

Anastasia Novykh
“Sensei of Shambala”. Book II

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

This book was written based on the personal diary of a former high school senior girl reflecting events of the years 1990-1991.

Prologue

“But not everything is so bad. Moreover if you decided to stay, let them have one more chance and let me...”

At this moment a light breeze flashed by over the sea brightening the moonlit path. The last one sparkled charmingly with its silvery plays alluring to the mysterious expanse. The nature as if intentionally teased the Creature, on the one side surrounding It by its eternity, and on the other side by its natural earthly beauty. Obviously this easy capful of wind hid some innermost known only by its mystery. “If you want is so much, go ahead, try it. When we are still here there is a bit of time...” “But the field is long ago ripened. And the bushes of weed are growing too fast and overburden the Earth... The crops are too weak, though they were carefully cultivated: the

seconds of illusion overshadowed for them the reality of the eternity.” “However, I hope to find out...”

The new capful of wind brought away the words to its endless expanses. Two parts of the Creature again united themselves in their essence. A short silence reigned. Only the fire crackled softly with its burning branches. Fine thin twigs quickly turned down to the charry formless ashes. It was so strange as only one instant passed by but it seemed that this odd matter has never existed as if it has never happened to be.

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A stone fallen to the sand – rustle of sand grains.
A wave reaching the land – rustle of sand grains.
Your running headlong,
Foot in the sand – rustle of sand grains.
Life is just a step,
And its years are rustle of sand grains.

Rigden Jappo

1

All the guys ran to swim. Finally it happened so that Sensei was left alone. He stood in the shoal water gradually getting used to the water temperature. Taking advantage of his loneliness I started to tell him my strange dream about the Red Horseman which I have seen in my dreams last night. This unusual vision impressed me by its unordinary realism, brightness and emotionality. Telling it to Sensei I complained that I couldn't recall its meaning, and remember only that it

was very important for me. Contrary to my expectations that he would fully decode this dream from physiological and philosophical points of view, Sensei only smiled and, looking at me somehow mysteriously, said, “The time will come, and you will find out everything.”

These words intrigued fully my person but Sensei didn't add anything to them. Having left me completely confused he joined the group of our guys who had a lot of fun trying to stop the incoming waves with their athletic bodies. “It's a strange dream. And a strange answer. What could it mean?” I thought about it again.

Observing Sensei from aside I couldn't stop wondering how natural he was in all spheres of life. In our group he wasn't too much remarkable, although maybe by his bigger fortitude and very good sense of humour. But if we touched, figuratively saying, the strings of his spiritual life, they brought such a nice melody charming with its unordinary sublimity, simplicity, elegance and at the same time with unusual wisdom which really attracted everybody to him...

Extraordinary mysterious Human. Analyzing my past I made an interesting conclusion: everything whatever Sensei came across, started to get changed. I was lost in guesses how he managed to do it? Take for example my destiny. Half a year ago my body despite my 17-years-old age was on the verge of death. And at that difficult period of my life when I was almost completely desperate and my relatives' eyes were full of sorrow and condolence, exactly at that “last moment” I met Sensei, the martial arts' master, whose knowledge and abilities evidently exceeded the limits of common people.

Sensei literally changed not only my destiny but the whole world in my perception. Now I'm pretty sure that this meeting was not a happy fortuity as I had thought before. Putting altogether all the "unexpected fortuities" that unavoidable brought me to certain consequences in my life, I became sure that this meeting was rather a rule, a manifestation of Somebody's will from above. And if thanks to Sensei I stayed alive then it means Somebody needs it.

But what for? And why? What can I do in order to fulfil the task I was left for? It's difficult to guess about something you don't know. How can someone get know the full intention of the Higher forces? It happens often that the occasional meeting, word, even wordless action may cause such a flow of events that invisibly will lead to some global changes both for some individuals and for society as a whole. But the ordinary person who gave this original impulse will probably stay unaware of the general result of his doing as he lives in the restricted little world of his thoughts and surrounding of exclusively "his reality". And what is really striking is that everybody every day, even without knowing it, adds by the will of his own choice his small contribution to this increasing snow ball of coming events.

I intuitively felt that the clue to the true sense of my destiny lays in this mysterious dream. And as every curious person I wanted to know everything at once and in details. But the mystery continued to stay the mystery.

After the good breakfast our big group laid down on the sand putting our bodies to the tender rays of the morning sun. Our group consisted of enthusiasts of different age, we had a common passion to the martial arts (and not only), and were unanimous in our special and sincere respect to our coach Igor Mikhailovich whom we called in a friendly way ‘Sensei’.

Sensei was really an extraordinary personality. By his appearance he didn’t distinguish himself from our group. He was a young athletic man with blond hair. Although a careful observer could notice at first glance his unusually eagle and wise eyes. But despite of that... the eldest and most considerable was our 40-years old psychoterapist Nikolai Andreevich. The most serious one was Volodya, the old friend of Sensei, who was in charge of some secret service department. The loudest one was Viktor, our seniouir sempai, the young policeman. The most funny, humorous ones were Eugene and his friend Stas, tall athletic guys from the senior group. And the youngest ones were Ruslan and Yura as well as our merry group which once had seen films about martial arts and went to look for a good Teacher and found such a knowledge source as Sensei. We didn’t expect even in our dreams that such unique individuals do exist in this world. “Our merry group” means Andrew, Kostya, Slava, Tatyana and me. This year we finished school and passed all exams. School was left in the past and before us there was the whole life with its sorrows and joys, victories and defeats, ups and downs. And we were right in that uncertain “in between” which seemed for us the best time for the “respite”.

It was only the third day of our unforgettable vacation with Sensei on the sea coast. But what nice vacation it was! It was that very golden time when you have a chance not only to have a rest with your best friends but also to enrich yourself with outstanding impressions, and the most important with wisdom due to the hearty communication with Sensei.

Slava and Yura headed by Volodya, following the army order, went to the sea to clean the dishes with the sand as it was their turn that morning. The boys didn't have any objections to do that. It was enough of light reminder from Volodya, who said in a deep commander voice "Let's go!" and they grasped enthusiastically the pots. This funny scene caused the whole flow of jokes towards Volodya. But the last one wasn't confused by that and replied in a military manner, "The order is the order."

Nikolai Andreevich took again a book which he used to read from time to time already three days. Judging by the questions which he raised during the discussion with Sensei, the book concerned obviously somehow his psychoterapeutic activity. He argued that psychology was unfortunately still a young science and that a good psychologist nowadays must be also a good philosopher as namely philosophers stood at the origin of the philosophy as a science.

"Take, for example, Socrates, one of the initial founders of the psychology. Listen to his remarkable words," Nikolai Andreevich opened a marked page and read aloud, "One should not cure eyes separately from head and head separately from body as well as one should not cure body without curing soul..." And one more, "Cure soul... with corresponding

spells, the last ones are nothing else than right talks,” Nikolai Andreevich accentuated the last words, “these talks inspire good sense in soul, and good sense facilitates appearance of health in head and in body.” Nikolai Andreevich kept silence, looked through the page and continued, “Having heard my words Critias exclaimed ‘My Socrates, the headache would be a true gift of Hermes for a young man if it forced him to improve his mind to cure it!’”

“That’s true,” smiled Sensei.

“You see, it was written fourteen centuries ago but it’s still relevant today.”

“Sure, because wisdom has not time boundaries.”

“Right, Socrates correctly noticed it.”

“Socrates only imparted knowledge he had been taught. Socrates would not be Socrates if he hadn’t met Crito on his way, who was attracted by his kind heart and who gave him the corresponding education. Therefore you are deeply wrong when you think that psychology takes its origin from Socrates. The knowledge given by the Teacher to Socrates and later to his followers was only a remote echo of the real knowledge of the ancients... The psychology is more ancient science than anyone may imagine. And not the new one. Its forefathers and founders weren’t Socrates, Williams James, nor Le Bon, Sigmund Freud, Alfred Adler and others. These people tried only to partly restore step-by-step the information given to people once as a whole one and which was carelessly lost with the time... And in general this science has its roots in the extreme antiquity.”

“With respect to philosophy maybe. But not the scientific theory and practice?” Nikolai Andreevich was sincerely surprised.

“Why?” objected Sensei, “it concerned the science first of all. The ancients possessed such knowledge which stands far ahead our days. If today the psychology tries only to study the structure of the personality, general patterns, laws of communication between people, the ancients considered it as just a superficial philosophy as they possessed more subtle knowledge of psychology due to different psychotechnics. They studied the depths of themselves, of their soul and not of their Ego. And the psychology science starts right from the self-cognition. The more one cognizes himself, the better he will understand not only others but the world as a whole.”

“Wait but the modern psychology possesses quite a lot of different psychotechnics.”

“Right but which ones? As a rule, they are the most primitive and pay attention that they mostly directed to the material nature. Can you consider the modern humanity as a spiritually developed society with its modern development of the psychology science? Of course, not. The reason is that the modern psychology touches mostly the very low level, it tries to solve the problems of conflicts caused by the human Ego. To put it simple, it boils in the clear soup of the Animal nature despite the fact that its primary goal is to understand the human soul. With such a relation between the “theory” and “practice” you understand what a contradictory future awaits for it. That is, frankly speaking the modern psychology tries to reconcile the egoism with megalomania.”

“In principle, it’s one and the same,” delicately remarked the psychoterapist.

“So think I,” emphasized Sensei giving time to Nikolai Andreevich to deeply realize the sense of his words. “In no way do I diminish the meaning of psychology in the modern world. It’s a good and useful discipline. It’s really worth developing, it helps people to tackle stress and to fight with their fears. But I have one question to you, doctor. Tell me, why psychologists aren’t able to put in order their own minds trying meanwhile to get into the minds of others?”

“Well...why?” slowly drawled Nikolai Andreevich and in a while lively answered, “Everybody likes to make money”.

They laughed both, and after that the psychoterapist continued the conversation.

“If the ancients possessed such knowledge, then it means that they should have had the golden age?”

“Right you are. It was exactly like that.”

Nikolai Andreevich reflected for a while and then asked, “Which ancient times do you mean? During the time of our civilization?”

I noticed that Nikolai Andreevich adressed Sensei sometimes in familiar friendly manner and sometimes in official respectful way.

“I would not consider even the beginning of our civilization as ancient times. Our civilization exists only some twelve thousand years. Though in the beginning of it the humankind was given partly certain knowledge, including that one of psychology as well.”

“It was given knowledge? I wonder who was given it?”

“This knowledge was spread throughout the whole world: in Europe, Asia, Africa, South and Northern America. It was kept as a secret knowledge by wisemen in tribes of Ancient Egypt, India, Mesopotamia, Siberia, China. But despite its wide geographical spreading it was nevertheless lost with the time. That’s why you, gentlemen, have to invent a wheel again.”

“Still it’s rather strange. How was it possible that this knowledge was given to people on the different continents, and moreover in tribes? And what is more interesting, who was able to give it? As far as I know, that time the ocean was an insuperable obstacle. There were no airplanes, and it was almost impossible to sail it across.”

“In your vision, one surely needs some technical means or devices in order to do it. But the ancients managed to do it only due to their abilities. I intentionally mentioned about their subtle knowledge of human psychics. They were able to use their abilities. And those things which are argued today such as levitation, telekinesis, teleportation, telepathy and so on were just a normal reality for the ancients. It was so natural as for example for us cycling or swimming...”

“Wow!” interrupted them with undue familiarity Ruslan who like us was an occasional listener of the conversation of our “experts”. “We would also like to possess such knowledge! We could fly by our wish. It’s cool! Sensei, may we learn it?”

Sensei looked at the guy first seriously but then he smiled slightly.

“Of course, you may.”

“Can you tell us in all the details how to do it?” Ruslan tried to put his question in a “smart” way.

Sensei kept silence for a while looking at him with a light smile on his face and then answered, “It’s simple. You see, the main thing in this stuff is your attitude, your wish, the internal mood and what is more important is your great desire to try levitation. The very principle of levitation is not difficult. The main kernel of it is in your wish...”

“This is more or less clear but in details... I mean physically?” Ruslan tried to find it out, frowning his eyebrows as if it were an enigma beyond his understanding.

“In details? Let’s put it this way. Everybody is a generator of an individual torsion field. This torsion field effects photons of physical space surrounding it and interacts with torsion fields of other individuals. To launch the effect of levitation, that is of your physical body flying in the air, you should give a certain impulse with the help of psychic energy and to transform the kinetic energy into potential and vice versa. It causes the powerful splash of psychic energy as a result of adrenalin discharge and that will launch the enormous stimulation of torsion field of another person and will impact considerable growth and acceleration of your energy potential.

So, when you concentrate mentally, certain spin structures arise in labile spin system, that is in your brain, and they duplicate the spacial frequency structure of the formed image. This information, in its turn, will be transmitted not only to the body as a whole, but to the surrounding space and

this way it interacts with photons, that is with quanta of electromagnetic emission. At certain conditions, and namely personal power and precise concentration of thoughts, it comes to an effect which afterwards lets you sharply diminish your weight. And further it's a matter of techniques. Just take into account that the more power will you give to your generator of stable thought, the longer will dure the effect of levitation. It's simple physics and there is nothing difficult or extraordinary in it..."

The guys tried to listen attentively to each word of Sensei. I didn't grasp even a half of what he said and just tried to remember his words writing them down in my mind so that to put them word by word to my diary. And Nikolai Andreevich was just chap-fallen after he had heard all of that and he had such an air as if he were a first-year student listening to someone presenting at least a PhD thesis.

"That is, everything depends on your internal will-power. Because this power is enormous. In ancient times, for example, people were able to lift up such huge devices as "vimans" in the air just due to their will-power, that is by the psychic energy of concentrated thought, not saying about their own bodies. The ancients were able to lift up and to move hundreds of tons. Why did they manage to do it? Because these people possessed the discipline of their mind... The main thing is the concentration on the desired result, only then the phyhic energy will be accumulated. There should be only one final goal, precise and clear. You should feel and imagine the whole process in reality..."

During such an explanation by Sensei Ruslan started to glance determined and goal-seeking. The guy seemed to burn with the desire to realize the words into practice immediately.

“Sensei, does it take long to learn it?”, jabbered Ruslan with enthusiasm.

“Well, if to speak seriously, it takes of course some time to learn levitation for hours. But levitation for a few seconds can be practiced by almost every beginner.”

“Wow!”, Ruslan said with admiration. “May I try it right now?”

“Why not? Everything is possible if you wish it strongly.”

“But how? What should I do?”, Ruslan inquired with hastily.

“Well, in this case, it is very important to master a quick start at the beginning stage. I won’t promise you a long levitation first time, but a minute or so of free flight is quite real. You are unlikely to be able to stand more. At least after getting over the critical point you will be able to run a few seconds on the water.”

“Really? On its surface?”, Ruslan exclaimed with joy.

“Of course... It’s very important to consider the speed and the impulse force of a push...”

At these words I recalled about pond-skaters, how quickly and easily these insects slide on the water surface. I recollected zoology lessons and thought, “If to take into account the small weight and the film of surface tension of water, so maybe this process is quite possible.”

Our group became agitated. Ruslan prepared to start towards the sea with concentrated air and carefully listening to Sensei. Other guys observed this process with interest. Eugene and Stas started to give hints to Ruslan how to make a good start. Andrew and Kostya expressed their desire to be next participants of this experiment. Me and Tatyana looked already with envy at “lucky” Ruslan who will be the first among our group to levitate in the air.

At this moment Kostya proposed with all his enthusiasm addressing to Sensei, “Maybe I can try it instead of Ruslan, to make this experiment pure. I have two kilos less than he.”

“Two kilos less, two kilos less”, - teased him Ruslan. “The one who asked first, will levitate first! Take your turn.”

“There is no difference”, Kostya waved with his hand. “Sensei, maybe we will levitate together with him? In case if he is unable to do it the right way?”

“We will see who will be unable to do it the right way!” Ruslan protested. “Go away, man, you only disturb my concentration...”

Sensei only smiled at such a boyish fervor and continued his instructions, “Why are you getting so anxious, guys? Everybody will have enough time to try it, if you wish. I repeat once again, the most important thing is to take a good start...”

“Will I feel something during it... physically?”, zealously asked Ruslan looking sideways at Kostya who tried to join with him.

“For sure. You will have certain feelings. When you take off, for example, you will have a sharp change of pulse

frequency. It will increase up to forty units. The coherence of wave processes in your brain will also change. At take-off first your breathing will be fully stopped, and then its pattern will change. In general, don't worry about the range of your sensations. Be sure that its complete set is already guaranteed for you. The main thing for you now is to take a good start. Did you understand?"

Ruslan stood fully strained, so to say, on the alert.

"I see, I see," he reported. "What should I do next? How can I take off the land?"

Sensei replied, "Oh, don't worry about that, you will take off for sure. The main thing is to take a very good start. Look, you should have no outside thoughts in your head. The main thing is your goal. Your goal is flight."

"I see, I see! Well, the goal is set up. No thoughts. What should I do next?"

"Next," uttered Sensei, "you run up and... hit Volodya to the back."

With there words he pointed at our military man. The last one was right bent over and washed the dishes at the sea coast. Well, Volodya stood in the good "start position" for the "initial take-off" of Ruslan.

"And that's all! The following levitation is guaranteed for you."

A silence reigned. Guys glanced amazed at our military man Volodya and then back to Sensei and tried to figure out what had happened. But this silent scene frozen in time didn't dure long. First who grasped what Sensei said was Nikolai Andreevich. He burst out laughing so loud until he cried.

Other guys started to get it a bit later. But when even me “saw the light” the whole sea coast was shaken with loud laughter of our group and “kind mutual concessions” of Ruslan and Kostya of the right on the first “flight”. Even our guys on duty turned to us on hearing our roars of laughter and hurried on to join us with half-washed pans. Dying from curiosity they tried for ten minutes to pump out of our laughing group what actually had happened there.

After that the guys calmed down a bit and most of them ran to swim, experiencing at each other in jest a “new method of levitation”. Only then Nikolai Andreevich returned to the conversation with Igor Mikhailovich he was so interested in which was interrupted so unmannerly by the stupid curiosity of Ruslan.

“I cant’t get it, first of all, who could tell this knowledge to the ancients and second how were able those ancient tribes understand this science by their primitive mind?”

“The thing is that those tribes weren’t primitive. They were survived descendants of the Atlants’ civilization. Their mind wasn’t primitive as you consider. It was the same like ours. As during all this time the human brain wasn’t changed. Moreover, they used the possibilities of the human brain much better and more effective than we.”

“That is you mean that they were much more intellectually developed than we?”

“Maybe it sounds paradoxically for you but it’s true. If to count in a percentage proportion, it means that now we use only 10% of our possibilities and they used more that 50%. Just count it. It means that they were five times more clever

that we despite all our illusionary “high technological” development of our times.”

“But how could it be possible?”

“The thing is that in fact we only come up to the mastering of our possibilities. And in the beginning of this civilization people having high potential of their mental possibilities on the contrary degraded that is they went from their big achievements to small. It’s normal as those isolated groups were remnants of previous highly developed civilization. Later their descendants lost the former possibilities and knowledge, so to say fully degraded, and then they started from the beginning again. The main problem is that highly developed civilizations are very dependant on the external factors,” Sensei looked at the sky. “Take for example the Sun. Modern scientists assume that its resources are enough for a billion of years. And then it can expand and die out and as a result all living beings will disappear on the Earth. But first of all these are only their assumptions and guesses as scientists know little about the Sun. And second even now any moment there can be a solar megafare directed to the Earth. And if this happens there will be nothing left on the Earth just in three days. There will be in the best case only small isolated groups of people who will face an acute problem of survival. As if you want to eat even plants, first you have to grow them and in order to do it you have to find their seeds. But even if not to take into account a global catastrophe, just imagine what will happen to us if to leave us now without electricity, gas, oil, to put is simply, all benefits

of civilization. We will be practically unadapted to survival. It happened like this that time...”

“Right, in such a way there appeared in history “hunters” and “gatherers”,” the doctor smiled sadly, “with sudden flashes of astronomic and mathematical knowledge peculiar to higher civilization.”

“That’s true. First there were tribes and communities. Then there started to develop religion. Some individuals usurped the power and were interested in degradation of intellect of the masses. It’s easier to control narrow-minded people. This is how we, my dear Nikolai Andreevich, came to what we have.”

“Well,” the psychoterapist drawled sorely and after a short reflection he added, “You are right, the human is first of all a consumer of various goods of civilization and just a small part of the chain of their reproduction. And if there will be nothing, what will happen then? He will not be able even to build a house. Because apart from theoretical knowledge there you need also a bulk of inventions of civilization such as bricks, cement, nails etc. Otherwise...” Nikolai Andreevich shrugged his shoulders.

“Otherwise only a hut or an earth-house,” joked Sensei.

“Right, in the best case it will be a cave,” Nikolai Andreevich kept up his joke. “If to analyze in details what can the modern man do if he happens to stay face to face with the nature? Really nothing good.”

“That’s true... And some especially lazy individuals have even no notion about elementary things, for example, how and what can be grown,” said Sensei half in jest. “Their

food “grows” in shops, already nicely packed. What can be said else about it?”

Having heard this I started to “fit” what was said to my person. I tried to quickly recollect the experience of my family when we lived in the country and what and how my mother grew in the garden. And in general what I know how to do in this life and what not. There were so many gaps in “elementary things” that I was scared myself. And I decided to fill all these gaps as soon as I can. I planed to ask the elder generation how they managed to survive during the war when there were severe conditions, hunger, ruins. And I aimed to take part in all possible activities in our cottage works and really to learn all those “elementary” things, according to Sensei. Because one thing is when you are forced to do something and quite another when you burn with the desire to learn.

Our “sages” again laughed on their jokes and then Sensei suggested: “All right, doctor, that’s enough to talk about “sad things”, let’s go to swim.” And having looked at the location of the sun in the sky he added in philosophical manner. “While we have such an opportunity.”

3

Having swum enough, Stas and Eugene decided to make a voyage on water with an air-bag, to dive with aqualung and to fish if possible. Volodya and Victor eagerly accompanied them. Having prepared the air-bag and loaded it with fishing-tackle, they rowed along the sea coast to the direction of fish-

factory. The others fully saturated their desire to swim, alternating long-term swimming with short rest on the hot sand. Sensei and Nikolai Andreevich mostly preferred “sun baths”, after that they swam far in the sea where our young guys didn’t dare to swim.

The rest time flew by invisibly. After one of the bathings our guys blissfully stretched out on the sea coast. Having created a few small sand hills they improved their creativity and made up to form a simple sand sculpture from different parts of the bodies. Kostya, Ruslan and Slava became “victims” of this grand idea, or to be more precise, their heads, arms and legs. While making a “sculpture”, the raising creative appetite and wild fantasy brought to the idea to decorate the “monument” with plates, spoons and forks, with elements of clothes, as well as with the gifts of nature such as rush, seaweed, sea shells and thin local plants. As the heads of the “monument” were fixed in their position during our creative activities we had all the time to water them, to feed, to scratch their noses, cheeks, to keep off flies and other insects which using this opportunity tried to climb them like curious tourists the mountain of Kilimanjaro. Finally after the painstaking work accompanied with the non-stop laughing we have got, according to Andrew, a “mutant of unknown origin” instead of the planned “three-heads-Dragon” from a fairy-tale. When we were giving the final touches to the decoration of our “beautiful creature” one of his “heads” (bearing the name of Ruslan) noticed Stas and Eugene running far alongside the sea coast.

“Oh! And where is the air-bag?” wondered the most “sharp-sighted head” of the “three-heads-Dragon”. “What’s wrong with them?”

The “head” bearing the name of Slava extravagantly decorated with its “hat” lazily turned to that side, hemmed and added, “They must have forgotten something.”

And lastly the third “head”, the most wise one (bearing the name of Kostya), which was located between the two others and according to its status was ornamented with the super-turban made by Tatyana herself from a roll of toilet paper, uttered prudently, “If they had forgotten something they wouldn’t be running with such a speed.”

Indeed, judging by the hurry of the guys one couldn’t say that they were running with a slow speed. Moreover, the absense of Victor and Volodya as well as of fishing-tackle obviously showed that something has happened to them. All our attention concentrated on the senior guys.

They reached our camp and started to restore their breathing after the speedy run looking with surprise at our “masterpiece”.

“What has happened?” asked the most “wise head” puzzled.

“Well, really!” smiled Eugene on seeing the grandiose sculpture.

“Where is Sensei?” Stas questioned in reply to our question.

“He is over there,” Andrew pointed to the sea where two heads were seen in the waves from time to time. “They swam far with Nikolai Andreevich.”

Stas and Eugene turned their heads to the sea looking far away. Without thinking twice Eugene put on his fingers to the lips and started to whistle loud to the sea direction. The sound was so shrill that Andrew even shrank back from him laughing and rubbing his ears.

