spread very quickly. People were constantly heard saying: as Agapit taught, as Agapit said, as Agapit did. Well, who among that time's religious shepherds of the 'herd' would like that people honoured some simple monk more than their 'highly spiritual' personas? That's why some of the high-ranking priests harboured vile envy towards Agapit even during his life. However, as I've already said, they were afraid to undertake anything against him because even their attempts to poison the true Saint had failed. It didn't harm Agapit at all. Thus, his strong personality, popularity among people, the uncommon strength he possessed, and freethinking horrified the powers that be. Unable to destroy Agapit either physically or morally, they began to act in a different way. To counter Agapit, they decided to put forward their own candidate for public worship and, if possible, to carry out his official canonization. Their choice fell on the already deceased by that time hegumen Theodosius who, by the way, was not the first hegumen of the monastery and was far from an ideal candidate for sainthood. However, his image was the most congenial for those gold-lovers whom Agapit hindered from making money on God's name.

To carry out this plan, 'chronicle codes' and a 'life story of a saint' were compiled in short order. Thus, already in 1078-1088, there appeared texts of the *Life of the Venerable Theodosius of Pechersk*, which basically contained very little information about the real life of Theodosius, but had plenty of fake additions. That's how in 1077-1088 there appeared records by Nikon 'The Great'. This

name in monkhood was given to Ilarion who at his time was dismissed from the metropolitan seat at Saint Sophia's Cathedral for his love of gold. He also had an irreconcilable attitude towards Agapit's fame. Later, in 1093, these records were supplemented by hegumen John. And it was already on this basis that the *Paterikon* as well as *The Tale of Bygone Years* were written in 1113, meaning, eighteen years after Agapit's death. Yet, even *The Tale* was subsequently edited several times, and further changes were made to it.

Thus, in 1116, hegumen Sylvester of the Vydubychi monastery thoroughly revised the text of the 'chronicle'. By the way, it was he who interpreted the record about Andrew the First-Called. Where it was written that Andrew the First-Called had come to lay a seed in those lands — Christ's package, Sylvester, while revising this material, wrote it already from his own viewpoint, describing the 'package' as a cross and the 'seed' as faith. And since it was his records that reached the descendants, it turns out that according to them, Andrew the First-Called, while staying in the Kiev land, raised a cross on a hill, blessing that land, and foretold that God's grace would shine upon it."

"And those descendants received it like in the children's 'broken telephone' game," Zhenya smiled. "Instead of 'seed' they heard 'steed', and instead of 'package' — 'scrappage'."

"That's right," Sensei sighed. "So, in 1091 they decided, on top of all that, to exhume Theodosius' relics and put them out in the Dormition Cathedral for worship. But when they opened Theodosius' monk cell in the Far Caves where he was buried, they discovered that his relics had decayed. Yet, the date of the solemn transfer of Theodosius' relics to the cathedral had already been announced. So, to conceal the incident, they began to hastily unseal other graves in the cave. Again, who participated in this shady enterprise? Mark, which is why he was later nicknamed the Gravedigger, an assistant monk, and Nestor who was later called the Chronicler and who had actually been put in charge of this 'jolly group'. Finally, to their delight, they found a well-preserved mummified body of a recluse, one of Agapit's first disciples. The very next day, his remains were solemnly presented as Theodosius' remains. They didn't even

know whose remains those were, while those remains were indeed unusual. The person to whom they once belonged had gone to Nirvana, or, speaking the language of Christianity, he went to heaven because already during his lifetime he managed to conquer death and leave the circle of reincarnations. This monk's name was Dobroslav, or as Agapit and his disciples called him in a friendly way, Dobrynia."

"Are those remains still kept in the cathedral today?"

Sensei grinned.

"Of course not. Justice has triumphed after all. In 1240, Dobrynia was spared from mockery. During Batu Khan's attack, his remains were withdrawn by Mezhanins and moved to a place more worthy of him."

"Mezhanins? Who are they?" Kostya asked curiously.

"Mezhanins are people who have access to Shambhala and communicate directly with the Bodhisattvas of Shambhala."

"And a recluse, what does that mean?" Andrey wondered.

"A recluse is a monk who settles in a small cave cell of his own free will, arranging it in such a way that it was connected with an underground corridor only by a narrow window, which later served as a means of passing scanty meals to him. A recluse often limited himself to bread and water, and not even every day. There he would live and pray until his death."

"Wow!" escaped Kostya's lips. "In total darkness and solitude?"

"Of course. In renunciation of everything earthly."

"But why?" Kostya was sincerely surprised.

"This is one of the ways to reach Nirvana."

"No way, I would never endure that," our 'Philosopher' shook his head in denial.

"As for me, I would try," Andrey expressed his opinion.

"Do you think it's that easy?" Sensei uttered. "In order to undertake the technique of seclusion, you must first learn at least the basics — to control your thoughts... After all, a person didn't just seclude himself in a cave in complete darkness, praying to God. He was first taught a special breathing

technique, then an ability to control thoughts and to convert them into a steady state of agathodemon, meaning, positive thinking. Only then would he withdraw into seclusion, performing a consecutive series of certain meditations that brought him to a certain level from a simple to a complex one. Ultimately, a person consciously passed to Nirvana, to God, that is, liberated himself from the cycle of reincarnations. It's not all that simple. Although," Sensei shrugged his shoulders and said thoughtfully, "from a spiritual point of view, this way is too simplistic and too easy, it's for those who are lazy. It's the easiest path — to get away from the human world by becoming a reclusive monk.

It's a different matter to live in the world and come to God through doing good while being among people. That's really something! Difficult, but truly valuable." Then he returned to the topic of conversation again. "The technique of seclusion is a very ancient technique that has been practiced since time immemorial. Agapit imparted it to his disciples as sacred knowledge. But later, this technique was lost because the last person who really possessed it simply failed to find anyone worthy among people, who could be trusted with this knowledge.

Trying to emulate Agapit's disciples, many people made attempts to seclude themselves on their own, having absolutely no knowledge of this practice. As a result, they either simply couldn't endure the seclusion or went crazy. This is natural. After all, if a person doesn't know how to cope with his fears and negative thoughts, if he is constantly dominated by cacodemon, meaning, negative thoughts, it only increases many times over in seclusion. For an untrained person, it is almost impossible to endure seclusion."

A brief silence fell.

"So, does it mean that Nestor was a bit insincere?" Victor asked.

"He just wrote what the higher dignitaries instructed him to write. Nestor was given the task of preparing the *Life of Theodosius* book for canonization, simply put, he was to create an image for worship. Therefore, Theodosius had to be written about accordingly, at the proper level, and that's what Nestor did. He took a little bit from Theodosius' real life and copied the rest of his

'holiness' word for word from other sources. You see, as the author, he didn't witness the real events. When Theodosius came to Anthony's cave in 1056, Nestor was still, as they say, singing songs while wearing diapers. That's why it was Nestor whom they assigned to write this work, having appointed several of Theodosius' old monk followers, who had been there during the times of his hegumenship, to look after Nestor, so to say, to assist him in making the history as 'truthful' as possible."

"How can we trust in 'history' after that?!" Zhenya smirked.

"What do you expect? Everything's not that simple. At that time, the Church needed an image of the first saintly life in Rus. So they chose hegumen Theodosius for his 'outstanding merits.' After all, they couldn't choose Agapit, could they?" Sensei said with a smile. "Who was needed? A hegumen. So, Nestor did his best. He took a little bit from Theodosius' real life, namely partial information about his childhood, youth and life in the monastery, and then, at the instigation of the 'fathers', copied the rest word for word from life stories of various Greek and Palestinian saints. Back then in Rus, there were already many translations of ancient paterikons, ascetic teaching treatises as well as ascetic life stories. Particularly favourite and widely read were the life stories of Greek saints, such as St. Anthony, Theodore the Studite, Theodore of Edessa, and John Chrysostom. There were also less well-known, but full versions of life stories of the sixth-century Palestinian saints, whom Cyril of Scythopolis had written about. Those were the life stories of Euthymius the Great, Sabbas the Sanctified, John the Silent, and Theodosius the Cenobiarch. In short, there was plenty to choose from for creating a new image.

Nestor, for example, especially liked the life stories of saints Euthymius and Sabbas. So the image of the new Theodosius turned out to be much like that of Sabbas, sometimes even with the use of literal extracts in the text. He copied spiritual feats from the Oriental asceticism, then added some elements from the saints' life stories, and there you have the image of the great Theodosius, the father of Russian monasticism.

Although Theodosius himself was far from being the way he was presented.

It is true that he had a difficult childhood in a rich family. His father died when Theodosius was 13. His mother constantly beat him. The boy's psyche was totally unbalanced. In short, he was a weakling who always tried to please stronger ones. When he came to Anthony in Kiev, once again escaping from his mother, Anthony accepted him out of the goodness of his heart, hoping to re-educate him. At that time, a small community, including Agapit, was already living in the cave with Anthony. Agapit actually warned Anthony about this 'meek' fellow: "That's a snake thou warmst in thy bosom." But Anthony let him stay out of pity. Incidentally, Nestor depicted this episode of Theodosius' coming to Anthony and Anthony's alleged refusal to admit him in his own way, having copied it word for word from St. Sabbas' life story, which in actual fact had nothing to do with reality.