“You should have warned us. This is the best way to become deaf.”

“What has happened?” Yura joined our inquiries.

“You have damaged your air-bag? Or didn’t master the current?” the “sharp-sighted head” uttered with some acidity.

“We hope there were no victims,” the “wise head” finished the phrase of his “confrere”.

“Nothing happened,” Stas answered all the questions at once which Eugene has been artistically whistling. “The air-bag is alright. Everybody is healthy and alive, the same we wish to you...,” Stas looked with a smile at heads of the guys sticking out from the sand with their “scattered” extremities. “We just found a dolphin on the sea coast.”

“A dolphin?!” almost together exclaimed me and Tatyana.

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

Our group got excited.

“Wow!”

Meanwhile Sensei and Nikolai Andreevich swimming far from us glanced back and Eugene gave them a signal by waving his hands. The men started to swim back to the sea coast.

“Was a dolphin alive?” Andrew inquired.

After completing his duty of being a radio beacon Eugene immediately joined the conversation.

“No... a dead one, with a wound in his side. A fresh wound. It bleeds still.”

“Faugh,” Ruslan said with disgust.

“Well,” Eugene continued to spread hot news, “it’s a distressful sight.”

“Who has done it to him?” asked Slava feeling pity.

“There are some “nature-lovers”” replied Eugene with black humore, “Just look around, there are so many maniacs on the sea coast. They are looking for a victim...” and he added looking at the locked position of the guy dug to the sand, “especially for a helpless one.”

“Well,well,” Kostya grinned together with us. “You will tell us stories! So to say, “don’t let you dupe by the professionals”.”

Eugene glanced with expert air at the head of Kostya in the general composition of sculpture and his eyes sparkled with naughty fire.

“This is a good idea,” uttered the gay and as a real sand master started to add our comic “mutant” with even more funny details. When Sensei and Nikolai Andreevich went out from the water our group was rolling with non-stop laughter, whereas not only the “spectators” were laughing but also the “mutants” themselves. By the way, the last ones roared with laughter more than the others, shaking like awaken volcanoes, that’s why the “masterpieces” started to lose some details. And if to take into account Eugene’s comment about that, you can imagine in which “tears-and-dying” state we were when

Sensei and Nikolai Andreevich came up to us. However they also quickly joined our merry mood and made a few extremely funny jokes concerning that collective creature. Evaluating Eugene's additions to the sculpture he boasted of, Nikolai Andreevich even "diagnosed" him unambiguously with all typical symptoms of the disease.

When this uninterrupted laughter was over and extracted from the sand "victims" of the sculpture went to swim, Stas told briefly to Sensei and Nikolai Andreevich about their finding. Our psychoterapist standing near Sensei listened to the guy first a bit strained but later has relaxed and said, "I have already thought that... You whistled from the coast so as if all your crew sank."

"Here is our Nightingale-Robber," Stas pointed out to Eugene with guilty smile.

"Right," backed him Andrew who listened to the conversation, "He tested our ears here."

Eugene smiled self-satisfied and waved his hand towards Andrew.

"You, village boys! You have no notion of our robber accoustic art."

Everybody laughed again. Sensei just smiled and said, "Well, show us your "robber way"."

Stas, Eugene, Sensei and Nikolai Andreevich moved in a crowd. Going out of the sea Ruslan asked Yura, "Have you ever seen a dolphin?"

"No."

"Me neither. Let's go and look at him?"

"Let's go."

They hurried on to come up with Sensei. All the rest of our group followed them dying from the same curiosity. Nikolai Andreevich turned around to us and on seeing such a mass crowd stopped.

“Hey, guys, and who will stay in the camp?”

“Whom should we protect it from?” replied Andrew for all. “Anyway there is nobody here around...”

“But for the lonely maniac,” with thrilling “cinema” voice added Eugene.

Everybody laughed and Nikolai Andreevich glanced with question in his eyes at Sensei.

“It doesn’t matter,” answered the last on at his unspoken question.

“But the cars?”

“Well, it’s just pieces of iron. If something happens, we will walk on foot to the city.”

“You are right,” the doctor replied happily switching to the good mood of Sensei. “All the more walking is very good for the health!”

In twenty or so minutes of walking we have seen the air-bag dragged out to the coast and Volodya with Victor sitting near the motionless body of the animal who were watering it with sea water, probable out of pity, although it was obvious that it won’t help him.

The dolphin lay on the sand, his head directed to the sea coast. The coastal sea waves hardly reached the tail part of his body.

Having come closer we silently gathered round this unusual creature. And the first thing that stroke me was his

slit-like dark brown eyes. They were frozen with an air of silent terrible pain and suffering as if it were a man who went through a heart-break. His dark almost black spine moistened by human hands was shining under the sun and giving an illusion of the body full of life. The white belly and nice black and white stripes on the sides stood out in contrast on the ideally smooth skin. The light sectors were seen around the nice snout with slightly prognathous jaw. On one side a bit lower than the head there was a stab wound which was already hardly bleeding. “Eternal” kind smile of the dolphin seemed very unreal in contrast with this terrible death. Looking at this harmless friendly creature the heart sank out of pity and impossibility to help him somehow.

“Who’s done it to him?” Andrew asked sadly looking at the dolphin.

“Obviously the fishermen stroke him with a gaff,” answered Sensei inspecting the wound.

“My God, why?” exclaimed Tatyana with compassion.

“Sometimes dolphins steal the catch from fishermen and damage their tackle. But dolphin is just an animal. He goes there where there is a catch. And people...” Sensei sighed heavily and his gaze became a bit severe, “kill them for this.”

Sensei fell silent and I experienced this moment flows of different feelings. I felt as if there were a lump in the throat, and tears came to my eyes. What a beast (one can’t call this man otherwise) dared to raise a hand to kill such a wonderful creature? This is but a dolphin, the fully-rights earthling, the ocean inhabitant. And his “home” is much bigger than ours. So we, the people, should not kill them but learn from this

friendly creatures hot to so nice and kind, how to feel their natural joy of life and harmony of co-existence. Though they are wild animals but they never try to take more from the nature than they need for living, they never try to conquer anyone or anything. They peacefully co-exist with a big variety of species dwelling in the World ocean and taking into consideration their joy of life I have no doubts that they not only exist but also enjoy every moment of their life.

I think that chasing our “civilized” progress which requires more and more of natural victims we lose our human appearance, we lose first of all ourselves, our Spiritual nature. With our insatiable endless needs we glorify our Ego, turn to ugly heartless beasts which destroy not only the Earth but all living beings on it, including the same like us. And we consider it normal? But is it the reason we came to life? Our life is an instant. And everybody wants to be happy in this instant. Everybody wants but can’t. Why? The nature gives us its silent answers to these questions in harmony of its everyday life. But we do it vice versa: instead of observing we kill, instead of wisely creating we destroy. It’s awful indeed, to live with a beast nature and to possess a mind with the dominating Ego. Eternal sufferings... However the happiness is so close. We need only to turn to the Good and just to become a Human.

The guys stood silently over the body of the dolphin. Even Stas, though he was a reserved person, turned off hardly checking himself.

“If I met now that “fisherman”, he would lose for long a desire to take something heavy to his hands...”

“...and bad thoughts to his head,” replied in the same manner Victor.

“Hatred is a bad adviser,” thoughtfully remarked Sensei.

“Who talks about hatred?” Eugen shrugged his shoulders. “We would beat him...“with love”. So that he would forget how to touch not only a dolphin, he would avoid water at all and forget the way to the washbowl.

“Well, our “tolerant” friend,” Sensei uttered with a light smile and in a while added, “And if to speak seriously, maybe you are right. If you ignore the evil, you won’t notice how you will become indifferent to the good. But when you punish the evil, you should know when to stop. Only this way you will avoid the danger inside of you. The winner doesn’t pride himself, doesn’t rape nor triumphs. He wins... and first of all himself. So punishing the evil you should remember about the good.

The guys listened to Sensei and again hung their heads over the body of the dolphin.

“Let’s burry him or what?” Eugene proposed after a small pause obviously trying to vindicate himself in front of Sensei.

“Right,” Andrew backed him. “I will bring a shovel...”

“Why do we need a shovel?” opposed Eugene. “There are a lot of us, it will take us less time to dig a tomb in the sand. It’s easy.”

And in order to prove his words Eugene made with his hands a few wide rakes of the sand like a drag-line excavator demonstrating us how quickly it can be done. During this Eugene’s “sand work” Sensei scooped some water with a

hand and poured it on the dolphin. Then he started to stroke gently his head saying, “Why do you want to burry him on land? He is a sailor. His home is the sea...”

“Should we leave him like that, in the sea?” Eugene wondered. “Let’s better dig him to the sand, at least he won’t be eaten by fishes. Here he will sleep peacefully...” Sensei squatted down, looked at him and smiled, that’s why Eugene felt that he again blurted out something wrong and added with confusion, “Our dear friend.”

His phrase provoked smiles of the guys who tried to hide them as it was a clearly inappropriate moment for it. Sensei didn’t reply anything to Eugene. He started to raise a little the head of the dolphin holding it by two hands.

“Nikolai Andreevich, help me...”

Apart from Nikolai Andreevich other guys, including Eugene, rushed at once to help. But for body transportation it was quite enough of Sensei, Nikolai Andreevich and Volodya. The “mournful escort” moved to the sea. Part of our group left on the coast, the others, including my person, accompanied them. Hardly the water reached the waist and the body of the dolphin was half-sunk to the water, Sensei said to his assistants, “Let me go further alone. In the water he is lighter in weight...”

When men handed over the body of the dolphin to Sensei, I noticed that Sensei didn’t just embraced it anyhow. To my surprise, he put the palm of his left hand right on the wound as if hiding it from curious eyes and embraced with his right hand the back of the animal from top. Having half-sunk

the body of the dolphin to the water, Sensei went with him deeper. We stood on the same place.

Sensei was moving slowly and carefully as if it were not the dead dolphin in his hands but a little child whom he supported gently and patiently taught to swim. Little by little they moved away from the shore. Only when the water reached the chest of Sensei, he stood still. I thought that now he would push away the body to the depth and it will sink down. I felt so sorry for this dolphin. Despite these sad circumstances due to which we got the chance to see this beautiful creature of nature and the short time of our “acquaintance”, this dolphin seemed to me so dear and close. I felt something unusual towards this animal and this feeling was hard to be described in words as if his grief, when he was alive, was my grief, his pain was my pain. This strange feeling of some invisible unity started to overfill me from inside. I half-closed my eyes fearing to see the moment of his going down to water and I thought that it would be better if my memory will save the picture of his “voyage” with Sensei. But having closed my eyes for a moment I suddenly heard the voice of surprised Tatyana, “Is he alive or what?”

I opened my eyes and saw with astonishment that my friends were observing with curiosity Sensei and the dolphin which continued to be in his hands. The water where was the tail of the dolphin waved. First I thought that it only seemed to me. But in a few instants it waved again, even much strongly. We couldn’t be wrong. The guys noticed it, too. We exclaimed with joy, “Look, look, he is alive!”

Our noise attracted attention of the guys who were left on the shore and they made an attempt to come closer to us. And we wanted to near Sensei. But Nikolai Andreevich stopped all of us, “Keep quiet, don’t make noise. Stay still. Don’t scare him...”

Our group stood frozen, looking with admiration at this. The movements of the dolphin first were weak as if he recovered after a long slumber. But a bit later they became much more brave and intensive. The most amazing was the fact that this wild wounded dolphin obviously experienced the pain from a man who almost killed him but he didn’t even try to loose from the hands of Sensei though the last one only supported him afloat. On the contrary, judging by vivid movements he looked as if he was fueled by life energy. It seemed that the dolphin somehow understood it and didn’t hurry up to slip out careful, kind hands.

In some time the dolphin threw up from the water his flat tail which was similar to a whale’s one, but in a miniature, and dove after slapping with it funnily on the water. Coming to the surface not far from Sensei, he showed his side and balanced some time on the surface without assistance “observing” the one who has been recently holding him in the hands. Sensei also froze looking at the dolphin. In a few instants obviously after this silent “dialogue” finished, the dolphin turned around and slowly swam to the depth of the sea. Contrary to our expectations he didn’t dive anymore but tried to be on the surface. Sensei cast a glance at him, then dipped into the water, sleeked the hair and started to come back to the shore.

When we all crowded on the shore Victor remarked, “He is still swimming weakly. As far as I know, dolphins are high-speed creatures.”

Eugene responded him in his favorite country dialect, “If you were beaten so by the gaff, would I look at you swimming... It’s good that at least he can tow his body like that.”

“Yes, he is still weak,” Sensei uttered thoughtfully looking how the dark silhouette with a half-moon fin slowly moved away from the shore, from time to time disappearing among waves.”

“I wonder, too, whether he will survive,” busily said Eugene.

“Keep your fingers crossed,” replied Stas.

Eugene immediately followed his advice. He crossed his fingers, put off his hat and touched his head. Stas noticed his movements and smiled, “You should better touch wood, not the head.”

“Blockhead is like wood,” answered Eugene in such a manner as if it were just trifles.

We smiled. And Stas waving his hand towards Eugene turned to us, “Help us bring the stuff. We have no longer desire to continue fishing.”

We didn’t need to be asked twice. All together went to take out fishing tackle, rucksacks in order to unload the air-bag. The guys floated the boat to the shallow water and dragged it along the coast like barge haulers.

While we were making our preparations, the strong wind has risen. Leaving this place we again threw a glance at the

sea looking for our dolphin. But he was not seen anywhere among the huge waves. We heard a sad cry of seagull whirling over the water... Well, unfortunately, everything has in this life its beginning and the end.

We hung our heads. It seemed that nobody wanted to believe that our almost alive dolphin sank though the common sense told quite the contrary. Some time we were going not saying a word, looking back with hope at the place where the dolphin had been seen for the last time. But every time we lowered our gazes to the sand underfoot.

“Well, finally,” Eugene was the first who couldn’t stand this mournful general silence. “Dolphins don’t sink. They are fishes!”

“They do,” replied Sensei with a even and calm voice, without a slight trace of any emotions. “There are cases when they sink during our minute, especially when they are excited or scared. But if they sink, it happens quickly... As far as that goes, dolphins are not fishes at all, they are warm-blooded mammals like human beings. They possess well-developed brain. And by the way, the cerebral cortex of dolphins is bigger than the cortex of humans.”

“Therefore it has more convolutions than some Homo sapiens,” Nikolai Andreevich added in jest looking at Eugene.

Sensei smiled and went on, “Like humans, dolphins react to different situation, including the stressful ones. They also possess fear.”

“I can’t grasp it anyway, how can they sink?” Eugene shrugged his shoulders, either really not understanding or pretending.

“It’s simple,” answered Sensei. “They just swallow the wrong way like people. If a dolphin is under stress, it’s enough that water goes through blowhole to lungs... and that’s all.”

“Through a blowhole?” Ruslan asked again. “It’s something like human nostril, or what?”

“Right, but it is located in the very top of the head. It is directly connected with lungs.”

“That’s great! Just sneeze once and the whole sea...” Ruslan didn’t continue his phrase letting the inertly smiling crowd to finish itself his “brilliant guess”.

“I wonder how he coughs in the water,” inquired Andrew.

“He doesn’t. Dolphins never cough.”

“Lucky are they... these warm-blooded mammals,” Victor envied as he suffered from coughing from the very morning. “They might never catch a chill.”

“Why am I not a dolphin?” Eugene uttered dreamingly.

“You are wrong,” Sensei replied to Victor. “They got sick the same way like us. We have even identical microorganisms which cause respiratory diseases. But unlike us dolphins endure badly the chill. Very often it turns into pneumonia and almost always it ends with the death of the animal.”

Eugene made a surprised glance, “Really? Then it’s good that I am not a dolphin.”

“But if they swallow water the wrong way, how can they live there?” Kostya was curious.

“They die only when they are seriously stressed, when they panic, actually the same way like people. Apart from that they live quite well! They have such a good system of muscular and respiratory valves which ideally functions in the most severe external conditions.”

“Well,” Nikolai Andreevich sighed. “It means that the fear equals all.” And in a while he asked Sensei, “Then it means that the psychological factor is the same way important for dolphins during apnoea as for people?”

“You are completely right.”

“Apnoea?” Ruslan wondered. “And what is this?”

Eugene hemmed.

“Here you are... Apnoea means breath-holding. Even I know that!”

Ruslan glanced at aqualungs in the air-bag and relied with a crooked smile, “Of course, you should know that.”

“Don’t worry,” Stas invigorated him. “If you dive like us, you will know it, too.”

“Right, with a head to the sand,” added Eugene with a smile and looked at Stas.

They both laughed, obviously having recollected some funny case from their past. Offended Ruslan said, “Am I a ostrich or what?”

“If not, you will become a one,” declared Eugene kindly, again exchanging glances with Stas. The guys felt some dirty trick in his words and insisted on telling what was hidden behind these grins. The fellows told a story about their first unlucky experiments when they had been learning diving. Actually there was nothing special but surely due to Eugene’s

interpretation it looked quite comical. At the end Stas uttered, “It would be great if people were able to stay long time under water without additional devices like aqualungs.”

“It’s quite real,” Sensei remarked as if by the way. “The brain of the human has a lot of programs. You just have to know how to use these abilities... What is human breathing in fact? It’s an interchange of air breathes in and out. This process takes place due to diaphragm and ribs muscles contraction which causes the volume change of the thorax. The gas exchange takes place on the level of lungs alveolus and it enriches blood. The blood transports oxygen among cells and extracts carbonic acid. And what does regulate this breathing rhythm? The breathing center which is located in the medulla. There is hidden a golden key to the “switch of speed”.

“You mean the programs?” asked Kostya.

“Right.”

Eugene grinned self-satisfied.

“Aha, and the key lies there like in a fairy tale, and nobody knows where it lies. And those who know they keep silent as they can’t reach it through the hole.”

“You are wrong,” smiled Sensei. “Those who want always will find.. and will reach. There are plenty of such practices of breath-holding. You just have to look for them and not to be lazy, but don’t tell us stories that there no of them only because you are unaware of that. Let’s take for example a practice of breathing control in yoga. It’s called Pranayama. Though in its original form it was given namely as an instrument for activization of one of the most ancient

reflexes of a human, a “submergence reflex”, and not into the water but into the depth of the consciousness where a human gradually neared the source of the soul. But ourdays this practice is rather changed by people and is boosted into the whole teaching where yogis mostly lose their time and energy for learning how to control the breathing, to speed up some processes in the body, for example, to heal wounds or slow down for examle the general metabolism or beats... It’s also good, of course, because this way people learn how to control their thoughts. But they knocked to pieces the whole and complicated the simple. Therefore modern people, when practicing it, see the piece and think that it’s the very whole...” and addressing himself again directly to Eugene Sensei said, “So if you want just to hold your breath, you may use this practice as well. The choice is rich. The technique of breath-holding in the alternating consciousness was known to people from the time immemorial. This practice can be found everywhere: in Tropical Africa, in Northern America, in Lapland, on the Bali island. I don’t even mention those techniques which are heired from one generation to another by people who live from of old due on sea fruits, for example pearl hunters.

Eugene considered for a while and started to discuss aloud.

“Well, tell me how long can someone stand under water without air? A maximum of two minutes, and only if it’s a professional diver. I mean, without aqualung,” detalized the guy.

“He’s right,” agreed Nikolai Andreevich. “Then it comes to anoxia, simply to say, to the lack of oxygen which leads to irreversible processes in the substance of the brain. A man loses consciousness...”

“And that’s all folks, alles kaput,” finished Eugene supporting his “companion”.

But Sensei objected, “In alternating consciousness even a not trained person is able to stay much longer than any professional diver.”

“Well, Sensei, that’s too much,” the guy didn’t believe.

“Let’s bet on it?” immediately proposed Sensei with a mysterious smile.

“With you, Sensei? Not at any price,” Eugene waved away at once under the general laughter of the guys. “Am I a self-murderer? I know anyway that I won’t stay under water so long as you.”

“No, I don’t count myself,” Sensei calmed him. “Let’s take anybody from this gang, chose yourself.”

“You say, it’s my choice?” Eugene smiled archly and started to “drill” us with a gaze. This very moment, as bad luck would have it, the grip of my plastic sachet was torn by pure accident.

“Oh,” my person uttered with confusion and started to collect quickly fishing tackle and some other things from the sand.

Andrew and Volodya who were going close to me, began to help me. Eugene drew his attention to the “object” of his winning choice, declared self-satisfied, “Let’s take her for example.”

“Alright,” agreed Sensei. “Aren’t you against?” He asked me.

I was so naïve to take it just for some funny joke and decided to back Sensei. And declared in the same self-satisfied manner as Eugene, “Of course, I agree. What’s the problem? I’m a hereditary diver of the seventh generation. Do you know how the Siberians dive? Oho! They dive in the mountains of Altai and come to the surface in Kara Sea!

“Do they come to the surface or float on the surface drowned?” – with a malicious smile specified Eugene.

“It depends on your luck,” I answered.

Our dialogue made all the guys laugh.

“Well, well,” Eugene rubbed his hands anticipating his victory. “And what will be the prize of our bet?”

“Choose by your own!” merrily answered Sensei.

“Then..., then,” the guy was confused.

“One day on duty in the camp,” Stas gave him a hint as it was their turn to do it.

“Right you are,” Eugene expressed his consent. “One day on duty in the camp! That is to say all those things like tidying-up-with-a-broom, washing-dishes, making-fire. And all other small and boring routine things in the camp.”

“Alright,” said Sensei. “When we arrive to the camp, then we’ll start the competition.”

They shook hands with each other and Volodya agreed to be a referee of the bet. We continued our way.

Eugene was so inspired by his obvious advantage that he began to “psychologically influence” his opponent, preparing

me to the cleaning procedures and explaining in details what I had to do.

“Maybe I should also clean the dust on rush?” I proposed him laughing and keeping up this fun.

“No, well, don’t trouble yourself!” satisfied Eugene started to treat me with kind gloves. “We are gentlemen all the same. Let’s not go beyond the camp chaos.” And he added at once, “However, if madam has a desire, she can not only clean the dust from rush. She can wipe that small puddle.”

Eugene pointed on the sea and everybody burst out laughing again. This way we were going to the shelters all the time exchanging “mutual compliments and concessions” with him under the roar of other guys.

4

Already from afar we have seen that our camp looked somehow unusual, as if it were covered with white moving spot. Of course, we tried to keep order but everything was too white... Coming closer we have observed the whole “banquet” of seagulls. Our sudden appearance scared these thieves and they were in panic. Breaking away from their rich meal, they flew up as if on command and so to say made sail leaving us piles of leftovers. Our group was in stupor from such a barefaced impudence.

You should have seen this scene. Everywhere lay about in disorder plastic torn paper bags with cereals, macaroni, what is more, thoroughly mixed with the sand. So to say, sand-cereals-macaroni fundament mixed with droppings of

birds, with small hills of poured out flour, salt, sugar. And all this morning disaster was supplemented by open work tissue papers whirling by the wind, like in a play, on the whole shore. And if to take into account our previous bet, so my person for example lost its wits and I, so to say, “lost heart”.

In a minute of deathly silence during which some with surprise and others with fear were observing this nice landscape named “landfill”, Eugene scratched his head and threw with triumph to Andrew, “Well, well. Is it called “not a living sould”?!”

Andrew hurried on to counter, “Right, but for your lonely maniac!”

“The fact is that he was not lonely,” remarked Victor in jest examining the multiple remnants of the devastation. “And judging by traces left this “leader” was more likely a representative of the local fauna and had four paws and even maybe a tail. Obviously he was the first in our food shelter.”

“Right,” Eugene stood up for the unknown animal. “He ate too much there. He was bored and invited all he could to this party.”

“Nice party,” hemmed Stas. “Who will clean up for them all of this?”

“Make a guess with one try,” Eugene proposed to him with a smile and looked satisfied towards me.

Then as if recollected suddenly he started actively to look for our improvised broom made from branches bound together. It happened to be “half-dug” in the sand. Eugene raised it, shook it down, pretended having blown away the last specks of dust and handed it over to me with an open hand.

“Take it, Cinderella! Today you will forget about the rest on the sea shore. A bet is a bet.”

I took up the broom because I understood that we should bring our camp to order anyway. And I began to plan in my mind where to start the big cleaning of the territorium from. Meanwhile Sensei took away the broom from my hands and addressed to Eugene, “But she didn’t lose the bet yet.”

“But she is unlikely to win it,” uttered the smiling guy with self-confident expression at his face.

“I would propose the following,” said Sensei. “If it turns like this, let’s complicate the task...”