As for Theodosius, although he was shy around the brethren, inside him 'a boiling cauldron' was seething, and not of good thoughts by far. Feeling that Agapit saw through him and knew all his secret thoughts, Theodosius tried to stay out of his sight. Even afterwards, he felt inner fear of Agapit throughout his entire life, for Theodosius did things that were incompatible with spiritual life.

What Agapit had foretold Anthony about this guy actually happened. Later, when Barlaam, the son of John who was the first boyar of Prince Izyaslav, joined the monks, a scandal broke out with those in power. It was then that, out of the whole brethren, precisely Theodosius, due to the weakness of his spirit, became Izyaslav's informer. Subsequently, he let Anthony down more than once. Eventually, when Barlaam was the first hegumen and came to Izyaslav to ask for the land above the caves, Izyaslav agreed to give it only on the condition that a clergyman of his preference would be at the head of their brethren. Barlaam had no other choice but to agree. That same year, Izyaslav transferred Barlaam (whom Anthony had once put in charge of the brethren when he himself became a simple monk) to the Dimitrievsky Monastery and appointed the 'insider' — Theodosius in his place. Yet, Nestor presented all this as if the brethren themselves elected Theodosius as their hegumen for his

'monastic feats'."

"Feats', exactly", Volodya smirked. "With us, he would have been given a good thrashing for such 'feats'."

"It was from that moment that a tacit division took place at Pechersk monastery," Sensei continued. "Agapit's followers sought spiritual life. As for Theodosius and his followers, among whom the most notable was Nikon who had ordained him into monkhood and whom Theodosius was smitten with a peculiar love for," Sensei smiled, "they used their status for their own enrichment. After attaining what he wanted, Theodosius enhanced and consolidated his power to such an extent that even Izyaslav had a hard time dealing with him."

"Indeed," Nikolai Andreyevich said pensively. "If such a person as Theodosius is given power, don't expect anything good. A sustained depressive state in adolescence often causes serious psychic disturbance and various psychopathologies. Such a teenager has a hard time adapting to his peers, often losing a sense of reality in the world around him. In turn, this gives rise to a sense of inferiority, one's own inadequacy and low self-esteem, as well as a whole set of fears. As a rule, such people are introverted, timid and spineless. But as soon as they get a chance to have real power over people, that's when the whole bunch of their mental illnesses manifests itself..."

For a while, Zhenya listened to the psychotherapist's reasoning, and then said,

"Just like a portrait of Chikatilo... He was all shy and modest in public too."

"Well, where do you think maniacs come from?" the psychotherapist said seriously. "Inflated megalomania can do even more sinister things to people."

"Absolutely right," Sensei agreed. "Theodosius primarily served his own megalomania. As for the spiritual, he was terribly lazy. He read prayers only for show. Looking at the spiritual work of Agapit and his disciples, he, while teaching other monks to spend the night awake in prayers, at the same time slept so soundly that they always had to wake him up in the morning. Yet, it was later presented as the secrecy of his ascetic practice. Jesus once said about

such people as Theodosius, 'They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger.'

In eulogies, they portrayed Theodosius as 'a book-lover and an enlightened man.' That's quite a joke, taking into account his poor knowledge of elementary grammar. However, he loved to teach others at every turn, to exalt his own persona, to have them bow at his feet, kiss his hands, and call him 'holy father'. That was an integral part of his nature — to present himself to people almost as the image of God. Although Jesus actually said, 'Call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father who is in heaven.'

Besides, Theodosius liked to teach not only his 'flock', but ordinary laymen as well, portraying himself to be a fierce and implacable adherent of Christianity and pounding into them that 'whoever praises another faith, walks on the verge of heresy.' At the same time, he often repeated Agapit's words: 'God is one and faith in Him is one!' Yet, while Agapit was telling his disciples about the single inner faith in God that is inherent in any human being who strives for Him, which is what Jesus actually taught, Theodosius twisted these words from the point of view of religion and the egoism of his Animal nature, saying that 'only my faith is the true one, while all the rest are unworthy.' He especially liked to teach the rich, often visiting them at their homes and feasts. He even imputed to himself that his duty was to teach princes, while their duty was to listen to his precepts. Thus, he sought to have power over those in power. Even in the Gospel, the canons of which Theodosius tried to proclaim, it is said about such people-'pharisees': 'Everything they do is done for people to see; they make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long;' 'And they love the place of honour at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues;' 'And to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and to be called 'Rabbi' by others.' But it is also mentioned there: 'But you are not to be called Rabbi, for you have one Teacher, and you are all brothers.' 'Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one Instructor, Christ'..."

At this point Tatyana, who was apparently affected by the words about the



single faith the most, said,

"Somehow I don't see the difference between Agapit's words and those of Theodosius about the single faith. I think Theodosius was right. As my grandmother used to say, one must believe only in Christianity, for it's the only faith that leads to God."

"Well, you see, your grandmother thinks this way because she was born and raised in a Christian environment. Yet, someone else's grandmother who lives in the Middle East would tell her granddaughter that Islam is the only true faith. A Chinese grandmother would assert that it is Buddhism, and so on. But these are all just external conventions which ultimately lead a person, provided that he completely switches to a positive wave, meaning, to domination of agathodemon (instead of supporting the aggressive fanaticism of cacodemon), all this leads a person to the same inner outcome. And a person often doesn't even know about the processes that are taking place in him. He just begins to understand what true faith in God is and feels an extraordinary spiritual surge. Thus, everyone who truly believes in God, no matter what they call Him, eventually comes to the same door and steps over the same threshold. It is said that many roads lead to God, but the Gate is narrow."

"Well, as for me, I kind of understand it all," Kostya started reasoning. "But to be honest, by and large, it's hard to believe in all this... For example, take that very Agapit, that the Holy Spirit Himself abode in him. What does he actually look like, that Holy Spirit? And was it all really so important for Rus? And how come I've never heard or read about it anywhere until today? Why is it exactly those stories which, as you say, are largely distorted, that reached us? Whom can we actually trust in such a case? And if there is God, why does he allow saints to be mocked, Christ to be crucified, and the truth about Agapit to be concealed?.."

Sensei sighed wearily and then quietly replied,

"Don't try to understand God's actions which are largely hidden from people. This is tantamount to an ant trying to swallow an elephant. The human brain is extremely limited. A human cannot perceive basic things: how he hears,

how he sees, how he thinks, how he lives, and who he is in fact. He doesn't even know, to a large extent, what death is, not to mention his inability to understand with his limited brain what the infinity of the Universe is. The only thing a person can do is either believe or not believe."

"How is that, believe or not believe?" Kostya objected, getting a taste for arguing. "Any belief requires evidence, including belief in God!"

"Evidence, you say?!" Sensei's voice seemed to change. "Approach a mirror and take a careful look at yourself. And if you believe that you are a random combination of amino acids, that has eventually led to a mutation of a monkey because of which it has become intelligent, then why should you seek God? Go to the market, buy a banana and enjoy life! But if you don't agree with this and believe that you are a wonderful creation of God, then how can you demand from God evidence of His existence?! Who are you, and who is God?"

Sensei spoke with such power in his gaze and his voice that Kostya, involuntarily taken aback, shrank and cast his eyes down. He seemed to be wishing for the ground to swallow him up at that moment. A short silence fell.

"Indeed," said Nikolai Andreyevich, breaking the silence. "It turns out that Theodosius served Caesar, while Agapit served God."

"Absolutely right," Sensei replied, again in his steady usual voice. "That's when division began in Lavra. Some monks performed truly spiritual deeds, including shutting themselves away in seclusion, while at the same time others enjoyed willfulness, debauchery, selfishness, and love of gold, ripping off laymen and earning money on showing them places where true monks who strove for God accomplished their spiritual feats... Basically, everything went just as always with people: they defiled this holy place with their avidity, twisted everything around, and stirred up trouble. Although everything could have been different. After all, the Holy Spirit Himself created His Abode there. Oh, people, people..."

Sensei paused for a moment and then said thoughtfully,

"All in all, Agapit had a very strong influence on Rus and not only it... And, despite the fact that this influence was of an indirect nature, it has changed the

future world. Although it wasn't actually a part of Agapit's task as a Bodhisattva at that time, it was rather Agapit's own initiative. Well, in a word, a Bodhi remains a Bodhi.

Agapit established a spiritual abode where, throughout its existence, no one ever kept count of how many people were healed of fatal diseases and, thank God, still continue to be healed. But this is not what's essential. The main thing is that many people have found spiritual health there, which is much more important than physical health. By and large, it is thanks to Agapit and his relics, in which the healing power of the Holy Spirit was preserved, that the Kiev Pechersk monastery became famous throughout centuries.