“Noway! A bet is a bet, as agreed upon,” Eugene started to protest as he thought that Sensei would propose now something extraordinary for his person.

“But you will benefit from it!”

Eugene calmed down looking with suspicion at Sensei and trying to figure out where was the dirty trick. And Sensei meanwhile went on, “Take an assistant. Your total time under water will be summed. That is, the time you both stay under water against her one diving.”

Eugene hasn’t found out anything onerous for himself and immediately agreed fearing that Sensei would change his mind.

“Alright, alright!” and he added toadily, “I have always known that you, Sensei, are the most fair judge in the world. However, who knows,” he pointed out to me with a cunning smile, “Maybe she grew gills instead of lungs on the way.”

Everybody laughed and I pretended laughing, too. However, a rapid wave of doubts that it was just a joke rose in

me. If they didn't joke, then it meant a whole disaster for my person. I didn't know how to dive at all, not speaking about long breath-holding. And a bet against two well-trained guys! "I got into a mess," my person thought scared.

"Well," Eugene rubbed his hands anticipating his victory after he chose his partner. As I assumed, it was Stas, "Let's not lose time and go to the sea!"

He made an inviting gesture to all our group suggesting to witness this event. The people eagerly agreed on the proposal of our comic fellow and followed him leaving the things. Lighting a cigarette Sensei remained behind, together with Nikolai Andreevich. Me and Tatyana also stayed there as we used to pack up the left things in one heap. Meanwhile Nikolai Andreevich said in low voice addressing to Sensei, "Eugene is so sly. As soon as condition of the deal became favourable, he immediately changed his attitude to the situation. However, many people do like him. This is a typical example of egocentrism."

"What can we do," Sensei shrugged his shoulders and answered in the same low voice. "Man seeks a better fate like fish seeks deeper water," and he added with a smile, "How can he deprive himself the dearest? Indeed, this egocentrism is automatically practiced by people. How can we talk about the love for one's neighbour if they don't even want to understand each other?"

"It's the most sad thing about all of it."

During this time me and Tatyana already finished our work. I came with doubts to Sensei hoping to solve a dispute before starting to realize its conditions.

“Well, I...”

Sensei didn't let me finish a phrase and express all my numerous doubts. He said in a kindly manner, “Go and get ready. Get used to the water.”

His soft confident tone calmed me a bit. Still hoping that this was a joke I went together with Tatyana to the sea. There was already a “support team” presented by Kostya, Andrew and Slava. I should mention that our big group has divided itself to two parts: those who “supported” in jest Stas and Eugene and those who “sympathized” with me.

Unlike senior guys who ran to the water with much noise like torpedoes and dove deep at once in order to cool off their bodies warmed-up by sun me and Tatyana tried as usually to get used to the water step-by-step. However, the guys who so to say “supported” us decided to speed up this process and started to sprinkle us from all sides pretending to help us intensively to get used to the water. And as they were intentionally attacking us from shallow water me and Tatyana had to run away to the depth, of course, with a following submergence.

Having seen enough of Eugene and Stas breath training before diving Kostya put up on his head the “crown of the winner” from twisted algae and began to play the role of my mentor in “diving in shallow water”. All this process was accompanied by killing jokes of the guys. But despite the philosophical teachings of Kostya I wasn't able to hold breath under water for long. Kostya even tried to slightly hold me in place under water fixing my shoulders and mumbling from the surface his “instructions”. But all of that just scared me

even more as sooner or later my instinct of self-preservation prevailed and I managed to “scramble out” to the surface with amazing quickness sometimes even drowning at panic my “mentor”. After several involuntary submersions Kostya exploded with even more “innovative proposals” on improving the diving method, for example by making my body heavier in the water with a “necklace of bricks”, “beton handcuffs” etc.

“Finally, what task do you have?” Kostya said in jest shaking out water from his ear and adjusting a hanging algae which fell down after his another submersion to water by his “bad disciple”. “You need to submerge under the water. Right? Right. But nobody said about emersion.” We laughed again.

“You are so kind, indeed!” said Tatyana with a funny intonation.

So unlike the seniour guys who didn’t lose time and seriously trained we had a total clownery. So just in case I mentally reconciled myself to my future one-day role of Cinderella.

Finally Sensei and Nikolai Andreevich came closer to us. I thought that looking at our attempts Sensei will turn this bet into a next big joke and everything would be over with it. But when he came up and seriously asked, “So, let’s begin?” my heart sank. Being afraid of showing my fear in front of my friends I started to talk to Sensei with lips trembling either from fear or from cold water, “Sensei, I can’t... I’d better go to tidy up at once.”

Sensei calmly replied to me, “Don’t give up. Keep off your fear. Take away all the doubts. Believe since it’s said “Lively faith brings everything”.”

I looked at him confused with a silent question, “How can I do it?” But Sensei looking at my eyes answered, “Just relax. Don’t think about your breath. Your task is to achieve a deep state of meditation with a minimum of thoughts. Concentrate on the count from one to ten. You will stand 10 seconds, will you?”

“Well, if it’s just ten seconds, I will stand easily,” I replied with proud for my such a small “result”.

“So why are you worry? Count to ten and emerge. And don’t count quickly like 1,2,3... but slowly, with pauses, like three-digit figures like 501, 502, 503 etc. Is it clear?”

“Yes.”

These words not only calmed me down, I got even curious. I have never before done meditation under the water. Strangly enough but my curiosity turned to firm confidence that everything would be alright. And this feeling grew from some my internal belief and absolute trust to Sensei. It wasn’t trust actually but some hidden knowledge of my soul about his Essence which was expressed only intuitively, on the level of perception.

“So be it, I will dive,” my person thought after a range of sharp breathes in and out. The same was done by my first “opponent” Eugene. Getting ready to start, when it was counted “three” I breathed in with all my chest as much as I could and submerged at the same time with Eugene under the water. Sensei put his hand on my head in the region of

Sahasrara (seventh chakra) and pushed it a bit, so I thought that he didn't want to let me emerge before time. Instead of expected panic, on the contrary I relaxed and began to count slowly to ten according to the advice of Sensei. Freely fulfilling this task I decided to sit a few more seconds under the water in order to add to my "score" some more time. But when I started to count again, I felt that some strong hands, obviously of Sensei, draw me out of the water. Frankly speaking, I was even a bit upset as I could stay there a bit longer. Only ten seconds?! Emerging to the surface I began immediately to express my indignation, "Why? I'm ready, let's continue... I can stay longer..."

But when I glanced at the others, I didn't understand anything. Everybody stood in some dumb amazement, looking at me like at the alien who came from another Universe. Eugene and Stas were among the guys and also didn't take their eyes from my indignant person in some strange amazement. I even thought that maybe they didn't dive at all, maybe something happened? Only Sensei kept Olympian calm.

"That's enough of you," he smiled good-natured. "You have already stayed ten minutes under the water."

"Who?! Me???" grinned my person thinking that it was a joke.

"Well, well, everything can happen in life," uttered Stas scratching his head. "Just it's a pity that not everybody can get this "everything"."

"You see how all of them are anxious, especially some boasters," Sensei waved towards Eugene who opened his

mouth and stared wide-eyed, either for fun or really in surprise as if he was stricken by something. “Now someone will have to tide up and to turn into Cinderella.”

Eugene seemed to “come to himself” after these words, comically chattered with his teeth and put his jaw to its normal state helping himself with a hand. After that he uttered in his usual joking voice, “Cleaning everything is not a problem! But we didn’t make an agreement that I would have to change my male sex.”

Stas began to “quiet” him launching a new wave of laugh.

““Cinderella” is just a such sort of individual entrepreneurial activity when you have to do a maximum of work in a minimal time and by the way for free...”

“For free, for free,” Eugene bantered him, “Why are so happy? We dove together, so we will have to tide up together, Cinderella number 2.”

“Oh, no, we have the only Cinderella on the staff,” Stas objected to him with laughter.

“So you decided to become a Fairy, a tax inspector of cleaning so to say. You are a monster!”

The guys began to joke and at the same time they seemed to recover from their stupor.

“Sensei, what have you done to her?” Volodya was first who asked about the matter.

“Nothing special, I changed her time perception, her ezoosmos.”

“Ezoosmos? And what is it?” inquired Victor.

“I will tell you one day,” Sensei waved his hand. “So what, our bet is over, let’s go to bring our camp to the order...”

“To separate the wheat from the tares, and the cutlets from the flies,” Stas completed the answer of Sensei.

“It’s not possible that she has spent ten minutes under the water!” Eugene was ironically indignant, looked at the shore and probably was scared by the forthcoming work. “Noone can live so long without air!”

Sensei uttered in a fit of temper, “You people, I’m fed up with your lack of faith! You have seen it with your own eyes.”

“Aha, but maybe she had some respiratory tube under the water. It’s cheating! That’s a pure trick!”

Sensei bowed tired his head to the side and grinned, “Certainly, it’s cheating! You were cheated that very day when you came into the world.”

Everybody laughed. Sensei turned back and began to go out of the water together with Nikolai Andreevich.

“Go,go,” Stas hurried Eugene with laughter.

“Yes, my Ober-Sturban-Fuhrer-Frau Fairy,” Eugene reported without spirit and having sighed added with assumed sadness in his voice, “We, Cinderellas, always have such a dog’s life. Every day we get only penalties.”

All the others also moved on to the shore. It came to the whole torrent of words. I asked my friends whether I really had stayed ten minutes under the water. And they, in their turn, ignored my questions and asked me whether I had any additional respiratory tubes. So all together we chattered so

noisily like seagulls when their seat is disturbed by unexpected visitor. Finally nobody understood anything.

We started the general cleaning works in our camp. Though Eugene comically made himself out the main character in this “individual entrepreneurial activity”, he cunningly avoided any work only pretending to take part in it. However he made us so laugh by his jokes and tricks that we didn’t even notice when we quickly cleaned together the whole territory of the camp. And when we started to mock at him that he actually didn’t work he replied with a significant air that any fool can work but the most important in his opinion is to manage professionally the process. All of us expressed “thanks” to him and we have thrown him all together to the water.

After such a “solemn” finishing of our “work feats” we began to summarize our losses. As our food supply significantly diminished, we decided to visit a market. Because these “flying robbers” ate a little but celebrating “big party on the island of civilization” they mixed a lot of food, including cereals, with the sand, and they have done it so meticulously as if they had had here a great disco party.

When we prepared a list of food, the senior guys decided to take a car. But Sensei suggested not to use the cars but to organize a “small jogging” along the coast. Nobody objected to this idea, of course. Those who were very hungry took some crackers. The others decided to wait till the food would arrive, all the more Sensei used to say that it is healthy to fast from time to time.

First of all, Volodya, Stas and Eugene made their mind to go for food. But when Sensei joined them and expressed the idea to train, Nikolai Andreevich, Ruslan, Andrew and me also gave consent to run with them. Though jogging was not going to be physically easy, I couldn't miss such an adventure with Sensei. For me it was not just a trip but due to interesting remarks of Sensei it was the whole excursion to the people's world, as well as to my own. As Sensei promised us, he has hold a good physical training to us on our way. First we jogged along the coast and stopped only in half an hour. Then headed by Sensei we have done a warm-up. Then it was again jogging but already with acceleration. Then we made push-ups, jogging in the water, steeplechase. In general Sensei wasn't stingy of new ideas and due to it this physical training turned for us into some unusual adventure of "marines". And despite we felt the overloaded muscles when we reached the boundaries of "civilization", the internal pleasure was much bigger as we have stood all of this.

It was decided to go through recreation centers, in order to shorten the way to the market. Having swum over the water barrier-net which served as the boundary between the first recreation center and the "wild nature", we went out to the coast like ordinary campers and went slowly along the coast. People as usual spent their vacation lying on the sand, they just changed the home picture in TV to the observing from the sand the many-coloured crowd with monotonous sea in the background. Some rare conversations we could hear were on everyday issues. Someone complained about others, someone talked over another, someone mocked at others. In brief, it

was ordinary people's life, nothing special. First we felt clearly the striking difference between those spiritual things Sensei told us and these utilitarian material-minded stuff discussed by people. But later on going deeper to this atmosphere of many-coloured mass you start get infected involuntarily by its not pure air.

I didn't notice the moment when "provocative thoughts" appeared in my head. They seemed to capture my attention by trifles. Somewhere I have seen a nice swimming suit and I thought how pretty I would look in it. Someone bore nice earrings and got a desire to buy something like that for myself. My imagination immediately started to draw a picture how I would look in that swimming suit with those ear rings. And as soon I gave freedom to those thoughts, Madam Envy immediately appeared in my mind. And I noticed it only when she completely conquered my mind, hiding by her greed and dissatisfaction all the most light feelings. "What am I doing?" I was indignant in my heart. "I try on strange images. But it's not me! So to say, a bad penny always turns up. What should I do now?"

My sad reflections were interrupted by Andrew who seemed to be easily hooked by the Animal nature, too.

"Look at nice bodies of those lads!" he said with admiration to our guys showing at sun burnt young men who played volley-ball. They seemed to be a group of body builders. "Look at their muscles..."

Judging by the way these guys were moving it seemed that they rather didn't play volley-ball but showed off in front of the crowd demonstrating their muscles in a good light. It's

naturally that they drew attention of passers-by who, in turn, gazed at their bodies with unconcealed envy.

“Sensei, is it possible to build a body quickly and to grow such muscles?”

“It’s possible,” Sensei said simply. “But what for? You will gain one thing and lose another. If you have such big muscles, you will lose in endurance and speed. What do you need it for? Just to show off in front of girls.” Andrew was struck as if Sensei guessed his most hidden thoughts. “Do you know what is the main reason of such a desire? It’s just ordinary envy...”

These words made even me shudder. As I have just thought about it.

“But it’s not your own fault, this is a problem of many people. If you knew what people really think over! There is only greed, envy, desire to outdo others even in trifles. They dream only how to look in front of other people better than they are in reality. Do you understand what is the main problem? People want to look nice not before the God, neither before their conscience, but before other people. And the main reason of that lies in the human desire. Everybody values only those things he wants to see valuable for himself. And what he doesn’t want to see valuable, doesn’t matter for him. Envy, hatred, spite have not the external roots but internal roots of ambition. Let’s take for example those guys who spent plenty of time in order to build their bodies. In fact, they don’t need it at all. But they chose a role of the body-builders and they play it. What for? In order to achieve some spiritual goals? No. Just to show off in the crowd. Some people build their

bodies, some do tatoos, others colour their hair with different colours. And they do it just to draw the attention of their neighbors, to satisfy their megalomania. It's an ordinary Animal nature.

“People do it like for example Japanese monkeys. Some of their tribe gather nuts the whole day in order to throw it around in front of the whole tribe, drawing this way attention of their congeners. Others are busy with nit-picking on the deer and put these fleas on themselves so that their congeners would pick on them. And of that is done only for drawing attention of the tribe... So, all these muscles, trinkets, fashion etc. are invented only to draw attention. They are the same like fleas on the monkey. A human doesn't differ from those monkeys, so to say, due to his Animal nature. But it is even intensified in him by his own megalomania. Since everybody who is spiritually vile and odious starts to glorify himself in his thoughts and desires uppermost. But it was said “But many who are first will be last; and the last, first; for many are invited, but few are chosen”. A lot of people hide the secret thoughts of their Animal nature by tinsel show pretending that they are striving to the spiritual development. But in fact it's just a plausible excuse for realization of animal desires, satisfaction of their megalomania, self-glorifying and ordinary vain posing before other people. However sincere real Love to God can be hardly found in their secret thoughts.

“Christians would call such wishes of people as tricks of Satan who draw away a human from the main thing – from the soul, from the Eternity. Look at the model of modern civilization. The whole world tries to evoke in a human as

much desires to get something he doesn't possess as possible. The whole world sells illusions. It's woven from lie and its threads are based on envy. People beget illusion themselves, feed it with their dirty thoughts and live themselves in this illusion taking it for the true reality. And unfortunately the fact of the global lie by the Animal nature is revealed only in the face of the Death. But then it's too late to change something.

“Since youth passes by in one day as a fast horse set free. Hardly you draw the reins, you are a middle-aged already. At this age you stop and look back. You start to reevaluate your values. Your achievements seem not to be so significant, they are not worth of paying so much attention and energy as before. Now you are obsessed by new desires and illusions to win the recognition of respectable people. And you start to invent new ways to rise above the crowd. Hardly you bat an eyelid, you are already old and a lot of things in your life seem to be absolute absurd and lose their sense. When you are old you think more and more about the death, and this makes you think over about the main thing - about your soul. As you come closer to that boundary where you came from of this world in order to find your true essence, to save your soul. But instead achieving this goal you have wasted your time and energy on empty illusions. Then you start to rush about, to think up new illusions, to console yourself that you will pray before the death and everything will be forgiven there. But in fact the whole life of a human is judged there.

“The human stupidity has no boundaries. People's megalomania pushes them to do bad things,” Sensei looked

around, moved hands apart and said with sadness in his voice, “If you knew, guys, what people think about, you would be frightened! Though in principle why do you need to hear it, just observe yourselves. What you dream secretly about.

“Just recently, before the perestroika people were dreaming of saving the world and building communism, I mean our high-principled people. But now, after the perestroika, what do young people dream of? They dream of money and capitalism. Everybody wastes money in his dreams, dreams about getting rich. Both those who earn well and those who don’t tell fairy-tales how cool they are, showing off their megalomania. Why? Because egoism flourishes in their heads. Mikhail Evgrafovich Saltykov-Schedrin, the Russian satirist writer, has said once nice words concerning this, “Nobody is so dangerous as a man who is not humane, who is indifferent to the destiny of his native land, of his neighbor, to everything but the profit he gets from his money.” And he is right.

“Excessive richness doesn’t bring anything good. A man spent years of his life, cheated a lot of people. Since no big money can be earned fairly. Everything is based on cheating and lie. So, a man earned a lot of money. I don’t mean honestly earned salaries, normal money just for living. It’s not big money. So, he rolls in money. But he finds out that there is no satisfaction. It appears that he feels a lack of something. He understands that he needs power in order to conquer other people so that not to show off himself, not to put fleas from the deer on himself and draw attention by that by the whole tribe, including the leader. So that not to throw his money

around like a monkey throws nuts but to usurp this power and to become a leader by himself. This way party leaders and presidents appear. But they find out that they don't have enough power. What do they do then? They make up their mind to conquer the whole world. It comes to wars, aggression, enslavement. This way Napoleons, Stalins, Hitlers and similar to them arise. They conquer lands, expand the boundaries of their state but they still don't have satisfaction. Why? Because whatever power a man has on the Earth, he will never be satisfied with it as he remains to be a slave of his desires. But the real power is the power over yourself.

“There are a lot of examples in the history of humankind showing senselessness of such a way and the global lie of the Animal nature. One of them is Alexander the Great, a man who maximally realized his ambitions. He conquered vast territories and founded the biggest monarchy in the ancient times. And what was the result? In the day when Alexander the Great became the “master of the world”, he left all and bitterly cried. When his military leaders found him, they were surprised as they had never seen their commander crying. And they had accompanied him in the most dangerous situations of the military campaigns. Alexander served always an example of courage. Even when the death was nearby nobody had ever seen traces of despair and hopelessness. Therefore his military leaders were tortured by the question what had happened to the man who conquered the whole peoples? He was asked about it and Alexander told them the reason of his sorrow. It appeared that when he had conquered he understood that he had lost. And that time he happened to be in that very place

where he planned his “world conquering”. And only that very moment he realized that it was all senseless. Since before he had had the goal and the way. And now he had nowhere to move, nobody to conquer. And he said, “I feel terrible emptiness inside of me since I have lost the biggest battle in my life.””

Sensei was going some time silent and then he repeated again, “So, the highest power is the power over yourself. Do you remember what Laozi said, “Those who know others are intelligent; / Those who know themselves are truly wise; / Those who master others are strong; / Those who master themselves have true power.””

“Right, it’s difficult to master yourself,” Nikolai Andreevich uttered in a thoughtful way.

“All difficult things are simple. For doing it first of all you have to control your thoughts. People always are led by their mood and live with all what pleases their megalomania. They are lazy to control the field of their mind. Therefore all possible weeds are growing there. As a weed doesn’t need to be specially treated and cared of. It will come out anyway, without you being aware of it.”

“How can we deseed a weed?” Andrew asked puzzled.

“It’s simple. You just take and uproot it. Is it difficult for you to control your thoughts right now? No. And these “nows” form the whole life. Live “now and here” and don’t be possessed by illusions described by the Animal mind. You are given the freedom of choice! So choose it.”

That moment we moved to the asphalted path of the shady alley.

“Well, it’s clear now about the power,” Nikolai Andreevich continued the discussion thinking over something of his own. “It means that big money can’t be earned without losing Honour and Conscience.”

“Why isn’t it possible?” Victor objected to him. “I have watched on TV a “round table” with famous businessmen. They are normal guys.”

Sensei gazed at him and answered, “They are dishonest people. They are liars and egoists who pretend and tell stories. Excuse me, guys but if you wallow in money, if you are rich when there are so many hungry, poor and homeless people around you, if you think only about increasing your profit, you are not a worthy man. You just don’t deserve to be called a Human.”

“But wait,” Victor couldn’t quiet down. “What is the fault of a rich businessman? If he is smart and he knows how to earn money, so he does it and earns it. And those who don’t want to work, who are lazy, drunkards or whatever, is he obliged to feed them or what?”

“He isn’t obliged to feed them. It’s stupid to give a fish to a hungry man as he will eat it and will be hungry again. But it’s much more clever to give him fish tackling and teach him how to use it. Understand me please the right way, I’m not against the wealth, I’m against poverty. Money has its certain equivalent of energy. And physics laws tell that if energy comes somewhere, it will go down in another place. The world should be fair and accessible for all people. But when the world is governed by the servants of the devil, I mean

thieves who call themselves as politicians, there will never be any justice here at all. That's why it's doomed to destruction."

"You talk again about justice," Eugene said archly. "Sensei, it sounds like communism."

"What can I do? I was so brought up in my childhood that communism is for long in my blood," Sensei joked in reply. "And if to speak seriously, think yourselves, guys. There appear oligarchs now. What is the source of their wealth? They become rich at expense of pauperization of the people, because they sell our Motherland. Are they so clever or what? Have they done something good for the people, for their country? Why is the country so poor? How can there be rich people in the poor country? Only when they steal it, they steal those who are weaker than they. Do you want to say that they are successful people worthy to be called Humans? I tell you they are servants of the devil and they are doomed to the hell.

"These oligarchs even dole their cheap charity only for showing off before other people. But are they ready to make a serious deed in their life and to completely change themselves? I have doubts. Since it's said, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be". It's very difficult for such people to divert their heart from the stored riches. It was like that one thousand and two thousands years ago as people don't change, unfortunately. Do you remember the episode from the Bible, when the rich young man came to Jesus Christ and asked what good thing he should do that he might have eternal life. And Jesus answered him that if he wanted to enter into eternal life, he should keep the commandments 'You shall

not murder', 'You shall not commit adultery', 'You shall not steal', 'You shall not offer false testimony', 'Honor your father and mother' and 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'. And the young man said to Him that he had observed all those things from his youth and asked what he still lacked. Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." But when the young man heard the saying, he went away sad, for he was one who had great possessions. Jesus said to his disciples, "It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God."

"Subconsciously they feel their worthlessness and consequences awaiting them. Therefore they build temples and monasteries trying to rehabilitate themselves before the God. Fools! They forgot the Holy Writ. Since it's said, "Churches built by thieves are shelters for Satan. They build not houses of the God, they build shelters for the devil. And if they hope that they will be granted absolution, they are mistaken. It will be added to their sins. And this way they not only damn themselves but their relatives as well who make use of their "richness". After all, they didn't ask their relatives whether they need such a sacrifice. Are they ready to share the responsibility for their sins before the God?

"I will tell you one story which happened long time ago as a thief and killer who met a wise man completely changed his life and became a great man. Once upon a time there lived a robber who robbed people and killed them without doubts if they resisted. At the same time there lived a man called

Narada. He was a poet and musician. And he was famous for his deep wisdom. People loved him for his good advices, good temper, his jokes and charming music which he played on his instrument.

“Once the wise man made his mind to visit the neighboring village. His path went through that very forest where the robber operated. And people tried to persuade the wise man not to go on that path as it was very dangerous. But Narada just laughed, “I want to look at the man who beget fear in your hearts and made you cowards. He is just one man but he stopped the traffic on the whole way.”

“On telling it Narada turned back and went to the forest playing music on his instrument. Soon the robber heard the music and went out to the path. He was surprised to see an unarmed man who seemed to be happy playing his melody. It was first time in his life that he felt doubts inside. And he addressed to the musician, “Don’t you know that it’s dangerous to go on this way?”

“Narada didn’t stop playing, turned off the road and took his place near the robber who was sharpening his sword all this time. Having finished his melody, he asked the robber, “What are you doing alone in this forest?”

“The robber answered, “I rob people. And I will take now all your riches.”

“The wise man said, “My riches is different, it’s a spiritual one. And I would be happy myself to share it with you.

““I’m interested only by material riches,” declared the robber.

“Material ones, you say?” asked the wise man and taking a handful of soil he scattered it. “But it’s only dust, illusion which disappears immediately. This is nothing comparing to the spiritual eternal values. Tell me, why do you need it?”

“The robber answered, “I do it for the sake of my family: my mother, my wife, my children. If I don’t bring them money, they will starve. And I can’t do anything else.”

“The wise man inquired him, “Have you asked them whether they need such a sacrifice? Are they ready to share the responsibility before the God for your sins?”

“It was first time in his life that the man making his life with robbery thought about it.

““I don’t know. I didn’t think about it before.”

““So, go and ask them,” proposed the wise man. “And I will wait for you here.”

“And he played again his charming melody.

“The robber followed his advice. He came back home and asked his mother. The old woman replied him, “Why should I share the responsibility with you for your crimes? I’m your mother and it’s your duty to give me food.”

“His wife said, “Why should I be responsible for your sins? I have not done anything and I’m pure before the God. I don’t know how you get your bread. It’s your own matter.”

“Having looked at faces of light-heartedly playing children, the robber didn’t even start to ask them. With a sunk heart he came back to the wise man, “Nobody wants to share responsibility with me. Whatever I do for my family, it will turn out that I will be the only one responsible for everything. It happened that I’m alone. What should I do now?” And he

looked with dolefully at the perfect face of the wise man. The latter answered, “Take away the mask of the thief and burn it the flame of good deeds. Redeem the evil done by you. Change yourself and become a Human.”

“This man left this dark forest of delusion together with the Great wise man... Later on people started to call him Walmiki and he became famous in following centuries as the legendary poet, author of the world-known ancient Indian epic poem “Ramayana”.”

Sensei became silent. We also were walking for some time silent under impression of the heard story. And when passing by the café, Stas broke silence and proposed to visit a shop and to drink some fizzy water. Everybody welcome this idea as it was hot. Only Sensei refused and said that he would wait for us sitting on the bench. He pointed out to the bench in shadow where an old couple sat. We parted.

Having drunk quickly my glass of fizzy water, I went out outdoors while the guys were saturating their athlete bodies with additional portions of the drink. Sensei sat near the old and talked to them about something. Meanwhile Nikolai Andreevich went out of café and we came together to Sensei, greeted the old couple and became involuntary listeners to their conversation.

“...by his prayers.”

“He is a good priest, father Vasiliy,” agreed Sensei. “He’s done a lot for people.”

“Life passed by so quickly,” sighed an old woman. “We look at young people, but we have been recently the same like

them. And the most important, we don't feel in our soul that our bodies are old."

"A human doesn't age in his soul," remarked Sensei and added with a good-natured smile, "Don't envy to the young people. They still have their whole way to go through. And you stand already on the threshold and you have just to knock."

"That's the trouble. Not the death makes me sad but the parting," sadly uttered the old woman imperceptibly wiping a tear. "We lived with Vanechka fifty three years in perfect harmony, we didn't hear a bad word from each other." The old man nodded with his head. The old woman took his hand with gratitude. "And now it seems the time came for us to be separated. That's the reason of my sorrow in my sould."

"Your sorrow is groundless. What is it about? Do you care about your body?" Sensei opened wide his hands and pointing out to the young couple walking not far from us uttered with a smile, "My God, I understand when you are young but now what do you have to be sad about?" They laughed together. "And the soul... While love lives in the soul, separation isn't possible. Because the main thing is that you know that you love this man. How can you lose him if he is really dear to your soul, if Memory and Love to him continue to live in you..."

The guys started to go out of the café and Sensei stoop up from the bench and started to say goodbye to the old couple.

"Thank you very much, you calmed me so," said the old woman at the end as if she wanted to tell to Sensei everything

she had in her soul, “And really what can separate us? Even if I leave this world, I will love him from that side as much as here. We don’t lose anything.”

“Never mind!” Uttered Sensei. “Here you were together in one instant and there you will be together in the eternity. You should be happy that the eternity comes close. Here you are in grief and sorrow and there you will find peace and joy.”

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

“It was also a pleasure for me to talk to you.”

“I don’t know whether we will meet each other. Every day I spend in waiting. Of course, I would like to meet father Vasiliy and to talk to you. You calmed me so much. It became so easy in the soul. I would like very much to meet you again.”

“Don’t worry,” Sensei endearingly looking with some tenderness and warmth at the old woman. “We will surely meet each other and we will have plenty of time to talk.”

When we moved away from this old couple to the considerable distance following the guys towards the market, Nikolai Andreevich asked Sensei, “Are they your acquaintances?”

“No,” Sensei said with a smile. “They are just good people.”

“And is this woman sick?”

“Yes. She has little time to live.”

“Isn’t it possible to help her somehow?” I asked anxiously.

“It’s possible. But this kind of help will be harmful,” answered Sensei. “Human is temporary. Death puts the end to the old age and torments, it sets free from burden of existence. For loving souls it’s a reward. Since at least we don’t become different only because we die...”

5

Finally we came to the final destination of our trip, it was a local food market. Before the entrance there were tables with different Chinese truck such as trinkets, pens, watches and other consumer goods. Sensei looked at all this multi-coloured assortment and said in a low voice with bitterness.

“They completely lost respect. They shower us with different trash like a developing country.”

The guys started to look at all this various goods. Stas took some square trinket in the form of a watch, pushed a button and it started to produce strange sounds, blink and show changing digits.

“What a stuff is that?” Stas was surprised.

“It looks like Geiger counter,” grinned Nikolai Andreevich who stood next to him.

“What?” Eugene squeezed between Stas and doctor. “What for a counter is it?”

“Geiger counter,” repeated Nikolai Andreevich. “It’s a gas-discharge indicator of particles.”

Eugene stared at Nikolai Andreevich a numb question. Stas ironically screwed up his eyes and decided to speed up the thinking process of his friend.

“Have you ever heard about a device called dosimeter, you, village boy?”

“Ah, that is a device for radiation or what?” Eugene made a second attempt to guess.

“It’s a device for measuring the dose of radiation,” Stas said with a laugh.

“I say the same.”

Eugene made a serious face of the “scholar”, took a blinking “device” from Stas and started to examine it.

“It’s a stop-watch,” explained a saleswoman. “But it’s... I will give you another one.”

Stas winked her and merrily said pointing out to Eugene.

“Don’t pay attention at him, he has just studied too long time, that’s why he retarded mentally a bit.”

We laughed. And Eugene shook his head and intentionally said loud specially for Stas, “Usually I don’t remember bad things... more often I write them down.” And turning around to the saleswoman he asked, “How much does it cost?”

She mentioned the price and hurried on to change this “brocken thing” to another.

“No, no, I will take this one,” Eugene stopped her. “There should be someone at least who will by your defective goods with 100% discount...”

And Eugene continued to talk such a funny way like a pernickety buyer that we almost died laughing. After one of the next Eugene’s jokes even our psychoterapist inquired Stas with interest, “Is he always like that or only now?”

Stas replied, “Now and always.”

“Well, then it’s a “diagnosis”,” the doctor stated laughing.

When satisfied Eugene got a reduction and bought this trifle for a few pennies and being mocked by the guys came to Sensei, the last one said, “Aren’t you ashamed to deprive people their money?”

“So what? It’s they who should be ashamed to sell such a “stuff” for such a price,” and smiling with his attractive Hollywood smile he added, “You know, Sensei, my conscience is crystal-clear...” and parting from him he added in a low voice, “because I don’t use it.”

“That’s the problem,” concluded Sensei under the loud laughter of the guys.

We entered the market and started to buy food according to the list. Eugene had nothing to do and came to some seller who obviously arrived here from some southern lands and asked him with suspicion, “Where did you vegetables grow?”

The seller seemed not to understand him and started to praise his goods as he used to. Questions about the place turned lastly to the question about the price which was considerable higher than average. It’s natural as there is never cheap food on sea resorts. But probably not for Eugene. He posed him as inspector (at least of the consumer rights society), pulled out his “dosimeter” and began to examine all the goods with it. The dosimeter surely started to peep and blink showing unreal figures on its screen. The seller stared wide-eyed. Such a behaviour of this strange meticulous buyer, who appeared nobody knows where from, made a bad impression on him.

“Have you seen that!” Eugene showed with indignation the data of “dosimeter” to Stas who stood all this time near him and made his best to keep a serious expression on his face.

“Look at this! It’s much worse than in Chernobyl! At which nuclear test area have you grown it?” Eugene addressed to the seller poking into the indicators of “dosimeter”. “You see, even the Geiger count stops functioning. It’s incredible! Soon we will be fed by nuclear waste...”

Eugene’s statements attracted attention of other people. The seller looked confused at the counter then at the vegetables and intensively tried to understand what was wrong. He began to justify himself and to tell that his food is of best quality. And when Eugene boosted this story to unbelievable extent, the seller ate himself a tomato in front of the crowd trying to convince not already Eugene but the crowd gathered around him that his vegetables were fully safe. But it provoked Eugene even more and in reply to this action of the seller he started to tell scary stories how radiation influences on the body, with detailed enlisting what stops functioning first (of course, in his opinion). At last, he talked such a nonsense and gathered such a crowd of idlers around him that finally the seller put the vegetables to him obviously at much lower than purchasing price in order to get rid of this panic-monger.

Meanwhile we bought a part of our food. Stas and Eugene found us and showed the whole basket full of tomatoes and cucumbers. Eugene didn’t stop boasting about his “achievements” and expressed the desire to purchase the

rest of the food at lower prices. Sensei only shook his head at this expressing his censure, “You, people... I told you so many times and you...”

“But, Sensei, why should we spent more if we may buy at a reasonable price? They all rook people here! I’m an honest citizen and I can’t let them do it. I want to take part in it where I can.” The guys roared laughing and Eugene went on finding excuses for himself and smiled cunningly. “I don’t envy them. Just when I see any salesman, my soul needs to obtain justice.”

“Ah,” grined Sensei. “Now they call this merit this way?”

“Right,” nodded Stas laughing. “Moreover, this “merit of justice” he shows in two ways: a selfish and non-selfish. A selfish one is when he wants that “he would also have it”. And a non-selfish is when he wants that “the others would not have it either”.

Sensei waved his hand hopelessly towards Eugene and Stas and uttered, “Do whatever you want.”

Nikolai Andreevich gave them a list and money. Our team divided itself. Part of the guys went together with Eugene in order to have fun at his purchasing. And Sensei, Volodya, doctor and me, after we preliminary agreed with the guys about the meeting place, went to the sea shore.

The sky was cloudless. Half asleep resort visitors walked lazily along streets hiding in the shadow of trees from the sun. We came to the agreed place. And having put the paper bags with food on the ground, we sat at the free bench in the

shadow of the big tree. Nikolai Andreevich decided not to waste time and began to talk to Sensei.

“Sensei, you touched an interesting topic when we were going here... I have been thinking all the time... Well, we are not endangered to become rich with our profession and in our country,” the doctor said in jest. “But if to speak seriously, what should a man do? Everybody say that is bad, but what is good? How should we live?”

“You see, every man actually doesn’t live his real life. He chooses an image he likes and plays a role, and usually not the only one. For example, you play now a role of a student and you try as in the lecture to put questions, to understand the sense of my words. Then you switch to the role of psychoterapist and strive to analyze my words. But in fact it’s just a game, nothing else. Because you know yourself what I say. You need only to look deep into your soul.

“The same way does every human. He plays. One likes a role of a doctor, another likes a role of a cool military man, the third one likes to be motor mechanic. One choses a role of a drunkard, another that one of a gangster, someone of careerist, and someone a person offended in life. However, whatever role choses a man, in fact it’s only his role. Just he gets used to it so much that he thinks that it’s his true life. Actually Shakespear was right telling that the whole world is just a theatre.

“And like any actor, a man stays dissatisfied with his role and dreams of another role, where he sees himself more important. Whatever a man achieves, it seems to him that he hasn’t yet played the main role in his life. And playing the one

he dreamed of, for example, of a poor, sick, rich, healthy, mechanic or astronaut, it doesn't matter, a man dreams about another role. He tries on an image of president, oligarch, hero and saviour, fighter for justice or someone else... And all the time he stays in his dreams, pleases himself with these fairy-tales. But isn't it much easier to stop it and to chose a role in life which is worthy a Human?"

"You mean a role of saint, lama or whoever?"

"Be it lama or saint or just honest and kind man, call it as you wish. I call it simply, a role worthy a Human. And you should be the one you must be. So that when you fall asleep, you will be sure that your conscience is pure. So that dying you wouldn't be ashamed for your thoughts and doings. And staying even in front of the God, or as Christians say, in Divine Justice, you would have something to tell. So that your basket with good doing would be full and the one with bad doings would be empty. That's what it means to be Human. And not only externally but what is more important inside of you. You should put an order in your head. Not to dream of stupid, bad, idle things. Think more about the God, about your sould. If you have free time, use it with benefit for your soul, pray, meditate, do spiritual things. Since life is too short. And it's given so that a man would prove the God that he is worthy to be called a Human..."

Sensei was telling simply and clear. His words were full of such a sincerity, such a sympathy, power and kindness that my "lotus flower" even began to tremble automatically, pouring pleasant warmth in the body. And I felt so good inwardly as if all put on masks fell down from me, uncovering

for an instant my true Essence. And somehow in this free state I really understood what Sensei was talking about. Since this understanding went not through the words but through my soul.

For a while we were sitting in silence, contemplating the sea scenery. In this unusual state begot by the words of Sensei everybody seemed not to wish to say anything idle. Everything was amazingly clear and simple. This serenity of contemplation was disturbed by the guys who returned from the market.

“Look how much food have we bought!” uttered satisfied Eugene who opened wide his hands and demonstrated full paper bags which they carried. “And why are you so sad?”

“Ah, we are just looking,” said Sensei gazing at sea space.

Out of politeness Eugene also glanced at that side. Meanwhile a motor-launch was rushing exactly that time at sea. A rope was tied up to it and one end was kept fast by a girl on water skis.

“Oh, cool girl!” appraised Eugene thinking that we were talking about it.

“Right,” uttered Sensei. “I have just told them a joke about it, that’s why they became so sad.”

Eugene hemmed, “What kind of joke was it that they are in sorrow?”

“Two fishermen sit on the bank of the river. A nice girl skis on water skis in front of them. One tells to another, “Just imagine if she falls down and starts to sink. And I will dive and save her. I will drag her to the land and will pretend doing

artificial respiration but I will be kissing her and embracing her.” As soon as he said it, the girl falls down and starts sinking. That guy immediately goes into water, dives and drags out the woman’s body. He starts to do artificial respiration, kiss and embrace it. Then he comes to his friend and says, “I don’t understand something. That girl was nice and this one is ugly.” His friend looks at him somehow strange and answers, “Right you are... That girl was on water skis and this one on skates.””

Our group roared laughing under the tree. Only Eugene smiled somehow inertly and then asked puzzled, “I didn’t get it, what’s the matter with the skates? She was on water skis.”

We all burst out laughing, this time not because of joke but making fun of Eugene. The guy tried to hide his gaffe and quickly changed the flow of laugh to his adventures at the market. Other “eyewitnesses” joined his story and added some more details. Finally having laughed a lot everybody came to conclusion that it’s already dangerous to let Eugene go alone to the market. He has done so much turmoil with his “dosimeter” that if he appears there next time, even without this device, he will feel on his bones all the “consequences” of his joke.

We spreaded the food in paper bags so that it would be comfortable to take for all. And when we were going to go back Eugene suddenly laughed loud, “Ah! It means that the girl with skates lay there from the winter.”

It was already the last drop. Our laugh just turned into the hysterics. Even the passers-by lookint at us began to smile as

they were infected by the wave of good mood though they didn't understand what was a reason of such a roar laughter.

As we were loaded with food, we took a roundabout way, it was longer but more comfortable. And when we passed by one of the buildings Eugene staring all around suddenly stopped. He put the paper bags on the asphalt and made a detailed search in his pockets which were generously modelled by fashion designers both on his shirt and shorts.

“Where is it?” Puzzled muttered the guy.

As Eugene remained behind, some of us also stopped waiting for him.

“Ah, here it is!” At last he exclaimed with joy and dragged out a wrinkled sheet of paper.

“Do you keep it just in case of emergency?” grinned Volodya gazing at Eugene's attempts to smooth the wrinkled paper.

“Right, in extrasensory case,” jokingly replied Eugene.

Grasping his paper bags he caught up with Sensei.

“Sensei, look at this ad which I found out at the market. It's a true panegyric to the Ruler of the Universe and the whole Earth...”

And the guy holding at the same time paper bags in his hand extended a paper.

Sensei took it, scanned it with eyes, smiled and gave back.

“There is a lot of such a “stuff” around. Just look... Here and there and over there...”

We twisted around our heads together with Eugene to all that directions showed by Sensei. And really everywhere were

sticked the same ads written in big letters “The Great sensitive, honoured Master of international class, fortune-teller, powerful magician and wizard whose gaze healed many people, Vitaliy Yakovlevich... at numerous requests holds additional health-improving performance, the only one and unique in the whole world. The performance will start...” And further there was a next date and incredibly high price for tickets. Looking at this stuck variety of ads we again rolled laughing. Even the dustbin we passed by had such a paper.

“For shame!” Eugene spitted out angrily. “And I like a fool brought this “burden” in my pocket from the market.

And he wrinkled again the paper, tossed it up, kicked it with his leg like a ball.

“Why do you litter?” rebuked him mildly Sensei. “The purity of your thought starts from your external culture and tidyness. Go and take this paper and throw it to the dustbin.”

This time, despite his usual excuses, Eugene behaved somehow inadequately, evidently trying to diversify his humourous style. He put again his paper bags to the ground and obligingly rushed to the paper. He lifted it and even a few times “sweept” with a hand a place where it lay on the asphalt. And then like a true basketball-player threw the wrinkled paper to the dustbin like a ball to the basket. And “gaining a point” he expressly opened wide his hands with contented air.

“What for a paper? There was no paper at all. It seemed to you. Now it’s too hot outdoors. It was just a miracle.”

“Well,well,” uttered Stas with laughter. “And you are our genie from a bottle.”

We laughed again. Eugene evidently liked an idea of the new image and he said, “Why not? Think any wish and I will be so kind to fulfil it,” and having winked he added merrily, “Of course, taking into account modern business relations and self-service.”

“What do you mean under self-service?” uttered Stas smiling. “It seems that we will think a wish and will fulfil it ourselves?”

“You are so smart!” Eugene tapped him on the shoulder coming back to his paper bags. We laughed and Andrew said, “Personally I have only one wish and it is to be transported to our camp with all our food.”

“It’s easy,” replied Eugene after he has caught up with us with his load, “There is nothing impossible for my magic. There are two ways to fulfil this wish.”

“Please announce all your extensive list, oh great genie,” proposed Stas with humour.

“The first way is that we quicken and run loaded with heavy bags to the camp.”

“Oh no!” shouted we all together.

“It’s too hot now,” grumbled Andrew.

“And the second way?” inquired Stas with a smile.

“The second way of magic is possible if we do it the right way. What is the main thing in the process of transportation?”

“Volodya’s heel!” responded Andrew laughing.

Everybody shouted with laughter recalling the morning joke of Sensei.

“Well, it’s self-evident for some individuals,” Eugene continued to play his role. “Think wider!”

“Wings!” exclaimed Ruslan.

Eugene clicked with his tongue and uttered with pompous air,

“This is for bigwigs. Think deeper!”

“Wheels,” having seen the going by car uttered Stas in jest.

“You, Stas, have flown away,” copying the drawling voice of a drug addict Eugene waved his hand. And added merrily, “To think deeper doesn’t mean to go crazy. So what? No other ideas? Hey, you! The main thing, as our dear Sensei told us, is to occupy our mind with useful things.” And pointing with his head to laughing with us Sensei he asked, “Am I right?”

“You are right,” nodded Sensei.

“You see, unlike you I li..., I le... Gosh, I l-e-a-r-n,” finally the guy enunciated distinctly, “my lessons very quickly.”

“Of course, we are so much behind you, you are our unique object,” remarked Stas ironically.

“Who would doubt that!” Eugene said self-satisfied throwing out his chest. “I’m a genie, at last!”

“And what would you propose us this time, Abdurahman Abdurahmanovich?” asked Volodya with irony in his bass voice.

But Eugene seemed to drawl the pleasure of his play on words.”

“Wait, my friend, just wait. What can you occupy your mind with so that the time flies by quickly and unnoticeably? With humour! So, listen to the jokes...”

After a next portion of Eugene’s jokes when our mouths and stomachs ached of laughter from his “magic”, Nikolai Andreevich decided to interrupt this endless laugh and to use the time more rationally. He tactfully changed the topic of the conversation to eternal question on a human and his ways of spiritual searches. Warmed to this subject Sensei told us one legend.

6

“Once upon a time the Wayfarer lost himself. He happened to be alone in the desert and wasn’t able to recall who was he and where he had to go. Everywhere, where the Wayfarer gazed, were sands and endless sand-dunes. He didn’t know where is their end and where their beginning. The sun mercilessly burnt his skin. The wind burnt with hot air.

“The Wayfarer has been walking for a long time. Suddenly he saw a dry bush with thorns. He sat near it. But a sudden gust drove it on the sands. It rolled easily, leaving a trace with its thorns. And he thought that if it rolls, it means that it knows where. If it leaves a trace, it means that it shows a way for him. And the Wayfarer followed it. But the wind calmed down and the bush stopped. A new gust drove it back. And the Wayfarer again followed it setting foot on his own traces. But finally he appeared at the same place where he started his way. And the Wayfarer comprehended that the

bush is dead, and the wind just plays with it. He understood that it's senseless to run after the dear dry bush since it has no life. Now only elements rule over it. He took it to his hands, but it stung him painfully. It surprised him. Even being dead, it continued to bring pain. And he threw it away angrily.

“The Wayfarer moved on. He walked long time. He was parched with thirst and hunger. But he went on going. Having seen a flying big bird, the Wayfarer thought that he is also a bird. He followed it. He believed that if this bird flies so high, then it sees far than he. It knows the way, that is, it will route him to the place where he would be able to slake his thirst and to satisfy his hunger, where he would finally find peace and will get rid of sufferings. Rejoiced Wayfarer ran appraising its rash fly and look forward to fulfil his dreams.

“The strong bird flew nicely and quickly. The Wayfarer raced after it as fast as he could. He got tired but he continued his run hoping for better. The bird lowered over the nearest sand-dune, and the Wayfarer quickened his run. He assumed that only instances separate him from his dream. Having run up the sand-dune he stopped was horrified by delusion when he faced the truth. Over the sand-dune a flock of the same birds tore to pieces a dead body and swallowed up with greediness a rotten flesh. Having turned back with disgust, the Wayfarer went away. He understood that he is just a food for a bird.

“The Wayfarer has been walking for long. The sun was burning mercilessly all the time. The wind burnt with its hot air. He suffered from unbearable thirst and hunger. He was coming to an end. But there was around only endless sand and

blue sky. Suddenly the Wayfarer has seen a snake. It was moving resolutely and without haste as if it knew its way beforehand and enjoyed every moment of its overcoming. A peace was felt in it. It spreaded coolness despite the hot weather. And the Wayfarer thought, “If it doesn’t hurry up and it spreads coolness, then it knows where the source is. If I follow it, I will find shelter from the sun and will slake my thirst.”

“The Wayfarer followed the snake. He felt that he was gradually restored. And the Wayfarer thought, “Maybe I’m a snake?” But at this moment the snake stopped and turned to him. And he saw that the snake has teeth full of venom. His body trembled from fear and bolted him away. And it stopped only when it fell down to the hot sand. He was angry with himself that he couldn’t resist when only one step separated him from salvation. His body betrayed him. But he had considered that his body is himself.

“Standing up with difficulty, the Wayfarer again dragged himself along the desert. He was wandering under the burning sun rays recalling coolness and peace of the snake. Anguish oppressed his heart. Suddenly he has seen a flashed by shaddow. He thought it was a mirage, a phantom of the snake. But the shaddow flashed by again. Having peered at it, the Wayfarer has seen a lizard. It seemed to him that it also spreads coolness. And he thought, “If it spreads coolness like a snake maybe it also knows where is the source.” And he ran after it trying not to remain behind. But the lizard moved deftly and quickly. The Wayfarer got exhausted in desert following it and the lizard burried itself into the sand.