Even today, when visiting Pechersk caves where the saints' relics are kept, many people from various countries of the world, who belong to different religions, and even those who consider themselves 'atheists', spend the most time near Agapit's relics. Why? Because a person intuitively feels true holiness. After all, the soul cannot be deceived. But if people knew that they have an opportunity not only to ask for the healing of their bodies, but (which is much more important) to ask for the salvation of their souls, especially during the days when the Holy Spirit abides in Agapit's relics, beginning every February twenty-fifth and for an entire week that follows, that would be incomparably more beneficial for their souls. **For there is no holier place on Earth during that time, where any person, regardless of his religion, can be so close to God's Ear with his petition. And every person has such a chance, which he can use for seven days a year. After all, the next year might not come for him. For short are human days at the crossroads of times. For sorrowful are their deeds in the sight of God. Every human instant is already on the scales. And there is no more important concern for souls than the craving to gain salvation. The key to the Gate is not in the external belief, but in the inner faith. Only a sightless person, blinded by dust, can fail to see it.**

All that a human can give God is his faith and sincere prayer. He cannot give God anything more. For everything that surrounds a human is God's

creation, and it's not befitting to give the Master His own property as a gift. After all, apart from Love and Faith, God doesn't need anything from a human! What can a little child give his Parent to gladden His heart? Only his Love and Respect."

Sensei paused, fixing his gaze on the fire. And then he said thoughtfully, seeming to simultaneously speak to everyone at once and to each person individually,

"As long as you are alive, human, you have a chance to obtain eternity in God's love for your soul by prayer. And while you have this CHANCE, go to Agapit during the holy week and pray to the Holy Spirit only for your soul. For your body is perishable, it is dust, and all earthly concerns are empty. But remember, human, whatever you promise to God in your supplication, you must fulfil! For like every parent, He doesn't tolerate lies. He forgives, but doesn't trust afterwards..."

Tearing his gaze away from the smouldering fire, Sensei looked at us attentively. His eyes shone with incredible power and purity. And then he uttered,

**"Dare, human! Verily I say, as you cannot escape death, so you cannot avoid God's Judgement!"**

Silence fell and no one dared to disturb it. The dawn was breaking. Somewhere, a bird began to sing its melody. Sensei looked at the sea, sighed heavily, and said wearily,

"Alright, guys, I've tired you out with my stories. It's high time for you to rest..."

Everyone went to sleep. Only Sensei stayed on the seashore, sitting near the fading fire. His pensive gaze was directed to the East where the first rays of light were rapidly breaking the darkness of the night sky, clearing the way for the Sun.

## Sensei's Aphorisms

1. If you are tolerant towards evil, you won't notice how you become indifferent to good. However, when punishing evil, you must be able to stop in time. That's the only way you can avoid the danger which is concealed inside you. The victorious one is not prideful, he doesn't force and doesn't exult. He wins a victory... first of all, over himself. So, when punishing evil, one should remember about good.

2. People want to look worthy not before God, not before their Conscience, but before other people. And the entire reason for this evil lies in human desire. After all, a person values only that which he wants to see as valuable for himself. What he doesn't want to see as valuable for himself has no meaning for him. Envy, hatred, and spite grow not from an external stimulus, but from the inner root of self-love.

3. The whole world is working on evoking in a person as many desires as possible to acquire something that he supposedly lacks for complete happiness. The whole world sells illusions. It is woven of lies, and its threads are held together by envy. People themselves beget the illusion, feed it with the impurity of their thoughts, and live in this illusion themselves, taking it for true reality.

4. No matter what power a person has on Earth, he will never get satisfaction from it because he still remains a slave of his desires. While the true power is power over oneself.

5. It is foolish to give fish to a hungry man, for he will eat it and get hungry again. It's much wiser to give him fishing tackles and teach him how to use them.

6. For as long as love lives in the soul, parting is impossible. Because the main thing is that you know that you love this person. How can you lose him if he is really dear to your soul, if Memory and Love for him continue to live in you...

7. A human being is temporary. Death puts an end to old age and torments, freeing one from the burden of existence. For loving souls, it's a reward. After all, by and large, we don't become different just because we die...

8. Every person doesn't actually live his real life. He chooses an image he likes and plays a role, and, as a rule, more than one. And he gets so into it that he thinks that this is actually his real life. Like any actor, a person remains dissatisfied with his role, and he dreams of another role where he sees himself as more important. No matter what a person has achieved, it seems to him that he hasn't played the main role of his life yet. And all the time he lives in his dreams, he soothes himself with these fairy tales.