However hard the Wayfarer dug the sand in that place, he was unable to find it. But having lost the lizard, he wasn't upset. As it wasn't a snake, it was just a restless lizard which only superficially reminded of the snake. And all its essence was just an empty tossing around.

“Having risen to his feet, the Wayfarer dragged himself aimlessly along the desert. He was disappointed with his meetings, he was angry at his disobedient hungry body. He was tired of this vain wandering, senseless sufferings, encouraging dreams, empty fuss and endless disappointment, lie, deceit, illusions of this desert.

“The heat became unbearable. The body groaned and suffered of thirst and hunger. But the Wayfarer didn't pay already attention at it. He went on going until he had energy to do it. Finally getting weak, he fell down to the hot sand heated by the sun and was unable to move even a finger. Only his eyes still contemplated endless open space of cloudless sky which merged with shoreless sand-dunes of the desert. The Wayfarer shifted his gaze to many various sand grains in front of his face. Every sand grain distinguished from other. But in the general heap of the sand these peculiarities were unnoticeable. The wind moved them easily.

“And the Wayfarer thought, “I'm the same like this sand grain. I don't know who I am. But if 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 embodiment of His will. The events happened to me had to take place. Because the main sense is not in the external movement but in the essence of

internal development. If I die, what will be changed? All these sand grains don't need my life. But why did He created me then? What a pity that I lost the snake..."

"The Wayfarer fainted. He was awoken by the bright light. He screwed up his eyes and coved them with his hand. It seemed to him that the light damped down. Then the Wayfarer moved his hand away from his face. He has seen that it was already dark. A fire blazed in front of him. And there was the Wanderer who sat at fire and cooked some food. The Wayfarer asked him, "Who are you?"

"The main question is who you are," he heard the reply.

"I don't know," the Wayfarer said, "I have been walking for so long that I forgot who I am."

"The Wanderer passed him over a jug full of water and said, "You suffed for long of heat of the desert. Slake your thirst from my source."

"The Wayfarer took from the Wanderer with gratitude the jug and began to gulp water with greediness. The vivifying liquid spreaded over his body. It seemed to him that he had never in his life tried such delicious water. Having slaked his thirst, the Wayfarer gave back the jug to the Wanderer and asked, "Where have you found such a cool pure water among the sand of the desert? Its taste remind me a crystall pure mountain spring."

"The Wanderer smiled and uttered, "I can't tell you in words about the place of this source. Since you may know about it only if you are in it. The words aren't able to impart experience."

“The Wayfarer reflected on it and asked, “Why aren’t the words able to impart experience?”

“The Wanderer answered, “You drank the water. You received an experience. Since before however would I describe to you how delicious and nice this water is, you may feel and estimate its taste only when you try it. Only you may determine for yourself how good this water is. Only you may understand and feel the taste of the water when your lips touch it, when it fills your mouth and flows to your body through the throat. And this experience belongs only to you since everybody drinks his own water. But how much would you drink, you will be thirsty again and again. Only becoming a source will you slake your thirst for ever.”

“How can I become a source?”

“Become yourself, your own Essence. Life and death are like a single flow. The Essence moves in the flow. It gains Eternity during its movement. Nobody can estimate a wild flow properly unless he enters its waters as it is the future. Nobody can enter the same water twice as it is the past. There is only movement of the flow since it is the present. Any water sooner or later reaches its source and becomes it turning back to its original purity.”

“The Wayfarer was surprized to hear such a wise reply and asked, “How can you know all of that about water?”

“I was the source of its moisture,” was the reply.

“The Wanderer passed him over the food and said, “You were wandering for so long in the desert. Appease your hunger, try my food.”

“The Wayfarer took with gratitude the food from the Wanderer and began to swallow it up with pleasure.

“It seemed to him so delicious and nourishing as if he had never in his life tried something like that.

“Having eaten the food, the Wayfarer asked the Wanderer, “Why is your food so delicious? I have never in my life eaten something like that.”

“You were hungry. The food is just a pleasure for flesh. It feeds flesh but it doesn’t slake the thirst. Those who consider it as the highest blessing are not able to refuse from its accumulation. But however much will you pile it, it will rot. The food gives only a temporary pleasure of possessing it. It’s useful only for sustenance of flesh which is a container for the Spirit.”

“But why after such a small quantity of your food I was filled with much more power than ever?”

“Because this power which makes the food like it is doesn’t have any boundary or beginning. It’s a limit of the limitless and the end of the endless. But the food itself has its end, it’s limited within itself.”

“The Wayfarer was surprised again, “How can you know that about the food?”

“I was the Cook of this world.”

“Having saturated his hunger and thirst, the Wayfarer paid attention to his clothes. It was shabby and torn. And he felt ashamed for his appearance.

“The Wanderer noticed it and said, “Don’t feel ashamed for your clothes. Clothes is just a particle of the universal process of creation and destruction. There is nothing more

stupid than to satisfy caprices of your clothes. Since its essence locks you within the limits of its narrow space, estranges you from the world, plunges you into hesitations and fears caused by this estrangement. It makes you exist for the sake of its shapes and external illusions it creates for others thus involving you into even more worries about it. Since every shape has its own rules. And the rules are just a number of contrasts.

“Your clothes has its limit. It wears out. And you are free not to wear it. But having worn out one clothes you put on another one. However without destroying the limit, it’s disastrous to strive for the limitless.”

“The Wayfarer was amazed again, “How can you know it about the clothes?”

“I was the Tailor of this world,” followed the reply.

“The Wayfarer looked around, “Tell me, how did I get here?”

“You have come,” answered the Wanderer.

“But I remember only heat and sand.”

“And what have you seen?”

“The Wayfarer began to recall, “I have seen a dry thorn bush which was rolled by the wind. It dented on the sand. I followed it and thought that it would show me the way. But the wind changed its direction. I went back. And I decided that it’s senseless to run after the dead dry thorn bush as it’s not alive. But the thorn stung me when I took it up. Even dead, it continued to cause pain.”

“You have met the dead one which doesn’t show anything else but its thorns. The dead defends the dead. The

dead will not change into the alive because there is life and the alive will not change into dead because there is death. Both death and life depend on something, there is something which unites them,” uttered the Wanderer.

“The Wayfarer went on telling, “I have seen a big bird. It flew high in the sky. I ran after it and thought it would bring me to the place where I could find peace and get rid of sufferings. I praised its flying and appeased myself with a dread. But it led me only to the flock of the same birds who ate dead rotten flesh.”

“And the Wanderer answered, “It’s stupid to praise someone who sees only a future food in you. You were attracted by the height of its flying. And you followed it thinking of your own benefit. But the bird strives in the flight were different. Though it flies high in the sky over the desert, it feeds itself with its victims. The bird which eats carrion doesn’t suffer when its “dishes” change. Since its essence is rot. You deceived yourself. You have seen the reality and your illusions disappeared. But your reality is also an illusion. The big bird was only a shadow in comparison to the essence of things. And things used to be born in the Shapeless and return to the Lowest.”

“The Wayfarer said, “I have seen the snake. I felt peace in it. It spreaded coolness. And I thought that it knows the place of the source. I followed it. But the snake turned to me. And I have seen its teeth full of venom. My body trembled from fear and dragged me away. But I thought that my body is me. I lost the snake but I thought all the time about it.”

“Those who rely on external things may only assume. Those who rely on internal things possess the true knowledge,” uttered the Wanderer. “Your body is just a dust. Its essence is ashes. You might have possessed the Wisdom of Eternity. You needed just to make one step. But the fear of your dust death happened to be stronger. The dust ran away. You remained anguished as the Spirit always strives to the Eternity. You may not cognize the Wisdom of the Eternity through the power of the dust as it will turn it to nonsense. To run away from fear doesn’t mean to save yourself. To kill your fear means to gain perfection. Perfection lets make a step over the verge. Since only on the verge you cognize the source of the Wisdom.”

“The Wayfarer went on recalling, “I have seen a lizard. I thought, it was a phantom of the snake. It seemed to me that it spreaded coolness. I tried to catch up it. But it ran quickly and swiftly. It dug into the sand and I couldn’t find it. But I wasn’t upset because of that. Since it was only a restless lizard, not the snake.”

“The Wanderer remarked, “The phantom similar to the Wisdom only looks like the Wisdom. Empty fuss is a beginning of the distemper. Those who want to look like a Wiseman in order to boast in front of others, dolefully rush about and dream of the glory. But their essence is emptiness in the shell of Ego. When knowledge comes from the lack of knowledge, it gives rise to endless questions.”

“And the Wayfarer said, “I have seen the sun, endless space of the sky. I have seen boundless sand-dunes of the

desert. I have seen many different sand grains. But all together they were unnoticeable. The wind determined their direction.”

“The Wanderer replied to that, “The sky and the sun direct the changes. They can make transformations so that all living beings follow their nature. The sky and the sun magnify the full and annihilate the empty. The desert set in motion in rest. It’s dead but it’s able to bear mirages in order to deceive the alive with its illusions. The desert destroys the full and fulfils the empty. The sand grains in their mass follow the motions of the sand that’s why elements determine their direction.”

“And the Wayfarer admitted, “I thought that I’m the same like that sand grain. Since I don’t know who I am. But if I exist, it means that Someone created me. And if Someone created me, then it was His will to do it. Then my wanderings are just a part of His plan. If I die, what will change? Since these sand grains don’t need my life. Why did He create me then?”

“So that you would become Human,” was the reply.

“So that I would become Human?!” the Wayfarer was surprised. “But what is my life?”

“The Wanderer uttered, “A stone fallen to the sand – rustle of sand grains. / A wave reaching the land – rustle of sand grains. / Your running headlong, / Foot in the sand – rustle of sand grains. / Life is just a step, / And its years are rustle of sand grains.”

“The Wayfarer thought for a while and then asked again, “But what does it mean?”

“You came to a place which was granted to you from your birth,” responded the Wanderer. “You grew up where it was pleasant to your nature. You became mature in those things which became your destiny. And you will go to a place given to you by your death. Death is just a beginning of life. Life is just a successor of Death. You can’t avoid a start of life. You can’t stop its end.”

“The Wayfarer kept silence and then said with admiration, “So that I would become Human?! I recalled! I was looking for a Way so that I would become Human!”

“And the Wanderer answered, “You were looking just for a somebody’s else footsteps but not your own way. Alien footstep doesn’t look like your own. The footsteps appear where they are dented. But they are not those who dent them. Following alien footsteps you strived after outside images without knowing their internal sense. But everybody carves that way which meets its real strivings. The desert sands up all footsteps with time so that a new Wayfarer wouldn’t make mistakes from the past. That’s why your own experience is so important. In order to become Human, you should carve your own way.

“A foot of the Human takes little place in the endless desert. But despite this it may dent in those places which have never been visited before. Making footsteps where nobody went, the Human is able to go far ahead and to gain much more. Knowledge of his mind is little but if the Human trusts the Unknown, he can reach the One Who created him.”

“And the Wayfarer asked, “And who is the One Who created me?”

“The Wanderer uttered, “He can be perceived but can’t be described. The one can reach Him but can’t cognize Him. He can be Loved but can’t be grasped. He can be understood in the Beginning but can’t be cognized to the End. Since He is the One Who created everything. Since He is the One who Created by His Will.”

“How can you know about Him?” the Wayfarer was surprised.

“I’m His Voice and Hearing,” was the answer.

“But who are you? Tell me your name.”

“Name is just a shaddow of the clothes but I have a lot of it. And the Essence is the only one - Bodhisattva.”

7

After Sensei had told us this legend, we continued our way in silence. Obviously, everybody like me were strongly impressed by what we heard and we tried to look first of all into ourselves, our choice of the life way. And when we were already approaching the camp, Andrew asked Sensei, “Do Bodhisattvas visit only the East?”

Sensei grinned, “No, they visit all countries, including Rus.”

“Really?” Andrew was surprised. “Did they visit Rus as well? Were there Russian Bodhis? I have never heard about that. Sensei, tell us please...”

Everybody livened up, evidently wishing to hear about that in details. But Sensei looking at the “guards” of our camp

who were meeting us said only the following, “Later on, in the evening...”

“So let it be in the evening,” my person thought and fixed my gaze at Tatyana who waved me with a hand.

The guys in the camp got tired of waiting for us. Unpacking the paper bags, we told other guys about our adventures, and they told us about theirs. It happened so that my friends also had a lot to do. During the rest of our “guards” the “lured” sea-gulls tried to make a second attempt of “banquet”. Kostya decorated himself like a Red Indian and made up his mind together with Yura to catch at any price at least one “game-bird” and to “punish it in order to teach the others not to do it again”. They made as it should be an ambush in coastal rushes. But this invention only turned to a funny story how two urban boys almost caused infarct of the “noble bird” by their sudden appearance with hooting, furious shouting and crazy turns along the sea coast in chase of the scared flock of birds. So this “civilized punishment” in the wild nature brought, according to Kostya, nothing to our Red Indians but feathers and birds droppings.

Having finished our lunch, we went to frolic in the sea. We played water polo quite enough. And after half of our company stretched out on the sand warming up our bodies, Stas and Eugene decided to swim with aqualungs. But something went wrong with it, so they put aqualungs aside and they made up their mind to dive in the old way with a mask and a tube not far from the sea shore. Kostya and Andrew tried to swim far. And me and Tatyana rolled in the

shallow waters. For our coward female natures swimming was good only when we could feel the sea bottom underfoot.

And the very moment when Andrew and Kostya were quite far from the sea coast, Slava who was getting a sun tan on the sand suddenly for all of us began to shout to their side and to wave with hands, “Sharks! Sharks!”

“Why do you shout so loud?” Ruslan who laid not far on the sand expressed his indignation in jest. “They will not fall for your bait.”

“But there are really sharks, look yourself!” Slava cried already addressing to him.

Slava really looked scared. Me and Tatyana immediately stood vertically in the water feeling the saving bottom and began to stretch out our necks peering into the sea. But we have not seen anything dangerous and turned our gazes to anxious Slava. Volodya and Victor who were taking a sun tan on the sand raised themselves a little and looked grinning into the distance.

“What’s up, Slava?” said Volodya with a smile. “How can sharks exist in this sea? It’s not even a sea but a pool. How can predators happen to be here if you will not find even a normal fish around?”

“But look, there are sharks! Really, sharks!” Slava was went on repeating all the same like a long-playing record. “Here they are! Look!”

And having looked to the direction where Slava pointed out to I have really noticed two black flippers quickly nearing to the sea coast and from time to time hiding between the waves. They moved exactly towards Andrew and Kostya who

didn't pay attention to Slava's shouting and swam calmly in the water without noticing the danger. But when me and Tatyana started to scream with our clear female voices, Andrew and Kostya turned confused their heads around looking for a reason of our panic. Andrew was first who noticed flippers moving to them and quickly swam to the sea coast. Kostya didn't find out what was the source of the danger but he didn't want to take risk and hurried on to catch up with Andrew.

Loud shouts excited all our group. And when our instinct of self-preservation made us immediately leave the water, Sensei with senior guys on the contrary neglected this internal indicator and began to quickly enter the water looking into the distance. We approached them, so to say, a "safe zone", and stopped. We felt ashamed to fully go out of the water when our friends were still there.

Sensei left behind all of us but then he slowed down his run. And smiling he said us, "You are panic-mongers. These are the dolphins!"

"The dolphins?!" we were so surprised and looked again at the approaching to us triangular flippers.

Sensei moved with a smile towards the unexpected visitors. Kostya and Andrew seemed to notice Sensei "hurrying up towards them" and fastened even more their race, slipped by him like a bullet moving strenuously with their arms and legs, though the place where they swam was waist-deep. They stood up only when their arms and legs began to "row" in the sand in the shallow waters. They seemed not to recover from the shock, stood up quickly and

were going to race to the sea coast while they heard our laughs behind them.

“Why do you stand here?!” Andrew asked confused, wiping off water from his face and not understanding why we are not on land yet.

The guy was even more surprised when he saw that Sensei continues to go deep to water.

“We are not eatable,” Eugene replied for all of us putting off his water mask. “We have a higher laugh factor. This makes us indigestible. Those like us may cause twisted bowels. It’s the same as to swallow a sea-urchin and to suffer from colics all the rest of your life.”

“We are also not eatable,” Andrew began to come to himself on approaching the guys.

“Look how bony we are,” and he pointed out to shivering Kostya.

“Oh, no,” Eugene objected to him. “I have seen how speedy they tried to catch you. What does it mean? It means that in this question the gastronomical criteria of these predators don’t coincide with your opinion about your person.”

We burst out laughing. Our “heroes” joined the group and tried to understand what had changed during their race. When they were told that it were dolphins they were surprised not less than we.

“Why did they chase us so?” asked Kostya still with a tremor in his voice.

“And why did you swim away from them?” asked Victor in his turn with laugh.

“They chased us, so I tried to make off.”

“They might want to play with you,” Stas expressed his “version”.

“What a nice game. I’m still quaking with fear.”

“Why do you think they swam this distance for you?” asked Volodya with a low voice looking after Sensei.

We stopped joking and fixed our gazes on Sensei. A couple of black dolphins with contrast black-and-white stripes on their sides were rushing at full speed but suddenly stopped almost in a few meters from Sensei. Sensei froze, too. This time water reached already his chest. One of the dolphins in a funny way put out his head from the water, like a man, and funnily nodded with it with open mouth uttering funny sounds similar to chattering mixed with yelping. The second smaller dolphin was shier. He stood sidelong to Sensei not taking his eyes from him as if he examined him carefully. Sensei slapped carefully with his hand on the water as if beating some time. The first dolphin stopped to utter sounds and bowed with his snout with interest. He seemed to like it as he dove under and came to the surface almost at arm’s length from Sensei. The last one slowly stretched his hand and stroked the forefront of the animal. The dolphin swam to him even closer and placed his snout for stroking. But instead of that Sensei slightly drew some water with his hand and playfully sprinkled the animal. The dolphin “chattered” joyfully and turned tail diving under the water. In a few instants he suddenly showed his tail behind Sensei and loudly splashed through the water covering him with a fountain of splashes. Then they started to catch up with each other, each

time changing the role of “catcher”. The second dolphin quickly joined them. Looking at such water entertainment we lost our fear before these friendly animals. We began to come closer to Sensei wishing to take part in this game. Though first we were afraid of approaching these sea creatures. It’s no joke, they have so big “bodies”. And not only “bodies” as they are creatures with highly developed intellect, if to take into account that Sensei mentioned once that the brain of a dolphin has a weight of 1800 gram, it means more than some people have. They are similar to aliens who live their life, at the same time with us, on our planet, in our times, aren’t they? However looking at their “eternal” friendly smile, squinted joyful gaze, it’s hard to believe that they can hurt you.

The dolphins whirled around us. Though they were representatives of the wild nature, strange though it may seem, they weren’t afraid of us. They even allowed to “stroke” them, although only when Sensei was near us. And if they “let” us only touch during the breaks in our “catch-me” games, they allowed Sensei to “scratch” their belly with pleasure, especially the bigger dolphin. By the way, Nikolai Andreevich was first of us who noticed a skinned over wound on his side, a little bit lower the head. It was the same place which had a dolphin we had “buried” that morning in the sea.

“Oh! Is it our old friend?” Nikolai Andreevich looked at Sensei with amazed and admiring air, when he discovers this “identity”.

Sensei only smiled mysteriously.

“No, it’s another dolphin,” said Ruslan with hesitation. “Can it be that wound are healed so quickly?”

“Who knows?” the psychoterapist shrugged his shoulders and looked with cunning smile at Sensei. “It’s a special place here... That one also had long skinned over scars in that places. Just look...”

There were well visible white stripes on the upper part of the dolphin’s body as if left by huge comb teeth.

“It’s surely our dophin!” Volodya smiled satisfied. “A fight one! I have also noticed these traces last time.”

“Were that also fishermen?” I asked Sensei.

“No. These are traces of teeth of his congener. He expressed this way his obstinate character when he was young.”

“No, it can’t be, it’s not the same dolphin,” Ruslan continued to convince us, but rather himself. “Just all the dolphins look similar.”

“Don’t offend him,” Sensei objected with a smile. “Only an inattentive person can think that dolphins, like recruits, look similar. But in fact there are no two similar snouts of dolphins, like there are no similar faces of people. Everybody is individual and differs from others by expression on the snout, constitution, form of flippers.”

“Really?” Ruslan uttered and tried to examine the dolphin more “attentively”.

Meanwhile someone brought a ball. The playful dolphins liked it so much that it led to a fight for its possession, sometimes with quite funny situations. Especially it concerned Eugene. The “marked” dolphin didn’t like the guy at first “telepathic examination”. And further he tried all the time to bring him little troubles. Sometimes he managed as if by

chance to slap with a tail in front of him, sometimes to splash him. When the guy swam closer to Sensei, this dolphin tried to “kick” Eugene and to throw him away from Sensei. In his turn the guy began to express his indignation, “Sensei, why does he treat me so badly?”

“Why are you surprised?” grinned Nikolai Andreevich who swam near him. “You wanted to burry him when he was alive and to dig him into the sand!”

“Me?!” Eugene made an innocent face. “How can you say that?! I like nature...” Meanwhile the dolphin jumped out from the water not far from Eugene and flopped down back to the water with noise fully covering Eugene with the whole wave. You should have seen the face of the guy after such an unexpected shower. He looked so as if he were spitted upon from from top to bottom, and in a very cheeky way. The guy angrily finished his speech shouting to the dolphin that dove deep, “I have already told that I like nature!..” And having wiped the water from his face he added, “I almost like it, excluding some of its representatives.”

All the guys burst out laughing and Sensei warned him with a smile, “Be careful, dolphins like elephants remember offences long time.”

But when it came to the ball taken away from the dolphins by Eugene who wanted to tease them, the “Marked” one took a threatening pose. The dolphin anxiously nodded his head from one side to another and opened wide his mouth showing conical teeth as big as that of a tiger. After that we heard loud chattering of teeth. It seemed to augur nothing good. The guy immediately let out the ball from his hands not

wishing to try patience of the dolphin and quickly swam to the sea coast. He was followed by a whole cacophony of sounds, very similar to Eugene's malicious laughing, he was careless enough to express in presence of the dolphins. We didn't even believe that we heard ourselves such a funny "laughing" of the dolphins. Sensei explained us that dolphins are able to imitate different sounds. And really, when we swam together with them, we heard a lot, from a sound similar to gate squeak, to sounds similar to human laugh and even mosquitos hum.

Tired by the long swimming we went out of the water after Sensei. And the dolphins continued to play running with the ball further and further and bringing it away to the sea. We gave up on it and decided to leave them our small present for memory. So they took it with them to the open sea.

8

There was no other day in our lives so saturated with unforeseen events like this one. After grand water exercises we flaked out in deep sleep. It was not until the late evening sunset that we woke up. The heat finally receded. There reined silence. The sea was calm. Such a sheer bliss!

Those who had woken up earlier, gathered wood for evening campfire. Having cooked a friendly dinner and got over with all our living affairs, we made ourselves comfortable by the campfire, sipping lovely tea. The first stars came out in the blue overhead. We enjoyed our sitting in a close circle of friends, as always awaiting such an interesting

and such a useful for our souls talk with Sensei. After speaking on everyday matters, Volodya was the first to change conversation to “eternal themes”.

“Sensei, you promised to tell us about a Russian bodhi,” he reminded.

“Well, since I did,” replied Sensei and, after keeping a short silence, enquired: “Did you happen to hear about the saint by the name of Agapit?!”

Some of us shook our heads.

“No,” replied Victor for all.

For some reason the name Agapit sounded familiar to me. I began to rummage my memory, trying to recollect where I could have possibly heard this name, by the way not long time ago.

“Agapit, Agapit,” uttered Nikolai Andreevich thoughtfully, evidently recalling something. “Wait a minute... Is it by chance somehow connected to ancient medicine?”

“Ancient Russian medicine,” qualified Sensei. “He was a distinguished monk of Kiev Pechersk monastery and a healer living in the 11th century. The fame of his gift of healing severe diseases spreaded well beyond Kiev. This is not the most essential point of his biography, though.”

Sensei became silent lighting a cigarette. Suddenly it dawned upon me, where I could have heard that name. My uncle’s acquaintance told me about Agapit. It was right the time when my mum and I visited uncle Victor in Moscow, where I went into hospital for a check-up.

“Oh, I know who he is, too!” enthusiastically uttered my person to a large amazement of my friends. “My uncle knows

a scientist, who was a member of a scientific group that studied Pechersk relics. He told us that they had been conducting some sort of biochemical, roentgenological, bacteriological, and also... I don't remember how it is called in science... Anyway, some kind of research that allows to reconstruct appearance and constitution of a person from his bones..."

"Morphological and anthropometric," prompted Nikolai Andreevich.

"Exactly!" and already addressing myself directly to him for help, I murmured: "And those..., when they find out about illnesses..."