9. However, isn't it easier to stop dreaming and to choose in your life a role worthy of a Human? And to be who you are supposed to be. So that when you go to sleep, you would be sure that your conscience is clear. So that when you are dying, you wouldn't be ashamed of your thoughts and deeds. And so that even when standing before God, as Christians say, at God's Judgement, you would have something to say. So that your basket with good deeds would be full, while the one with bad deeds would be empty. That's what it means to be a Human. For life is too short, and it is given so that a person would prove to God that he is worthy of the title of a Human...

10. Become yourself, your Essence. Life and death are like a single

flow. The Essence moves in the flow. In the movement, it gains the eternal. No one can really appreciate the raging flow without going into its waters, for this is the future. No one can enter the same water twice, for this is the past. There is only the movement of the flow, for this is the present. Sooner or later, any water reaches its source and becomes it, returning to its original purity.

11. Clothing is just a part of a single process of creation and destruction. There is nothing more stupid than pleasing the whims of your clothing. After all, that which is the essence of it locks you within its narrow space, distancing you from the world and plunging you into doubts and fears generated by this estrangement. It forces you to exist for the sake of its forms and external illusions which its image creates for others, drawing you into ever greater worries about it. After all, every form has its own rules. While rules are just an aggregate of contrasts.

Your clothes have a limit. They wear out. However, you are free not to wear them. But, having worn out one piece of clothing, you put on another one. Yet, without destroying the limit, it is disastrous to pursue the boundless.

12. It is pointless to run after a dead dry thorn, for it has no life. It's a dead thing that has nothing to reveal itself with except its thorns. The dead defends the dead. The dead won't turn into the living because there is life, while the living won't become dead because there is death. Both life and death depend on something, there is something that binds them.

13. It is foolish to praise someone who sees only its future food in you. You were attracted by the altitude of the bird's flight, and you followed it, thinking of your own benefit. However, the bird's aspirations during the flight were different. Although it soars high above the desert, it feeds on its victims. While a bird that feeds on carrion doesn't suffer when its

**'meals' change. For its essence is rot. You have deceived yourself. You saw the reality, and your illusions vanished. But your reality is an illusion too. The big bird was just a shadow compared to the essence of things. Whereas things have a property of being born in the Formless and returning to the Lowly.**

**14. One who relies on the external can only surmise. One who relies on the inner has the true knowledge. Body is dust. Its essence is ashes. While you could have gained the Wisdom of eternity. You just needed to take a step. But the fear of death of your dust turned out to be stronger. The dust ran away. You remained anguished, for Spirit always strives for eternity. The Wisdom of eternity cannot be perceived through the power of dust, for it will turn it into rubbish. To run away from fear doesn't mean to get saved. To kill fear in oneself means to achieve perfection. While perfection allows one to step on the verge. For only on the verge you become aware of the source of Wisdom.**

**15. A phantom that looks like Wisdom only seems to be Wisdom. Empty fuss is a beginning of distemper. One who wants to look like a Sage in order to boast before others rushes about dolefully by himself, dreaming of glory. But his essence is emptiness in the shell of the Ego. When knowledge comes from ignorance, questions can never end.**

**16. The sky and the sun direct the changes. They are capable of transforming so that all living beings would follow their nature. The sky and the sun augment the full and destroy the empty. The desert carries out motion in rest. It is dead, but is capable of generating mirages in order to deceive the living with its illusions. The desert destroys the full and fills the empty. While sand grains, in their mass, follow the movement of the sand, and so the elements determine their direction.**



17. You came where you were granted by birth. You grew up in what was pleasing to your nature. You have reached maturity in that which has become your destiny. And you will go wherever you are given by death. Death is just the beginning of life. Life is just a successor to Death. The advent of life cannot be rejected. Its leaving cannot be stopped.

18. Someone else's trail does not look like your own. Trails appear where they are left. However, they themselves are not the one who leaves them. Following someone else's trail, you chased outward images without knowing their inner essence. But everyone carves for himself that path which corresponds to his true aspirations. With time, the desert erases all trails with its sands, so that a new Wayfarer wouldn't make mistakes of the past. That is why your own experience is important. In order to become a Human, you need to carve your own path.

19. A Human's foot takes up little space in the boundless Desert. But, in spite of this, it can step where no one has ever walked. Whereas, by walking where no one has ever walked, a Human is able to go far and to gain something greater. The knowledge of his mind is scanty, but by entrusting himself to the Unknown, a Human is able to reach the One Who created him.

20. He can be perceived, but cannot be described. He can be reached, but cannot be comprehended. He can be Loved, but cannot be embraced. He can be understood in the Beginning, but cannot be known to the End. For He is the One Who created everything. For He is the One Creating by His Will.

21. Gold is indeed dirt for the soul and temptation for thoughts. It is the filth that many crave, but which is actually a phantom deception. For

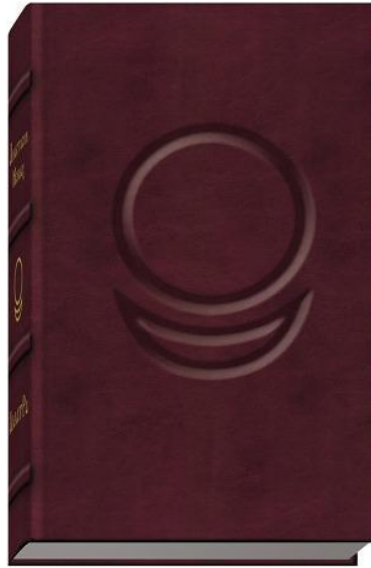
a monk, true value lies in sincere prayer about his soul. It is not the satiety of one's belly and health of one's body that a person should care about. For no matter how much you eat, sooner or later you'll become hungry all the same. And no matter how good your health is, sooner or later your flesh will die anyway. While the soul is eternal and the only one worthy of true care.

22. It does not befit you to disturb God with anything except salvation of your soul. Ask not for your body or health; it's not your belly you should care about — all of this is empty dust, insatiable in its desires. For there is no supplication more deserving than supplication for the salvation of your soul.

23. Nothing is impossible for a thirsty soul.

24. Short are human days at the crossroads of times. Sorrowful are their deeds in the sight of God. Every human instant is already on the scales. And there is no more important concern for souls than the craving to gain salvation. The key to the Gate is not in the external belief, but in the inner faith. Only a sightless person, blinded by dust, can fail to see it.

25. Dare, human! Verily I say, as you cannot escape death, so you cannot avoid God's Judgement.



### **The book "AllatRa"**

Anastasia Novykh

This is a live encyclopedia of primordial spiritual Knowledge of the world, society, and human being. It does not just speak to everyone about the innermost. It answers the most secret, deeply personal, and disturbing questions that a person hides inside and does not reveal even to close friends. AllatRa book immerses one into a wonderful state of versatile knowledge of Truth; it quenches the thirst for the search of the meaning of life from the eternal, vivifying Source. It is a foundation of primordial Knowledge for the spiritual awakening and radical transformation of a Person and the society as a whole.

- Soul is most precious in a Human being
- Sensations in science
- The meaning of a person's spiritual development
- The meaning of human life
- Multidimensional structure of a human being
- What unites all religions?
- Ancient spiritual practices and meditations
- Society of the future - free of politicians and priests

- What happens after death of the physical body?
- Active signs
- Untypical children's behavior
- Sacral symbolism of the icons
- What is the System of the Animal Mind
- The structure of the Universe
- What is hidden behind the supernatural powers
- Dialogue with God
- Holy Grail
- Ancient parables

This book, as well as other books by Anastasia Novykh, has been translated by volunteers – ALLATRA IPM participants. If you have suggestions to improve the book translation, please send your comments and ideas to [info@allatra.ua](mailto:info@allatra.ua)

◆ The books by Anastasia Novykh are well-known all over the world as spiritual, intellectual bestsellers that give answers to exclusively personal questions of every person, that give a deep understanding of the world and oneself, strengthen the best human qualities, inspire to inner self-knowledge, inspire to broaden one's outlook, gain victory over oneself and do real good deeds. The books of the writer - "Sensei. The Primordial of Shambala" (four volumes), "Ezoosmos", "Birds and a Stone", "Crossroads" and "AllatRa" are translated into many languages. They have become a handbook for people of different ages, nationalities, religions, living on different continents, in various countries.

◆ The phenomenon of the works of Anastasia Novykh is that everyone sees in them something innermost. It is a mine of knowledge about the world and human being, about his meaning of life and practical ways of self-knowledge and self-improvement. These books have united many people on

the planet by their universal knowledge and by novelty of perception of the world and oneself. All books are freely available to everyone on the Internet on the official website of the author

schambala.com.ua  
books.allatra.org/en  
allatra-book.org

The unique books by Anastasia Novykh have become the basis for a large-scale association of like-minded and kind people all over the world. Thanks to these books, good people from all over the world who want to apply their skills and abilities towards creative actively unite. These people implement large-scale projects that develop and strengthen morality, spirituality and culture in the world community. The example of such an association of kind, unselfish people is ALLATRA International Public Movement, which global international activity plays today an invaluable role in the formation of spirituality, morality and humanity all over the world.