"Aetiological."

"Right," nodded I. "So, owing to these investigations they managed to reconstruct true appearance of some Pechersk saints from the Near Caves, including those of Agapit. By the way, his relics caused a whole commotion among the scientists. It all started with discovery that Agapit's relics emit some kind of incomprehensible background or field, in general an unknown type of energy. Then various experiments were conducted. For instance, water placed near his relics changed its structure, and plants increased their growth, becoming even more robust and 'healthy' afterwards. Some protective properties against radiation were detected. Even in the premises, where the relics were located, they discovered something that has strong bacteriological effect for air. Plain water that was placed near Agapit's relics changed its properties over time. Further investigations showed healing effect on animals and people. People's wounds healed faster

and diseases cleared up. Sick animals recovered quickly. And the most important, they discovered some strange cyclic recurrence of the relics' 'background'. Sometimes this 'field' became more intensive, rapidly and manifold. In general, it behaved like a living organism... Here, that's all!" Having delivered all the information known to me at the moment, I fell silent.

"Wow, cool!" Andrew gave a whistle.

"Well, what would you want," said Sensei, "Agapit was a Bodhisattva."

"Wait," uttered the psychotherapist, "but he belonged to the Christian religion. A Bodhisattva seems to be of the Buddhist East."

"I explained the initial meaning of the word Bodhisattva to you once, do you remember? This word comes from Shambala. Similar to a human being, a Bodhisattva belongs to God. While religion and different teachings is simply a business run by people trading in God's name."

"Alright. Then I have another question. Suppose Agapit was a bodhi, then, considering his level of knowledge... I mean, why is the founder of Kiev Pechersk monastery, this first spiritual center of the early Rus, considered to be Antony, not Agapit, who lived at his time?"

Sensei grinned.

"Rather, it was Antony, who lived at time of Agapit... As to your question, you've left out a small detail. Bodhisattvas rarely act as leaders in a human society. Of course, if it is not connected to a certain mission, that is, such as the one bodhi Issa had. Usually it is their apprentices and disciples who

become leaders. And Bodhisattva, as a rule, remains incognito to the broad masses.”

“Why so?” wondered Tatyana.

“It is because a Bodhisattva, considering his non-interference into human affairs, may only advise how to reorganize the society for a better, spiritual way. While the reorganization itself is a matter of will and doings of peoples themselves, that is, for instance, their apprentices and disciples.

“Do you want to say that Antony was Agapit’s disciple?” Nikolai Andreevich saw the light.

Sensei nodded. The doctor thought for a moment and then asked confused: “How is about the general opinion that Agapit was Antony’s disciple? It was based on something, wasn’t it?”

“Its ‘base,’ as you put it, is nothing more than a church version, which in turn had been built on the basis of such books as the *‘Father’s book’*...”

“*‘Father’s book’*?” asked Volodya.

“Yes. Or it is also called *‘Kiev Pechersk Paterikon’*. This book, written in the 13th century, narrates about life and deeds of holy fathers of Pechersk. In turn it was based on the recordings of Pechersk monastery monk, Nestor the Chronicler, called *‘Hagiography...’* or for example his *‘Russian Primary Chronicle,’* which you should know from school.” Sensei made a pause and, looking at our young group, remarked good-naturedly: “Surely, in case you all did study at school and not just wasted time from beginning till end.”

“Why, yes, we do remember,” boasted Kostya. “I even memorized the date it was written.” And he declaimed, “1113rd to 1115th from the birth of Christ.”

The guys broke into smiles.

“Right!” remarked Sensei. “That is, it was written a certain time after real historical events had taken place and taking into consideration political situation of those days in the country as well as preferences and sympathies of the upper clergy.”

“Indeed!” said Victor mockingly. “It’s hard to find out who was right. Like we used to say among us, after hearing two witnesses on one and the same traffic accident you lose confidence in historians.”

We burst into laughter, and Kostya added some more fun, “That’s like when somebody asked Bernard Shaw after his speech: ‘What shall the history say about this?’ And he replied: ‘The history, sir, will lie as always.’”

“Well, don’t be so flat” responded Sensei to the guys’ laughter. “It is just when describing the past every person is guided first of all by his or her own personal considerations. These personal considerations depend on the person’s spirituality and personal interest, and that’s why it infringes objectivity. Give an assignment to describe the same event to ten people and you can bet that everyone shall communicate it in his own way. For example, a politician will describe it in such a way that seems favorable to him in the view of on-going events of that time. A physician will describe it from the medical standpoint. While an ordinary man will choose everyday point of view, specifying the elements he has

personal interest in. That is how a different history is written. Though, in every story you can catch the essential meaning of the on-going events. You ought to get at the root, as they say.”

“As the matter of fact, you are right,” agreed Nikolai Andreevich. “In many cases our view of the present-day history is one-sided indeed. Not to mention distant and almost forgotten past...”

“And considering that people, unfortunately, do not change or, rather, do not want to change...” uttered Sensei with an inflexion of sadness in his voice.

“...the history, therefore, repeats itself,” concluded his thought Nikolai Andreevich.

“Sad to say.”

Sensei looked pensively at the campfire. There was a short silence. As for us, we did not dare to meddle with our enquiries into the dialogue of the two ‘sages’.

“So, what did really happen a thousand years ago?” Nikolai Andreevich inquired animatedly.

“This is certainly a long story...”

“Well, we are not in a hurry,” replied Volodya for everyone, settling himself comfortably at his place and getting ready to listen.

“Well, since you are not in a hurry,” responded Sensei in the same tone, “then listen... Perhaps, the narration about the times, when Bodhisattva Agapit stayed in Russian lands, should begin with the story about Antony. Later you shall understand why...”

It was a warm summer evening. There reigned perfect silence around. The sea waves were inaudibly lapping on the

shore, leading us away with their monotonous melodious splashes into the time tunnel of the distant past, which, curiously enough, did not seem so distant as a matter of fact.

“... Before Antony was accepted to monkhood, he was called Antipa. He was born in Lyubech city of Chernigov in 983, five years prior to the baptism of Rus, in the times when Vladimir Svyatoslavich the Great ruled in the capital city of Kiev.”

“Is he, by chance, the one who was called the Fair Sun in Russian folk ballads?” Kostya asked.

“Yes, that is he, the grand-son of Grand Princess Olga and Grand Prince Igor,” specified Sensei and continued: “Antipa’s youth bechanced in chaotic times. It was right the time when the Old-Russian state was formed and Eastern-Slavic tribes united. Wars with neighboring countries were waged in the South and in the West. Besides, inner tensions, confrontation among various religions caused additional disturbance. At the same time, so-to-say by a decree from above, paganism has been replaced with Christian canons. Both parties even came to ‘fire and sword’ at that. In short, there was common chaos or, like it would be put nowadays, ‘disorders of the times of change’.”

“Well, as they say, one wouldn't wish it to the worst enemy to be born in the time of change,” said Volodya in a deep voice.

“Exactly. Though, Antipa somehow managed to...”

“Like all of us,” added Victor quietly.

“So, in general Antipa’s youth was quite a ‘lively’ one. What was happening around, to a large extent enabled him to

make efforts in sorting everything out not only with the exterior, but in the first place in sorting his own self out. And not simply sorting out, but sorting out thoughtfully. Many people believed in God in those days. And he felt that there is God. But how come there was so much discord going on? Why God admitted such evil? There was some kind of confrontation, unnecessary bloodshed going on. People suffered, their children suffered; diseases, poverty, and death were rife and rampant. Antipa had chances to hear missionaries of various religions. All of them taught of believing in their own God, worshipping Him and praying to Him. The paradox, however, was that they themselves lacked that pure faith, they were speaking about, and they did not perform what they demanded of others. Neither had Antipa trust in those, who came with sword, preaching of God. On the other hand, he was bothered with thoughts, why, if there was loving God, there was so much grief, so much blood senselessly spilt around? Why does God allow such great suffering?

“There were many questions, but, as usual among the swarming thoughts, there was not a single sensible answer. It was not until once he was intrigued by a story he heard from a stranger, who stayed overnight at his place. That stranger told him about the life of Jesus Christ. Antipa was stricken. For it turned out that people killed even the Son of God Himself. Why hadn't almighty God stopped those people? Why did not He intervene, while His own Son was suffering from the impious people, while His body was dying on a cross? But when Antipa understood that the point was in human choice,

in the choice of each individual before the face of God, he realized that the reason of the ongoing chaos was not in God, but in peoples themselves, including him.

“This thought so radically changed his personal views, that he began to look differently not only at the bygone outdated millennial events, but at the present as well. He sincerely fell in love with Christ, for He was congenial to him in sufferings. Indeed, Antipa sincerely and really fell in love with God and came to thinking about who he was before His face.

“Antipa was also amazed with the fact that there were people, who truly devoted themselves to God. For the first time he heard from the stranger about a holy place on the Mount Athos located in Greek soil. He learnt that there are living different people, not like everyone. That they abandon this worldly life and seclude themselves for the sake of God, for the sake of praying to Him for their salvation. They wear black clothes and give three vows of obedience, celibacy, and poverty. And these people are called ‘monks’.

“So, Antipa felt an urge to become a ‘monk’ and to be in an incessant prayer unto God. He did not know, however, neither how to get to that mountain in the strange land of Greece, nor how to pray to God properly so that to be heard by Him. That is when Antipa began to appeal to God with his simple, sincere words asking Him to give him a wise mentor, who would teach him a veritable prayer, leading to salvation. Such a strong desire he had, so persistently he thought about it, and so faithfully he asked God for it for many months and even years, that ultimately it came to pass the following.

“It happened in winter, at dawn of February the 12th in the old style (the Julian calendar), or on the 25th of February in the new style (the Gregorian calendar, which is used nowadays). That night he could not sleep, once again reflecting about God. He became so absorbed into his deep thought, that he started addressing to Him as a loving son to his own Father, begging Him, as he could, for a soul salvation prayer. He felt by intuition that God can only be asked about spiritual matters, not about perishable earthly ones. And he asked sincerely, with pure faith in soul. When Antipa deepened in his mental appeal to Him once again, an unnatural heat suddenly blazed up in his chest. The heat seemed to intensify every second. Ultimately it became so intense, that it was almost unbearable. Antipa dressed up hurriedly and went outside.

“It was slightly better out in the cold. It was snowing. The wind was cold and piercing. Antipa decided to find cover in a nearby haystack. Watching the raging elements from his shelter, experiencing great heat within his chest, Antipa prayed to God more sincerely. He was so imbued with the prayer that he forgot about the weather as well as the place and the time he was in. An extraordinary feeling of God’s nearness rushed into him. It was nearness of the very akin and close-to-heart Being. That was why his soul was warmed and he felt relieved.

“It was a daybreak already. The wind suddenly died down. Snowfall was over. The first light came through the leaden clouds on the horizon, enlivening dazzling white space around in a scintillating play. And that was when Antipa saw an

uncommon aged man not far from him, wearing black clothes. Grayish blond-brown hair and snow-white beard fringed his unusual face. A scarcely perceptible affable smile was upon his lips. And his extraordinary eyes, as if looking right into the man's soul, radiated deep concern and immutable kindness.

“The aged man approached, his feet stepping imperceptibly and silently over the snow. It was strange that Antipa could hear his affable speech, his mellifluous tuneful voice, although the elder moved not his lips. He stopped very close, and Antipa was able to sense fragrant delicate aroma, emanating from him. All of a sudden a bright ball of bluish white gradually emerged out of the elder's chest. It was of extraordinary purity and brightness. It did not blind or irritate eyes at that. Quite the opposite, it attracted his look with its soft glow and fascinating play of blue tints. Shining golden letters began to appear within this flow of pure light, transforming into one text. Antipa rather understood than saw what was written there, for at that instant the elder's melodic voice sounded inside his head, speaking the words of the soul salvation prayer:

‘My True Father! I set all my hopes only upon One You, and I ask You, my Lord, only for salvation of my soul. May Your Holy Will...’ That was the moment when Antipa felt so relieved and so tranquil as if through this prayer God Himself drew His attention to His child and stretched His helping hand to him.

“After proclaiming the prayer, the elder directed him to travel to Tsargrad...”

“Tsargrad?” Slava asked timidly, probably, not willing to interrupt Sensei on the one hand, but at the same time burning with curiosity. “Where’s that?”

“Well, it is nowadays Istanbul in Turkey, located on both sides of the Bosphorus Strait between Europe and Asia – the one that connects the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmara,” Sensei provided a full answer, perhaps, lest there should be any more geography enquiries.

“Looks like he sent him a long way,” Kostya put in. “Why did he need the Turks?”

“You are another one,” Andrew hushed at him displeased with Kostya’s meddling with his questions and disturbing such a fascinating story. “You were told that it was Tsargrad at that time.”

“A-a-ah, so were there Russians then?” Kostya didn’t stop questioning and tried to come to the root.

“No. It is just that in such a way those days the Russians called Constantinople, the capital of Byzantine Empire,” explained Sensei with patience.

“Constantinople?” exclaimed Kostya happily and seemingly in order to rehabilitate himself, chattered rapidly: “Was it by chance called after the emperor Constantine, who founded Christianity?”

“Exactly. After the Roman emperor Constantine.” But when Kostya was about to open his lips for another question, Sensei anticipated him: “After the Roman emperor, because this city became the capital of the Roman Empire since 330 A.D. and then of the Byzantine Empire from 395 up to 1453.

And in general it was founded in 659 B.C. and was called Byzantium.”

Having received such an irrefragable answer, Kostya grew quiet, especially because Andrew gave him a slight nudge to his side, thus granting him a clear signal to be silent.

Meanwhile Sensei continued telling his story: “Now, then, the elder ordered him to travel to Tsargrad and from there – to the Holy Mountain, where God should vouchsafe him to meet the One, Whom the very Holy Spirit veritably stays in. And that One shall be like the Lamp upon his path to God. Having said that, the elder disappeared. The wind returned. The sky became clouded, and it started snowing heavily again. However, Antipa did not pay attention to the raging elements any more. He was happy and determined to fulfil the elder’s behest, whose affable face became imprinted in his memory for the rest of his life. This vision became the key to his whole further destiny. It can be said that starting from this moment, the moment of Antipa’s personal choice, his life changed dramatically.

“This gave Antipa an unusual lift, and he was above himself during the whole week, incessantly repeating the prayer given to him by the elder. It appeared as if God Himself was there beside him and ineffably filled Antipa’s soul with joy by His presence. It was during these days that a new peerless feeling towards God arouse within Antipa. That was the first time when Antipa actually realized what the true divine love is. This feeling was incomparable to anything of Antipa’s previous thoughts about God, naive comparison with human emotions, existing among people. This was something

much higher, that cannot be described in human language. This was the Love, which thrilled his soul with delight, being unearthly raptured.

“But in exactly seven days from unforgettable vision, this extraordinary sensation of the Presence disappeared. And only pleasant memories of that truly divine feeling remained. Antipa did not hesitate to equip himself and start on his long journey, being not quite aware which way to go. But as the saying goes, you can get anywhere if you know how to use your tongue. Antipa’s one helped him reach Tsargrad. The path was not all sunshine and roses. However, incessantly repeating the soul salvation prayer he had heard from the elder, Antipa felt that God Himself was helping him. Being saved by a miracle from dangers of his adventure, at the same time Antipa was very lucky to meet good fellow travelers as well as kind people, who showed him the right way, gave him contribution and temporary lodging or shelter for the night.

“Having finally reached Tsargrad, that is, Constantinople, Antipa roamed around the capital for a long time. Although the city was nice, everything was foreign to him: foreign language, foreign people, foreign customs. He had to spend not a day there before he met a companion for the Athos.”

At that point Volodya give a polite cough and uttered: “I heard of the Athos. But, frankly, I have no idea where it is,” and stretching his lips into an awkward smile, he added: “Not a military ‘hot zone’ on this planet for sure.”

“It sure isn’t,” agreed Sensei with a smile and began explaining. “If you glance at the modern map, you will find that the Athos is located in Greece. It is a narrow mountainous

peninsula, the easternmost leg of the larger Chalcidice peninsula in the Aegean Sea to be more precise. It ends with mount Athos, being a little more than 2 kilometers high. It is this mount that gave the name to the peninsula.”

“Well, looks like we all certainly have big knowledge gaps in geography,” smiled Victor.

“That’s all right. Let’s bridge them, since they are ‘big’,” Sensei said good-naturedly and continued narrating. “By the time Antipa reached the Athos, it had already been recognized as an independent monastic state, formally subordinating to Byzantine emperor in terms of administrative division. In fact, however, there was power of the Protos, a widely distinguished elder. Each year he was chosen to rule from the monasteries of that place. There already stood such monasteries as Great Lavra, Protaton, Moni-Iviron. But Antipa was not accepted in any of them.

“So, following the advice of an old monk, Antipa settled down in one of the caves, located in a retired spot of the South-Western part of the peninsula. It is noteworthy that those two years he spent in the cave, despite scarcity of food, were among his best years in the Athos. He was happy to have finally reached the Athos, as the elder had told him in his vision. He was happy to have an opportunity to pray to God by the prayer given to him in the vision, to live for it, and to be one on one with Him amid that magnificent nature. In the daytime he visited monastic temples, learned the new language as well as the monks’ way of living. While in the evenings he prayed diligently, often seeing off a sunset with the prayer and meeting an early sunrise. It was only two years

later that Antipa was accepted a hegumen of one of the monasteries and was professed as a monk, being baptized Antony, in honor of Venerable Anthony the Great, in Egypt, who had led selfless life, solely living in caves for a long time.

“Antony mistook the hegumen of this monastery for the ‘Lamp,’ the elder had told him in his vision. In turn the hegumen, as ought to be done by the one being in holy orders, began teaching Antony of the monastic life. In a few years Antony managed to reach such a spiritual progress, so ‘devoted himself to acting in virtues’ that many people ‘made spiritual use of him’. Even the monks were amazed at such a rapid strengthening of his spirit and will. The hegumen had a vision that Antony would participate in the rise of Christianity in Rus and that Antony was destined to prepare the Abode for the very Holy Spirit. The hegumen considered it a sign and sent him hurriedly to Rus, to the city of Kiev.

“That time Antony was about thirty. After reaching Kiev Antony visited monasteries being built by Greek monks, who came along with Metropolitan Michael for Baptizing of Rus. However, Antony did not want to stay in any of those monasteries. So he walked around mountainous environs. Ultimately he found a small cave, dug by Varangians in the past, and he settled down in it. But he did not live for long there. As soon as Svyatopolk came into power after Vladimir’s death, bloodshed and persecution started again. Antony returned to the Athos, where in diligent prayers he reached a great age.

“Although Antony did live according to the monastery order, still he had a special holiday in his spiritual zeal. He

noticed that each year on the day of that memorable vision of the distinctive elder, starting from the very early morning he felt an unusual fit of energy. The feeling of the very spiritual lift, he experienced after the vision, returned to him anew. It remained for a week and then passed away again. So, Antony began to perceive these days as a special feast for his soul. During this week he endeavored to secluding himself, fasting, and praying to God with even greater diligence. The result was astounding. This extraordinary feeling of inspiration increased manifold and grew stronger year after year.

“Comprehending ecclesiastical writings afterwards, Antony was more frequently coming to the conclusion that in the memorable vision he had seen Archangel Gabriel himself, the proclaimer of joy and salvation, harbinger and servant of God's omnipotence of miracles and God's mysteries, – only in a bit unconventional to the ecclesiastical notion appearance.

“The main events in Antony's spiritual life, however, began when he was past sixty. Once there was a rumor among the fraternity that their monastery was to be visited shortly by a certain mysterious persona. And considering the elders' instructions, they were preparing for a visit of an important spiritual guest indeed. As Antony related afterwards to Agapit himself, he had thought then that arrival of some incredibly authoritative spiritual elder had been expected. Thus, it was such an amazement for him to see – instead of an elder – a good-looking fair-haired young man. Perhaps, the only unusual notion about him were his keen eyes, shining beyond his years with some profound wisdom and inspired glitter. However, Antony was even more astonished with the

reverence and deep respect that some of the elders of the Athos showed to this young man. He could not realize why his sojourn at that place was covered with some sort of veil of impenetrable mystery. Who was he to have been paid so many compliments and so much attention? He did not seem to be a monk, although he had been leading such spiritual talks, to which even their wise leaders listened to with delight. What was more, that guy turned to be quite an enlightened man. He had a perfect command of several languages. Besides, Antony was pleasantly surprised that this respectable guest was a Russian by birth and, as it turned out later, he knew Kiev and its surroundings well. And that young man's name was Agapit.

“Even when Antony was introduced to him personally, he was unable to get used to the fellow's simple manner of speaking to him – such an ease despite all the importance of that person for the Athos and all the deep respect that the elders showed to the young man. But, perhaps, the most striking was the simplicity and lucidity with which Agapit explained wisdom of holy fathers. As for his interpreting of the Teachings of Jesus, Antony could listen to him for hours, for Agapit spoke so simply and clearly, using such examples and in such detail, as if he had been a witness to those events of millennial remoteness. And those stories urged Antony to read available ecclesiastical writings again and again.

“During the time that Agapit stayed at the Athos, Antony befriended with him. In spite of his youth, Agapit had quite a store of knowledge, including knowledge of medicine. And he imparted some of this knowledge to Antony. Agapit was also

well up, speaking our language, in physics, chemistry, cognition of natural phenomena, as well as in human studies – philosophy, politics, religion. It was a pleasure to talk to him on various matters. And these conversations left some inexplicable pleasant feeling in one's soul.

“Antony became friends with Agapit despite considerable disparity in age. And in this friendship Antony discovered entirely new outstanding Personality of Agapit when he began to initiate him into secrets of the great science of ‘the White Lotus Art’. It was by word of Agapit that Antony first learnt about the previous human race of Alt-Land, about the underground Temple of Lotus built during those times on the territory of Kiev soil, and about the burden that Jesus had given to Andrew the First-Called for that place. Many a secret and much a knowledge did Agapit impart to him.

“After a time they parted. Agapit was to go to the capital of Byzantium and to the East from there. But he promised Antony that he would see him again and ‘foretold’ their meeting on Kiev's soil, in the place marked in the past times of Alt-Land.”

“Is there really a marked place there?” inquired Kostya, evidently willing to hear continuation.

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

“Andrew the First-Called?!” Andrew roused himself, as if having heard this name only now.

“And who is he?” Ruslan asked lazily scratching his side.

Sensei smiled looking at him and pronounced: “Andrew is one of the closest disciples of Jesus. He was among the first

ones, whom Jesus accepted as disciples, while preaching in Palestine.”

“Hmm..., is there a Gospel of Andrew the First-Called?” asked Nikolai Andreevich with surprise. “I’ve read the Bible and heard about Andrew. As for his gospel ... I don’t recollect. Maybe this book was not included in the Bible? There is now – how much – four, five Gospels, isn’t it?”

“Four,” answered Sensei and after a silence added: “Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Although they were all written by..,” but leaving it unsaid, he continued: “Indeed, there is no Gospel of Andrew the First-Called in the Bible. Not all gospels were included in the Bible, but only those that were selected by the emperor Constantine and his assistants to fulfil tasks posed before them. The remaining gospels were simply rejected because they interpreted matters by no means convenient and beneficial to them. And even the selected ones were fairly edited according to the situation of those times and to claiming Christianity as a state religion.

“Since 364, when the ‘New Testament’ was approved as such, and till the date when the Bible was first published, the text also had been edited numerous times. Plus inaccuracies in translation played their part. You know, the Bible had been written in Hebrew, with an insignificant part in Aramaic, while the ‘New Testament’ was in Greek. So, between the first printed book, published in 1455, and the one, which had been edited in 364, there lays a world of difference. Plus corrections that were made further. As a result we have now what we have. Nonetheless, much valuable and needed for people information has reached our times,” emphasized

Sensei. “And again, speaking of gospels, besides those canonized by church, there are dozens of apocryphal gospels.”

Ruslan knitted his brows and asked in a businesslike tone: “What is apo... apo... well, that... critics?”

“Apocrypha are works of literature that were not accepted by church or by priesthood as holy books. In general the word ‘apocrypha’ originates from Greek ‘apokryhos,’ which means ‘mysterious,’ ‘secret’. And primarily it was attributed to works of a Christian group, who called themselves the Gnostics, and who tried to keep their teachings in secret.”

“Right,” nodded Nikolai Andreevich. “By the way, I’ve read that an entire library of Christian Gnostics’ writings was found in 1946 in the South of Egypt.”

“Absolutely correct,” confirmed Sensei. “Among other works of literature there were found Gospels of Thomas, of Philip, of Truth, the Apocryphal writing of John. And some time earlier there had been found on papyri in Egypt some abstracts of unknown gospels written in different versions...”

“Well, what an surprise for priests!” giggled Eugene. “These bookies ain’t gotten accepted, but they just keep finding them. Such a real trooble with all this ancient ‘pulp literature.’”

Sensei and the guys smiled.

“The problem is the apocrypha are divided into ‘allowable’ and so-called ‘forbidden’. The ‘forbidden’ ones were surely sought to be eliminated. By the way, the first official list of ‘forbidden’ books was made in Eastern Roman empire in the 5th century A.D. Naturally, after such a ‘vandalism’ the descendants were left merely with some book titles and

quotations, cited in works of Christian writers of the 2-4 centuries, who had been arguing with those books... Though, everything goes as always,” Sensei shrugged his shoulders.

“Yes, that’s sad,” murmured Nikolai Andreevich. “But it’s the history of mankind. Why was it necessary to destroy it? The book could lay for the time being. Let the descendants make unbiased judgment.”

“You see, the matter is,” Sensei began explaining: “some of these books were valuable indeed, because they reflected true Teaching of Jesus in the form, initially given by him. Therefore, they left indifferent not a single human soul, because the true Teaching of Jesus enabled people to become free from any and all fears of this world. They started to realize that body is perishable; soul is immortal. People ceased being hostages and slaves of material world illusions of being. They understood that only God is above them. They realized how short life is and how temporary the conditions are, which their present body is constrained in. They knew that this life, howsoever long it may seem – is but one instant, in which their soul remains. They became aware that any worldly power, whether those of politics or religious organizations, is limited to power over bodies only. These rulers worship their own ‘god,’ who was given power on the Earth, over its matter, but not over soul. For soul belongs only to the true One God. And the first followers of Jesus, who professed His Teaching, – not a religion, which it became later – they lost fear of this life. They began to feel and understand that God is very near to them, closer and dearer than anyone, and that He is eternal... Such a true freedom of

people terribly frightened authorities. Therefore, the latter began collecting and painstakingly revising written sources of Jesus' Teaching available at that time. Much was destroyed after selecting the information necessary for making of a new religion, propagated already by authorities, what they call it, 'top-down'.

"Therefore, many written sources, containing true words of Jesus, did not fit in the collections of 'new ideology for masses'. But in spite of all deliberate omissions, contrivances, and egoistic ambitions of people, being at power on the upper strata of religion at different times, these written sources have been existing, and they still exist!

"Now then, in the Gospel of the very Andrew the First-Called it is written that since Pontius Pilate's people had saved Jesus after crucifixion, Jesus spoke to Pontius Pilate. It was owing to Pontius Pilate's appeal that Jesus decided to leave for the East. Before the departure he distributed regions among the apostles, where they were to go and preach the Teaching."

"Weren't they drawing lots of some sort, who goes where," remarked Nikolai Andreevich.

"No, there were no lots as such. That is a guesswork of people. Apostles... By the way, the word 'apostols' is translated as 'messenger' from Greek. So, disciples-messengers of Jesus were very different, and of course they varied one from another in terms of their spiritual progress. Jesus allocated various regions with corresponding peoples and tribes among the messengers on the basis of their spiritual maturity. Those, who were somewhat stronger, received more

difficult regions or those of especial importance for further spiritual awakening of mankind. Those who were somewhat weaker received less difficult ‘areas’. In general everyone was assigned a burden within one’s power...”

Sensei stopped for a while and then pronounced: “Too significant it was for many human souls both at that time and in the future that the spreading of this Teaching should be trusted to a simple lot of human mind...”

“He enjoined Andrew, as one of the strong apprentices, to visit with homily Thrace, Scythia, Sarmatia. But most importantly to reach the Borysthenes mountains and lay blessings upon those lands, where the Holy Spirit shall condescend in a thousand years’ time, establishing His Abode there. Jesus gave Andrew lotus seeds and enjoined him to lay this burden into that land as a gift for the Holy Spirit. His words became a rebus, set by Jesus, for Andrew as well as for those, who came across this description afterwards. Few realized why Jesus had given him exactly the lotus seeds, even if those seeds were merely a symbol.”

“And, really, why?” asked Andrew with surprise.

But Sensei only smiled enigmatically and evading direct answer, said: “Any seed is first of all... well, to make it more clear for you, let’s put it figuratively: it is a ‘microchip’ which has vast memory. It is able to carry not only the matrix of a future plant, but also a huge amount of other information. I’ll tell you more about it some time later. In addition to all that, those seeds happened to be in the hands of Jesus himself – the Son of God. Plus, those were the seeds of lotus, germinating

ability of which lasts for millennia... Hence, draw your conclusions.”

Sensei became silent. And we just sat there, looking at him, and trying to latch, with those little wits of ours, on the ‘conclusions’ about what exactly was there so special about that event. Andrew, apparently trying to make ends meet in his mind full of confusing questions, enquired: “How was Andrew the First-Called able to find a place Jesus had told him about?”

“Easily,” said Sensei simply. “In the ‘good news,’ or, speaking Greek, in euangelion, Andrew described not only the true life of Jesus, but also his journey during the fulfilment of his mission. It is there that he mentions that after reaching the Borysthenes (the Dnieper river was called the Borysthenes at that time), Andrew recognized this place right away. For it turned out that Jesus had described it with high precision. It seemed that Jesus was well aware of those mountains, though He had never mentioned to have been there.”

“Did He really happen to be there?” inquired Yura.

“He is the Son of God, you know,” answered Sensei with a smile. “And God is everywhere.” After a pause he continued his narration: “After all, the Gospel of Andrew the First-Called was disallowed, because it by no means fit in making of the new religion. There were generally two reasons for that. Firstly, the Gospel was too freedom-loving and upright, for there were true words of Jesus in it, so to say, from his own lips. Besides, Jesus’ conveyance of his Teaching was too simple, wise, and easy to understand. Andrew also described many details of his Teacher’s real life such as that in his youth

Jesus had been in the East, which, again, did not fit in churchly dogmas. In addition to that, mentioning of the lotus seed completely nonplussed ‘their majesties censors’. For it gave a scent of such religions as Buddhism and Hinduism. Nobody wanted to admix such a clear foreign symbolism to their religion. So it became another stumbling block, a reason for argues and discord among those, who decided in which ‘tones’ the religion’s ideology was to be sustained. That is why the Gospel of Andrew the First-Called was taken away, so to say ‘out of sight’.

“Of course, there were versions of Andrew’s the First-Called Gospel passing among various early Christian groups, but they were mostly written by followers of Andrew the First-Called about the Teaching of Jesus.”

“What happened to the Gospel of Andrew the First-Called? Was it destroyed?” asked Andrew.

“Well, they tried, of course,” Sensei chuckled seeming to recall some curious event. “But as it is said such things can neither be drawn in water nor burnt in fire, even if human foolishness desires it very much... But these are merely the petty details of life... Many years after Andrew the First-Called had accomplished his Teacher’s request, the words of Jesus came true. A city of Kiev sprang up in that place – the ‘mother of Russian cities’, the capital and cradle of Slavs unification in Kievan Rus. As for the place, where Andrew the First-Called ‘laid’ the lotus seeds, the Holy Spirit himself descended into a human body and established his Abode there.”

“What do you mean by ‘the Holy Spirit descended into a human body’?” asked Kostya.

“Well, simply speaking, the leader of Shambala came in a body of Agapit.”

“The leader of Shambala himself?” repeated Andrew with amazement.

Sensei smiled.

“Yes. He has to visit human world, so-to-say, duty-bound, at least once in twelve thousand years. While during significant events for mankind even more frequently, almost once in every thousand years, especially at the beginning and concluding stages of another civilization.”

Kostya only opened his mouth to ask something, when Sensei, looking at him, anticipated with an answer: “‘Civilization’ is meant here from the point of view of Shambala... But perhaps we deviated from the subject a little. Let us return to those events that took place one thousand years after Jesus... Several years after Agapit had left the Athos, the hegumen had another advice from God. In his vision there came Archangel Gabriel himself and enjoined him to send Antony to Rus. It was in 1051.

“Upon arriving that time, Antony did not visit Christian monasteries; although in any of them they would gladly offer shelter to a respectable elder from the Mount Athos. Antony purposefully came to the place, which he had accidentally stayed at, visiting Kiev the first time, and which had been indicated by Agapit before his departure. He settled down on a hill near Dnieper in the same cave. And began to lead a solitary life, waiting for Agapit and abiding in incessant

prayers unto God, especially the one, which had been leading him from his youth up. Although he was often in need of food and worked physically every day, deepening the cave; yet he was really happy again. For he was one on one with God as earlier in his remote youth, when he had been living in the caves of the Athos.

“Local villagers soon got to know about him. Antony become famous among them for what Agapit had taught him at the Athos – his gift of sagacity, miracle-working, healing, and praying. People began coming to him: one for treatment, another for blessing, while the other with a will to stay with him, gaining in spiritual exploits. So, by the time Agapit arrived, besides Anthony there were several inhabitants living in the cave, who had been made monks at their instance by the elder. By that time they enlarged and deepened the cave in joint efforts and made monastic cells for themselves.

“Antony greeted his friend from way back with great joy. Seeing such respectable regard of the elder for Agapit, the rest of the fraternity treated him with the same distinction. Agapit kept surprising Antony by his mysterious and in many respects enigmatic personality. When Agapit came to Kiev Antony witnessed his secret meeting with Yaroslav the Wise himself. Agapit passed four valuable handwritten books and three manuscripts for his ‘library’. Three of those books were encrusted with precious stones. While the fourth one, though it looked modest, evidently was very ancient. Antony was astounded. Every book was a real masterpiece and was worth a whole fortune. As for the manuscripts... Even one manuscript in those days was valued at a fabulous price. To

afford such a luxurious and truly royal gift, only a person of at least 'blue royal blood' could do that. Not only this astonished Antony then. Above all was the fact that Agapit and Yaroslav were freely conversing with each other! Yaroslav talked to him in such a way as if he had known Agapit well, like they were good old friends, and that was despite considerable difference in age and Yaroslav's high grand-prince standing.

"Following that memorable meeting, amazed at what he had seen, Antony hastened to propose Agapit to become the head of the fraternity, the elder of which he was. However, Agapit was willing to leave everything the way it was and become a simple monk. He asked Antony to keep his meeting with Yaroslav a secret. And wished to take monastic rank, so that not to stand out among the rest of the fraternity."

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

Sensei looked fixedly at him and distinctively pronounced: "Any power for a Bodhisattva is but an empty word. A Bodhisattva serves only God. Unlike humans he knows, what is being 'here' and what is being 'there'."

Kostya became a bit confused and apologetically murmured: "Well, I did not mean it in that way... I meant..." at that point he has evidently found an appropriate argument, "I mean, one ought to rest sometimes with all that work. As far as I know simple monks worked like beavers in those days."

Sensei answered him: "For a Bodhisattva there is no rest as such from human point of view. He knows the meaning of time and is able to appreciate it. Agapit was an influential and

strong personality, of course. However, he consciously escaped the power, rule over the fraternity, and devoted his full spare time to real aid to people. By the way, later on when the number of the fraternity grew, Antony passed governing to Barlaam and became a simple monk by the example of Agapit.”

“What kind of help did Agapit render to people? Healing?” inquired Volodya.

“Yes, besides his other merits, Agapit was a good practitioner of medicine. His heartfelt, caring attitude towards his patients produced unprecedented fame and respect among people, quite afar from Kiev too, although Agapit practically never quit the monastery territory. He became the most renowned physician of the 11th century. People called him ‘the Healer from God’. He cured such grave diseases, which nobody of then famous physicians agreed to treat. For instance, take such historically known fact, when Agapit cured dying Chernigov prince Vladimir Vsevolodovich Monomakh. A physician surnamed the Armenian, who was considered the best physician of that time among noble people, could not help the prince in any way. While for Agapit it was enough to put Vladimir Monomakh on his legs in a few short days by passing a ‘miracle potion’ prepared with a prayer via the prince’s messenger. Later on the prince came to Pechersk monastery in order to return kindness to Agapit and brought many expensive gifts and much gold with him. But Agapit refused everything both from the prince himself as well as from the boyar he sent afterwards on his behalf. It was because Agapit cured both common people and

noble ones with equal diligence and without return. That is why they called him Agapit the Unmercenary Healer. Naturally it caused conventional human envy, neighboring with malice, among such physicians as the Armenian. However, as to the Armenian personally, he ultimately realized, *Who* Agapit actually was. And it was owing to this that he became a monk of Pechersk monastery afterwards.”

“You don't say! He didn't even take money for treatment?!” Kostya was surprised again. “But how did Agapit live?”

“Modestly. In spiritual exploit.” And smiling Sensei added: “His cell caused pity even among thieves. For the single whatsoever precious object there was Agapit himself, his experience, and his knowledge.”

“But what did he live on? What did he eat? Thin air?”

Sensei laughed.

“No. He did not eat himself for sure.”

“It's not long to... you know, kick up one's heels.”

“Well, sooner or later each of us will kick up his heels,” either jokingly or seriously said Sensei. “But the point is not in that.”

“Ahem, I see that... But he did not steal that money, he earned it honestly. Besides, people brought it to him on their own will. Why didn't he take it?”

“You see, the point is that Agapit taught the monks the true service to God. He said that ‘gold’ and ‘monk’ are incompatible entities. No man can serve two masters at once: he serves either God or earthly reaches, that is, a devil. No third option given. A monk truly expects a reward only from

God in that world, not here from people. *Gold indeed is litter for soul and temptation for thoughts. It is filth, which many thirst for, but which in truth is a shadowy delusion. The true value for a monk is in sincere prayer for his soul. It is not satiety of a belly and health of a body that one needs to be concerned about. For whatever food you eat, sooner or later you will be hungry. And whatever health you've got, sooner or later your flesh will die. While the soul is eternal. And only it is worthy of a true concern.* As Agapit used to say, a monk prays for all people at his heartfelt will, but the whole point of monkhood is to serve God and by a prayer to obtain salvation of your own soul from Him.”

Sensei stopped, and there reigned silence. But soon it was interrupted by Victor's thoughtful voice: “Not anyone is able to do that...”

But then his reasoning was interrupted by Kostya's ‘inferences’: “So, Agapit was, in modern language, a folk healer?”

Sensei answered to that with ironical smile: “Well, if we take modern language, then Agapit was an academician, rather. As I've mentioned earlier, he mastered not only medicine, but also other disciplines. He knew several languages and easily read original treatises of antique Roman authors. He translated books into the Slavonic language. For the ‘library’ of Yaroslav the Wise he translated not only books from the East, but also ancient Egyptian manuscripts.

“Later on Agapit also helped... or, rather, consulted Svyatoslav, who was compiling ‘*The Collection of the year 1073*,’ where beside encyclopaedic articles there was medical

data described in detail. Particularly, methods of illnesses recognition, various recommendations on preparation and usage of medicinal plants, as well as knowledge on human physiology and anatomy. This book was used as a learning textbook for a good while afterwards.

“Agapit, of course, trained monks to culture and thirst for knowledge as well. He imparted medical knowledge to some of them, while helped the others in coping with books in their free time. In passing, it was subsequently legitimated by a cloistral rule, and book-reading in spare time became obligatory for monks. It was on his initiative that a book-collection of Kiev Pechersk Monastery was created.”

“Book-collection?” Ruslan repeated the word, which sounded so antique.

“Yes. A library, the way we say.”

“A-ah...”

“So, Agapit helped some of the talented monks to master medical treatment,” Sensei continued his narration. “The learning was based on special prayers, uttered in a particular state of consciousness, as a rule over food or liquid. Owing to which, for instance, that liquid was filled with force, and used as a remedy afterwards, given to the sick for intake or for external use. Simply speaking, Agapit’ disciples learnt not only the ways of altering physical characteristics of liquids, but also their molecule structure, overlaying the necessary information. Naturally, they were not aware to such a nicety of the process, which took place in molecule microcosm of liquid structures, as well as of how it exactly influenced the macroobject. But they did not really need to know all that.

The monks simply used general postulates of the knowledge, given to them by Agapit, – the same way, for example, as we use electricity nowadays. The electric power is exploited by people every day; however, thus far nobody really knows what it is in fact.

“For instance, monk Damian, who had received training from Agapit, could treat people well, especially children, by anointing oil.”

“By what?” asked Slavik, who seemed to have not caught what Sensei said.

“By anointing oil.”

“What is it?”

“It’s olive lamp-oil. Christians even have an entire ceremony, the so-called Anointing of the Sick – a sacrament administered by seven priests, or if there is no such possibility – by one priest, over a sick person. Otherwise it is also called the Unction of the Sick. The essence of it again is in reciting of certain prayers over the sick and anointing this person with consecrated oil. And that is done seven times.”

“Why exactly seven priests and seven times?” asked Andrew.

“That is accounted for by spiritual force, the forces of the seven Archangels, who are mediators between God and peoples. Simply speaking, of the seven Bodhisattvas... As for using anointing oil in such a way, actually it is a very ancient way of treating the sick. So far it is based on the knowledge I’ve mentioned to you – man’s capabilities of influencing environment through liquid. That is why you can find similar

rites in various religions and ritual ceremonies of the peoples of the world.”

“Eh,” sighed Nikolai Andreevich. “People are gradually losing gist, leaving only its exterior form.”

“Unfortunately,” uttered Sensei. “There were times when people knew what they were doing. Now they only imitate exterior form of that knowledge. Take one of the seven sacraments of Christianity, the Baptism, which signifies communion of a man with this religion. Nowadays it is a solemn, decompound ceremony, the major action of which is the triple submerging of a person in consecrated water, reciting prayers, anointing with oil and chrism. However, even those, who administer this rite, don’t know what an great power stands behind this whole exterior action. Even the believers in fact underestimate and are not fully aware of the true effect of this water.” And after a short silence he added: “The rite of ablution of the newborn, by the way, appeared in Christianity not right away, but much later, along with the development and improvement of Christian ceremonies.

“The origins of Baptism throw an accent back onto pre-Christian cults. Such water rites were conducted in many religions of the ancient world, which in turn were based on popular believes of their ancestors about the ‘cleansing’ power of water. But the purport of the Baptism practice, which was given to people initially, lies deeper, beyond the bounds of water element, which people see in exterior.”

“Interesting! What is its purport, I wonder?” asked Nikolai Andreevich quickly, intrigued with the topic of conversation as much as we were.

“The purport of genuine Baptism practice is immersion of a man in the depths of his own consciousness down to the soul. The word ‘baptism’ in Greek sounds like ‘vaptisis,’ which means ‘immersion’. Do you remember, I’ve mentioned to you this morning immersion practice of yogis called ‘Pranayama’? To a modern view these two may seem absolutely different practices, between which people drew a chasm by their ambitions. But the fact is that Baptism and Pranayama as well as a number of other practices and rites, relating to water, are but a distant echo of the true knowledge and practices that had been adopted by people themselves to vast masses. Primordial knowledge was based on practices that altered person’s state of consciousness and led him onto a certain frequency, which enabled him to grow spiritually and come to God as a mature being. In other words, per se, owing to these practices this person got to know the true reality. He knew what he was doing and where he was going.

“Long time ago the practice of ‘immersion’ was given to people and was intended for those, who already achieved a certain level of spiritual development. Owing to this practice man entered into an altered state of consciousness and acquired ability to immerse in his most secret depths, where he was able to unite with God. Naturally, there was no place for any Animal nature, since it was all about the essence of the Soul. And this practice indeed gave secrets of knowledge, the very knowledge that cannot be put into words, for it was obtained from a particle of God – the omniscient Soul.”

“Yes, we’ve lost much valuable in time,” Nikolai Andreevich remarked sadly. “Often we do not understand at

all what we do and why we do it. We attribute everything to traditions, soothing ourselves that this is the way it's been done from old, that we are paying homage to our ancestors, allegedly.”

Sensei smiled ironically and uttered: “Well, when you get down to it, it is better than nothing at all and complete oblivion. Because sooner or later there will be those who shall get at the roots of things.”

“I did not pay attention to such matters previously,” Nikolai Andreevich said. “But now as you were speaking about Baptism, I recalled a conversation with one of my long-time former patients. He is a believer, a devotee so-to-say, taking every word of Church literally. Anyway, during one of our talks he related the ideology of the Office of Christian Baptism. I am christened myself, though in childhood. But that was the first time I heard such a thing. According to this ideology, only the one, who received baptism, and no one else, is cleansed from the original sin, connected with the very fact of human birth. That it is only after baptism, that man becomes a member of the church and communes to its blessings, which is Everlasting life. Before baptism, man allegedly bears a diabolical seal, that is, he is not detached from satanic nature. And after administration of such sacrament, Satan is banished from this man's heart and remains in the external towards the person forever. And that owing to the Baptism a man is able to free himself from all the sins and abstain from backsliding to it in what follows. Can it really be so?”

“No, of course not. Undoubtedly, Baptism, has force. But for an ordinary person it is but an impetus towards his spiritual awakening. However, it does not rid him of his Animal nature, which is named ‘satan’ in Christianity. Man remains in Animal body. Mind of man – is Animal’s mind. And there is no way to throw that away into the exterior or to get rid of it completely. Assuming like that is equivalent to reasoning like a person, who is driving a car and tries to convince himself that he is just flying.

“Even Bodhisattvas, when being born in a human body, are liable to trials of Animal nature and all the human temptations. For instance, take Jesus, God’s Son, born in a human body. He did not escape this lot. For forty days did he have to struggle with ‘satan,’ that is, simply speaking, he underwent his personal Armageddon. He subdued Animal’s mind to his Spiritual Nature, ‘chaining up’ his Animal nature. And even despite that it had been ‘barking’ and ‘whining’ for the whole life, making itself felt. Because even though Jesus was the Great Soul, still he was in a human body. And there is no escaping it. Such is the Law. Such is the human nature.”

Kostya uttered to this, smiling: “I recall myself being baptized in the middle school. The priest asked us something, and we answered all together. Then he told us to turn to the West, blow and spit on satan with all might. This I remembered well, because I gathered all my saliva and did my best...”

We laughed, and Sensei explained: “This was one of the Baptism rituals – banning of evil spirits and renunciation of satan.”

“Well, I do understand that,” smiled Kostya, imitating Nikolai Andreevich’s reasoning. “But why did we need to spit?”

“By this spittle, as it is believed, a Christian shows that he is not afraid of satan and his crafty designs, because God gives this person the necessary protection,” explained Sensei. “In short, man shows his utter contempt for satan.”

“Why, such a queer culture – sheer Middle Ages,” chuckled Kostya.

“Culture has nothing to do with it. People do not change, you know. They remain the same like in the past.”

“And why did we turn to the West?”

“The thing is that the Orthodox Eastern Church has always associated the West with forces, opposing God. When a person turns to the West during this ritual, as churchmen believe, the baptized renounces satan directly, declaring it to him, so-to-say right in the ‘face’. After that the person turns to the altar on the East. This side is considered to be linking man to God.”

“Well, taking into account that Shambala is located somewhere there, they may be right,” remarked Volodya, and after a pause said in a bass: “And about the West, perhaps, as well.”

“The priest used to say prayers in Old Church Slavonic,” Kostya went into reminiscences. “Although half of what he said was obscure. Then he aspersed us with water, oiled us with something. Ah! He also sheared locks from our hair, and we wrapped them in wax cookies and dipped them in water. Why should it be so complicated, anyway?”

“You’ll understand when you grow up,” Victor put in.

Sensei smiled with a tinge of sadness and uttered: “You see, even such a rite is merely a show for some, and life rethinking for others.”

Kostya grew quiet after these words, and Nikolai Andreevich seized an opportunity to address Sensei with a story about his patient.

“So, during that conversation, he mentioned that only the baptized person will go to heaven, while the unbaptized one will never get there. That other sacraments have no effect on the unbaptized. Such person supposedly must neither be prayed for, nor commemorated during his life as well as after his death. He must not be even given a requiem service. And after baptism, allegedly, all these are allowed to be made. Looks like an unbaptized person does not exist for the Church at all?”

Sensei listened to Nikolai Andreevich attentively and then softly replied: “How shall I put it?.. For the church of this particular religion, perhaps, he does not exist. But for God – all people are His children! Starting from the eighth day, right after soul settles in a human body, he becomes His ‘child,’ a little human – with a small letter. But it is only up to the person himself – his will and his choice – that he can become a Human from the capital letter and come to God as a mature creation.”

“Does man’s soul settle in the body on the eighth day?” asked Ruslan.

“Yes.”

“And before that... What is that child before that?”