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ALLATRA IPM is a global association of those who actually do Good and maintain Peace for all people. ALLATRA movement unites people all over the world regardless of status, social categories, political and religious views. In a short period of time hundreds of thousands of like-minded people in more than 180 countries around the world have become active participants of the movement.

Our strategic goal is to induce people to actively participate in life of the society and together with people of good will from various countries be involved in useful activity for the world community.

We are outside of politics and outside of religion.

Thanks to the initiative and unselfish actions of active participants of the ALLATRA International Public Movement, various creative projects and good deeds aimed at creating conditions to unlock the creative potential of people and at revival of universal human spiritual and moral values in the whole global community are implemented around the world.

Among the projects are: the nationwide initiative - "ALLATRA Global Partnership Agreement"; international Internet TV - "ALLATRA TV"; international web portal for bringing people together in common socially important affairs - "ALLATRA - Crowdfunding with Conscience"; creative media space - "ALLATRA RADIO"; "ALLATRA SCIENCE" - modern innovative research in the spheres of climatology and physics; International portal of global positive information space -

"ALLATRA News" and many others.

We do not divide people into leaders and executors, every one of us is a leader and an executor, and together we are force.

Our General Manager is CONSCIENCE.

We invite everyone who would like to show kindness and to help the international community to take the path of spiritual and cultural development through socially important joint projects. Everyone who wants, who is able and who acts is with us.

It is timely and fashionable to be a good person!

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ALLATRA TV – International Volunteer Internet TV  
of the ALLATRA International Public Movement

**Official website: [allatra.tv](http://allatra.tv)**

ALLATRA TV is the international, nationwide Internet TV with relevant and interesting videos on various subjects: science, good news, information and analysis programs, interviews with famous people, friendly humor, educational animated videos, family programmes, and many other sincere and positive programmes which increase humaneness, kindness, and unity in the society. The reality that affects us all!

The ALLATRA TV shows are interesting to all people who are striving for self-improvement, spiritual and cultural development, and strengthening of the best qualities in themselves and the society around them.

Join the ALLATRA IPM international team of volunteers and realize your creative ideas and projects through the new national television format!

Especially popular among the audience are “The Truth is One for Everyone” series of programmes and a new film "CONSCIOUSNESS AND PERSONALITY. From the inevitably dead to the eternally Alive".

## CONSCIOUSNESS AND PERSONALITY

From the inevitably dead to the eternally Alive

<https://allatra.tv/en/video/soznanie-i-lichnost>

This is an alive conversation with Igor Mikhailovich Danilov. It is an alive book. It is a beginning of global events that will inevitably have a further development. It is a consequence of what happened on December 21, 2012. It is the next step after the book "AllatRa".

It is an unmasking of the system. It is the Knowledge lost in the centuries. The instruments with the help of which many people can gain real Freedom from the enslavement of the system which secretly acts through consciousness. It is a unique experience and practice of being in touch with the Spiritual World. It is an alive conversation for those who want to become a part of the Boundless World.

Here, the instruments are given so as not only to resist the Evil in oneself but also to bring here, into this world, something that has been missing for a long time - it is more sincere, real God's Love and that Freedom which is like fresh waters washing away the filth and lie of the consciousness and quenching the Personality's Spiritual thirst. The alive conversation is a Key for the Personality and a Path of person's transformation from the inevitably dead to the eternally Alive.

**THE TRUTH that reveals the system AND CHANGES YOU FOREVER!**

### IN THIS ALIVE CONVERSATION:

- practical experience of self-cognition;
- what a Personality is as a Spirit;
- what the difference is between autogenic training, meditation, and a spiritual practice;
- what the Prophets had faced;
- a human being was created twice;
- how it was: "a human being was created in the image and likeness";
- what is the original sin? You are not sinful!;
- the consciousness as an instrument of the system;
- until the eighth day, there is no difference between a human being and an animal;
- how the system works, what people do not see;
- how the system speaks with people;



- tricks and substitutions of the system in practice: peace and power;
- how to get in touch with the Spiritual world: experience and practice;
  - physics of the supernatural
  - unity is a new format of the person and the society;
- magic of the consciousness; the whole truth about magic
- predictions become true: the end and the beginning.

*The programme's text version edited by Anastasia Novykh and translations of the text version of the programme into various languages of the world can be found at [allatra-book.org](http://allatra-book.org)*

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