“Just a living organism, such as any other little animal,” replied Sensei. “And again, regarding this question we encounter that the knowledge was lost, and only mere traditions remain from times immemorial. By the way, echoes of the knowledge that soul comes on the eighth day from birth has been kept in Rus up till now. The child’s name was often given depending on the saint being honored on the eighth day of child’s life. And, by the way, earlier it was not the birth day that was celebrated, but the name day – the memory day of the saint, in honor of whom this person was named, – lest the person should glorify his pride, yet remember why people come to this world and whose name he bears... On the whole the tradition of giving a name to a child goes back to the Old Testament times...”

“It looks like nowadays we celebrate the birth of our Animal nature?!” Eugene made a discovery for himself. “So, now I get it why people stuff themselves and drink so much on their birthdays, like piglets. And they want presents – large and expensive too! So that’s where all our piggish essence reveals!”

Everyone laughed.

“No, we ought to abandon these scandalous practices,” continued the guy. “That’s it, Stas, next birthday I’ll come a week later and bring no gifts with me, except for a sole candle. For presents only harm thy soul, whilst feeding your Animal more and more, year by year awaking the appetite of a big swine...”

Stas did not hesitate to respond with a more constructive suggestion regarding Eugene’s birthday. His friend

immediately replied him with a joke. And their clownery creased up laughing the whole party. Later, when everyone calmed down, Nikolai Andreevich continued his reflections aloud.

“Indeed, there’re mere formalities and no knowledge anywhere you look at. That’s it, our so called ‘progress’... Now, I do understand, for example, from psychological viewpoint that baptism – if it is an adult who is christened – helps him gain self-confidence, asserts himself in a sense, protects him at least in such a way from his own fears. It turns him to the good, obliges to live according to the universal moral criteria. That’s all understandable. But why do they separate the ones christened and ones not-christened so categorically? What if a person is born in a family where parents belong to different religions? They actually push a person into an inner conflict with their restrictions and categorical frames.”

“Well, what do you want? Religious leaders are people too... As the saying goes, one cannot get to heaven of one religion without getting to hell of the rest.”

“Oh, my,” drawled Nikolai Andreevich. “Everyone wants to eat, as they say.”

“Exactly,” Volodya said in a bass. “Everybody wants to drive another’s sheep into his own flock.”

Everybody laughed. And Sensei uttered: “Well, but for jokes. Despite all the religious trumpery, the rites of sanctifying with water are rather important to an ordinary person, because they stimulate him to take the first step towards God. All those rites with their appearance, confusion, incomprehensibility, bring the person into a kind of trance. By

the way, the person who administers the ceremony and the participants in fact equally enter this state. And if the thoughts of all those being there are really concentrated on prayers to God – not on deliberation of material problems – it will engender spiritual force that each of the participants will receive in the form of an inner surge of their agathodaemon. That's splendid for ordinary people! At least that'll turn their attention to the fact that material being is not the only one existing, and that in fact they are born not for the sake of becoming lifelong slaves of their own Ego.

“In other words, through the rite a person finds hope, which gives him an impulse towards faith. While the principal sacrament arises from his own faith. Do you see the difference? If power of faith and will is enough for a spiritual person to change his state of consciousness and work on spiritual practices, an ordinary man lacks elementary belief in his own power. He needs spectacular, mass involvement to draw him away from material being and persuade him just for five minutes that there are higher values.”

“Why five minutes?” asked Ruslan.

“Because after all those impressions and positive splashes he comes home, and there are all sorts of problems of material being. So his consciousness returns to its habitual flow. If only he were clever enough to change himself for the better spiritual side with his own willpower. But, alas, he shifts all his inner problems onto the external ones.”

“Does that mean pure knowledge doesn't impress people?!” Nikolai Andreevich drew his unexpected conclusion.

“Absolutely right, howsoever paradoxical it may sound,” agreed Sensei. “Pure knowledge doesn’t impress people. It is too difficult for them to understand it due to its simplicity. There are no visual shows, bright impressions, emotional-stressing experiences, you know. And what do people strive for first of all? Bread and circuses, for it corresponds to most people’s estimation of the savor of life.

“People complicate their lives themselves. And that is true not only for ordinary people, living with their worldly concerns. There are some individuals who try to follow spiritual path, take first steps on finding initial knowledge. But instead of sincere self-cultivation and practicing of this knowledge in aspiration to learn the essence and move on, they spend years looking at the exterior form and attaching importance only to the fact of possessing it.”

“What do you mean?” Yura didn’t understand.

“Well, it is just the same as, for example, a man having a chocolate, instead of simply eating it up, goes to America to learn for five years how to unwrap the outer cover at first. Then he goes to Japan and studies unwrapping the foil as many years again. Then he travels to North, to the Chukchis, to learn how to bite the chocolate properly. After that he spends five years both in England and France, learning how to estimate the chocolate’s taste in his mouth appropriately. At last, he comes home, takes his chocolate and eats it up in two minutes. And then he realizes that it’s not quite what he has been expecting and preparing with such a pomposity for. Could it be like that – to eat the chocolate in two minutes, and that’s all? Could he have spent years of his life merely to

come to such a simple thing? That kind of reaction is natural, because in truth he was just wasting time. But one doesn't have to go far to acquire knowledge. Just look inside yourself and realize, who you are and what you want in this life.”

Sensei kept silence and raked a fallen ember up to the fire with a stick. A short pause arose again.

“I also wanted to ask you,” Nikolai Andreevich suddenly recollected, “about the Holy Spirit. As far as I understood from the story of my patient, everything in baptism ceremony is based on the Holy Spirit descending upon man's soul. For example, when consecrating water, a priest asks that the water in a font be sanctified with the power, grace-giving action, and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He is also called upon, when anointing as well as when the person is christened. When anointing parts of body, the priest also pronounces: ‘The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit!’. Each part of a body symbolizes something. Face to sanctify thoughts, legs – for the christened person to walk the path of Christ, arms – for him to do work of mercy. Is it a mere tradition or does it have some sense?”

“You have answered your question in part yourself. A symbolism takes place, of course, but the sacrament of the very Holy Spirit is there too. For those who address with faith receive their merit. In general man is able to come to perceiving God only through the Holy Spirit, for He is the first helper and the mediator between God and human. He is numerous in His manifestation, but His Entity is one. There is no religion, no sacrament, awakening Love and Belief in God in man that can be done without inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Because for people He is God's power, His Ear, and His Voice," Sensei made a pause and then got back to the story about Agapit again.

"By the way, we have digressed from the story about the disciples of Agapit. Now then, Damian healed people by prayer, anointing the sick with chrism. Yet, for example, another disciple of Agapit, Alipy, used paints instead of chrism. He was an icon-painter. Already in his youth, he helped the Greeks to paint the Assumption Cathedral of Pechersk Monastery. Then he started painting icons on his own. Agapit taught him how to cure people's skin diseases, for instance, ulcers and festering wounds, with the help of a prayer and paints."

"How can they be cured with paints?" wondered Kostya.

"Well, how? Paints have liquid basis, you know. They are just the same oils that are mixed with dyes. Plus, dyes themselves have additional therapeutic features, which naturally increase general health-improving effect. Only natural dyes were used in those days, you know, not the modern chemical ones. Some dyes have good antibacterial properties, such as the indican, an indigo dye made of *Indigofera* plants. In addition, red and yellow dyes were also used in those times. Owing to their organic components, they had an antiseptic, anti-inflammatory, wound-healing effect."

"So, you mean, Alipy was both a painter and a physician?" Nikolai Andreevich made a conclusion.

"Absolutely correct. He wanted to bring utmost good to people," confirmed Sensei. "By the way, Agapit told Alipy a lot of secrets about his first 'profession'. He told Alipy about

combinations of color palettes, their influence on state of human mind, about the representation system of spatial and temporal relation...”

“Wait a minute!” Nikolai Andreevich was amazed. “Do you mean that Agapit told Alipy all these niceties of color-perception psychology and the representation system of spatial and temporal relation *in the eleventh century?*”

“I guess Alipy would be surprised too, if he knew that this simple truth would become a science only in thousand years,” Sensei grinned. “However, all that color-perception is, by and large, not essential. The main thing Agapit paid attention to was how to produce an invisible effect from the image. Agapit asserted that an icon shouldn’t idealize an image, so as not to create an idol for blind worship. But the icon should be spiritual. It doesn’t matter how the icon was made and what the material was, whether it was a piece of wood or a wall, but the spiritual state of a painter – that’s important. For when a person, being in a special state of consciousness, disengages himself from the Animal nature and manifests his Spiritual to the utmost, a special power is put into the icon. It is able to entrance a person looking at the icon, rouse a feeling of real divine presence and produce a spiritual surge in his soul. Speaking modern language, to do a ‘recharge’. Besides, the purer the painter’s thoughts and aspiration to God are, the more the effect is that, owing to its positive charge, can spiritually transform a person, to say nothing of normalizing his physical health. For physical health in the first place depends on the spiritual one. By the by, such surge of power,

produced by the painter's Faith, will stably remain for thousands of years."

"For thousands of years? Why is it so?" wondered Tatyana.

"Because space and time do not exist for true spiritual power."

"Does it apply only to icons?" Kostya asked curiously.

"It applies to any artwork. Because it is not a board covered with paints that matters, as Agapit was saying, nor it is a canvas, or a book, or a sculpture, but it is the very inner power that was put into the artwork."

"Yes, an amazing effect," Nikolai Andreevich said. "Once I was lucky to visit the Hermitage in Leningrad. There surely is a rich cultural heritage collection of ancient Middle East, Egyptian, Asian, Greek cultures and many other curious things. And there are also artifacts of Russian culture from 8th to 19th centuries. Such wonderful pictures there are!"

Sensei nodded his agreement.

"If you noticed, people can stand for hours near some paintings, admiring them, though the painting itself, perhaps, is nothing to look at. While at other paintings, even though their details may be portrayed much better, people don't stay for too long. It's because pictures also have memory. When a painter creates a picture, he puts his emotions, feelings, and thoughts into it. And a person, looking at such painting senses it by intuition."

"What about a photo? Does it have the same effect?" asked Stas with interest.

"Undoubtedly. Moreover, a photo maintains a permanent connection with an object, that is, a person. That is why it is

easy to know whether the object is alive, where he is at the moment as well as his emotional state. It is also possible to influence his psycho-emotional sphere through a photo, his physical health, and so on. Even if numerous duplicated, this photograph retains the connection with the object practically without a loss. As for the paintings, their effect is different. Even if a painting is photographed, the information put into it is preserved in its original form. It is almost impossible to alter or influence it, because that information in it is permanent.”

“As far as I’ve understood, people so-to-say charge their paintings exactly with their own faith,” remarked Nikolai Andreevich.

“You’re absolutely right. Inner faith means a lot. For example, back to our talk, take Agapit. He really worked wonders in healing. To a large extend it was related to Inner faith and positive aspiration of people, who came to him. He cured people who believed quickly, no matter how severe their illnesses were. But those who came embittered, without faith in their soul – fortunately, there were very few of those – Agapit simply did not admit them to healing, though their ailment was easy to treat. Faith is not an empty word. Even Jesus himself, when came to His motherland ‘...did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith’.”

“Was it suggestion?” Nikolai Andreevich asked thoughtfully. And shrugging his shoulders, he added: “But suggestion alone isn’t enough to treat a serious illness. That’s a fact.”

“Suggestion has nothing to do with it,” rejoined Sensei. “The reason, why Agapit and Jesus didn’t agree to heal such people, was not because they couldn’t manage to do it. The whole point lies in the phenomenon of faith. If a person is open to light, he receives light. If a person is closed, that is, there is no faith in him, – it is equivalent to him climbing down to a cellar, closing the lid tightly, and waiting in this absolute darkness for somebody to cure him with daylight. Such expectations are unavailing, of course. Human brain works similar to a computer, and faith is a certain program. If it is installed on the computer, it can be actively used and a corresponding result of this work can be achieved. If a person lacks faith, it’s equivalent to the absence of the appropriate program on the computer. Naturally, you cannot work adequately until the necessary program is installed on your computer.

“What is the phenomenon of Agapit’ successful healing? You know, he could heal not only with herbs or hands, which is called chiropractic nowadays, or with the help of words. He often used to give something eatable from his meal or some water for his patient to drink. But all that food certainly had a spell cast on it by his prayers. The patient felt much better afterwards and he actually did recover quickly. Why was it so? It was because Agapit treated his patients with true faith. And it is a great, real power indeed. True faith is by no means a fanaticism, running into absurd extreme. It’s not ‘striking in the chest’ in debates and demagogies. True faith is the extent of purity of your personal spiritual power. And Agapit did have great spiritual power. When blessing food or water for a

patient, that seemed as casting a spell on it, in reality Agapit was putting in a certain program into the liquid by means of his personal spiritual power. Subsequently this liquid was incorporated into the patient's organism, where it interacted with its liquids. In other words, a new program was installed, which could be launched with the help of the patient's faith.

"By the way, Agapit always offered a prayer to bless food before him, and he taught the others to do the same. In general he used to eat only vegetable food. Even a bitter blade of grass, when Agapit cast a spell on it, turned into a sweet medicine for a patient."

"Well, perhaps, if considered in a figurative sense," uttered Kostya with a light tinge of scepticism, "then yes, one would swallow anything as a medicine to recover quickly, even if it's bitter and tasteless."

"Why in a figurative sense?" Sensei asked in sincere perplexity. "I meant literally."

Kostya mistrustfully looked askance at Sensei, then put on a thoughtful air, trying to comprehend what Sensei had just said. During that 'great-Caesar's' reflection, as he liked to speak of himself, he cast a look on dry twigs we had collected during the day for the campfire. They were lying on the ground just beside him. There was a sprig of wormwood among other blades of grass there. Upon seeing it, the guy livened up somewhat, apparently thinking about a 'rule of contraries' that had just occurred to him.

"What do you mean in the literal sense?" Kostya challenged with doubt. "And what if it's a wormwood?" he

pointed at the sprig. "It's as bitter as nothing else! It's always been a weed of reek. How can it be a sweet regale?"

Sensei glanced at Kostya, screwing his eyes merrily, and said:

"Let me have it."

Kostya took the sprig with disgust, holding it only with his two fingers, gave it to Sensei, and carefully shook off his hands afterwards. Eugene, who was chewing a cracker, didn't fail to gag about Kostya's careful jests: "Hey, chap, there's a question now, who a smelly weed here actually is."

Everyone burst out laughing. Sensei took the plant carefully and shook off the dust. Then he put it on his palm and stroked it tenderly, as if it were alive.

"How can you call it a weed? It is an officinal herb. It has essential oils and alkaloids, you know. That is quite a valuable collection of substances for medicine. As for its taste..."

Sensei smiled mysteriously. Then he started to stroke the sprig again and whispered something very quietly. Everyone grew silent, and there was a moment of absolute stillness. Even Eugene stopped chewing his cracker, which he had been enthusiastically munching. Though I was sitting close to Sensei and tried to make out what Sensei was uttering, I could not hear a word of his whispering. Then Sensei fell into silence, glanced at Kostya, and offered the sprig to him.

"Here, taste it."

At first Kostya stretched out his hand instinctively, but then, apparently thinking that it was a joke, jerked it back and declared, laughing: "What, am I crazy, to eat wormwood?"

Nikolai Andreevich stood up with interest and moved around the sitting guys towards Sensei. As he was passing Kostya, Nikolai Andreevich tapped him on the shoulder and remarked along with the laughter of other guys:

“Everybody is crazy, Kostya. No one is healthy. There are only under-examined ones...” The doctor reached for the sprig: “May I?”

“You’re most welcome,” replied Sensei smiling.

Nikolai Andreevich took the sprig from Sensei’s hands, and smelt it at first. Then carefully nipped off a small piece from its top and tasted it. We waited for his reaction with unconcealed curiosity, but our psychotherapist’s face kept its impenetrable look.

“I don’t get it,” merely uttered he and tasted again, nipping a bigger piece from the plant.

His mysterious ‘I don’t get it’ intrigued us even more and the most impatient of us, including myself, jumped up to our feet and crowded around Nikolai Andreevich.

“Well, well,” hastily finishing up another cracker, Eugene stretched his hand for the sprig. “Let’s try... My! It’s as sweet as treacle.”

After such an ‘advertisement’ we started hastily nipping small pieces off the sprig to taste them. I received a bit of the plant too. The taste was really unusual, more like tart-sweet. Kostya still hesitated to taste the ‘regale’ of Sensei. His pride didn’t allow him to do it, although his eyes revealed that he obviously wanted to.

Watching our stir he declared with his usual sarcasm: “You guys are wormwood maniacs, or something. Should I collect some toadstools for you?”

“Toadstools don’t grow nearby,” answered Andrew in comical manner, giving him the last ‘portion’. “Here, taste it. It’s really sweet.”

At first Kostya turned up demonstratively his nose from it. But when Andrew declared: ‘Well, as you wish’ intending to eat the last part of the stem, Kostya changed his mind quickly.

“Hey, hey, you, glutton, give it to me now!”

Kostya confiscated the remains of the plant from Andrew with laughter. After that, he hunched over it and began to examine it thoroughly. Then he sniffed it, and finally made up his mind to taste it.

“How is it?” Sensei asked merrily, looking at Kostya, who was like a duck in a thunderstorm.

Kostya produced a silly smile and made a helpless gesture: “What can I say...? As Goethe used to say in my performance: ‘What I do not understand I do not possess’.”

“But really, Sensei, how did you make it?” Victor asked with interest.

“It’s elementary. Have faith and you will make it. There is nothing to it. Faith and pureness of thoughts – that’s the principal cause. As for the influence on the plant’s liquid structure, this is, so to say, a technical matter.”

“Why exactly liquid?” Nikolai Andreevich caught at the word. “I’ve already heard it several times this evening.”

“That’s because any aqueous medium has peculiar cells in its molecular structure, a kind of mini-computers. Though

they are microscale, they are able to store global memory. And they contain almost all the information about matter. If a liquid structure is influenced by mechanical, chemical, electromagnetic means or by...” Sensei stopped trying to pick appropriate words, “or, to put it simple, by the energy of thoughts, it is possible to reshape a water molecule into necessary combination. For water remembers all the substances ever been in contact with it, whether directly or through energy states.., for example, even such simple ones as electromagnetic oscillations. Take into account that water is the most widespread substance in nature, that it contacts in one form or another with every other substance of this material world, keeping the received information in its every molecule, as well as the interaction of water among itself – and you can imagine what memory capacity water has.”

“Do you mean this wormwood can not only be made sweet, but also transformed into sorts of something I want?” concluded Ruslan.

“Of course it can, if you know the molecular structure and energy composition of this ‘something’,” smiled Sensei.

“Even into a bug?!” marveled Ruslan.

“And why not? There is no living organism on the Earth that can move without water. On our planet water is an essential part of every living creature, its ratio varying from 45% to 98%, including human body, where water constitutes 80% of its mass. Water is a widespread component of nature. Its elements are present even in fire as oxygen and hydrogen molecules, owing to which burning occurs. Even stones contain water.”

“Stones?” Slavik was surprised.

“Yes, stones. Under high pressure any stone bleeds water, though in small amounts. Besides, howsoever paradoxical it may sound for you nowadays, even in the center of the Earth, inside the inner core, there is a nucleus of enormous density and mass, which contains water too.

“In fact, the Earth is a living organism also consisting mainly of water. I mean not only the surface where 70% are oceans and 30% are various matter modifications with inclusion of water, but I also mean the inner liquid. And we, humans, are also similar to it.”

“Does the Earth have a mind too?” Kostya couldn’t size up the question for himself.

“Undoubtedly. And a man is linked to it since that mind is located in the memory of liquid structure. This mind accumulates information about everything, including each one of us. As I’ve already mentioned, since the greater part of our body consists of water, all the data about us, including our thoughts, emotions, health, and DNA matrix, is stored in this memory.”

“For how long is it stored?”

“Rather long.”

“So, it turns out it is possible to learn about any person ever lived on this planet. Like, Napoleon, Genghis-khan...”

“Huh, what a choice to learn about,” Andrew teased him. “There definitely are more interesting personalities.”

“I’ve said incidentally,” Kostya hurried to justify himself and looked at Sensei.

“It’s more serious than you think,” answered Sensei. “Only a few people out of the entire humankind can do this.”

“Is there a higher mind than the one the Earth has?” Kostya couldn’t quiet down.

“Of course. There are higher informational structures up to a global one. But all of them are controlled by the One. The One we call God.”

“I wonder, who are those few people who can read information from water?” Eugene asked cunningly.

“Well, for example, verily saint people. How did they work ‘wonders’? With purity of their faith. It seems incredible for other people, but it was quite accessible for them. Pureness of thoughts and faith – that’s what is essential. In fact, there is nothing miraculous in ‘wonders’ as such. It’s the matter of elementary knowledge, including water science, which the current human civilization, fortunately, knows less than a hundredth part about.”

“Why fortunately?” Kostya asked pretentiously.

“Because had people had such knowledge, they would have turned even a water-melon into a nuclear bomb. You cannot possibly imagine the power water holds. A man, possessing knowledge about it, is able to destroy the entire planet with just a drop of water.”

“What do you mean ‘to destroy’?” Eugene didn’t understand. “Closing the circuit of a nuclear bomb button with a drop of water, or something?”

“Why, nuclear energy is really nothing in comparison to the true power of a human thought.”

Eugene took his mug with some tea remaining in it, looked at Sensei and declared ambitiously with a shining Hollywood smile of his: “I can understand everything, but with one drop?!”

He looked at Sensei with challenge, provoking him for a demonstration. Sensei replied to him:

“Alright, doubting Gagger. Go, bring me a cup of sea.”

The guy became alert at first, but soon asked with a humorous air: “A cup of sea? Do you mean the seawater?”

“Exactly,” Sensei smiled.

Eugene looked at the sea lazily.

“I don’t grudge snow in winter... There is plenty of it around... But it requires an exploit too great – to stand up, and walk over, and get into the water, and wet my feet.” He looked inside his mug and proposed: “Can we manage with tea?”

“Come on, come on,” Sensei hurried him with a smile. “Such walks are good for your brains.”

Eugene stood up reluctantly, groaning like an old man, and directed himself towards the sea.

Nikolai Andreevich followed him with his eyes and uttered: “Courage, Eugene! Such a nice weather, there is no harm in going for a stroll.”

The evening was splendid indeed. The sea was calm, and the sky was studded with stars. The bright moon was shining. Silence and tranquility, true paradise.

Eugene scooped up some water and waddled back, trying not to spill it. But, obviously sensing our fixed looks, he

cheered up. And, coming up to Sensei, Eugene offered him the mug with a bow as if he were a regular waiter.

“Here is your order, sir. It’s a present from ‘Neptune’ company. Every hundredth cup, with all bacteria, bacilli, microbes, and excrements of the nearby city, is absolutely free!!!”

“Kindly appreciate it,” answered Sensei in the same facetious tone.

While the guys laughed developing the theme, Sensei put the mug in front of him, covered it with his hands, and concentrated. Nobody actually paid attention to his actions because Eugene completely got used to the role of a comical waiter and started relating funny anecdotes to us, so everybody burst out laughing. I laughed too, but suddenly I felt bad. At first I felt strange discomfort in my body. Then this feeling began to increase wave-like. I couldn’t even understand what was happening. I felt sick and giddy. I felt weakness all over my body, my bones ached. The first thought that came to my mind was that I had indigestion caused by sunny and hot weather. But the symptoms were rather strange and it confused me. It was as if I had not only got indigestion, but also spent too much time riding on a seesaw. What was more, an unnatural fear was coming up from the depth of my consciousness. I was immediately seized by panic that made me want to run following my nose, though there was no any apparent reason for such fear, at least a visible one.

In an instant Sensei gave the mug back to Eugene who was still cheering up the company with his jokes.

“There, splash it back out to the sea.”

Eugene looked inside the mug, apparently expecting to see something unusual there, and asked: “Is that it?! Well, it’s like always! The most interesting thing went right past my only straight convolution.”

Ruslan, who was sitting nearby, craned his neck trying to see what was in the mug.

Eugene reacted immediately: “Why art thy stareth thine eyes, child? Water-plants are not growing in it, and bacteria are not floating paunches-up.” He pulled Ruslan’s cloth-cap over his eyes and added to common laugh of guys: “So, you may switch out the light, there will be no film.”

Our plentiful laugh accompanied all Eugene’s trip to the sea and his successful return with the empty mug. As for me, frankly speaking, I was in no laughing mood. The fear inside me was growing. My entrails were about to turn inside out. I was already barely holding out, afraid to move once again. It seemed I would even faint the next moment. But all of a sudden a fresh breeze blew from the sea, and it relieved me at least a little. So, I perked up and turned to the breeze, naively supposing I were to recover soon. But noway.

The wind gained strength. The sea became noisy. In the glow of the moonlight path, I was horrified with the view of sea waves driven by strong gale, every new wave getting bigger and bigger. The guys quieted down and started to look around.

A blast of wind fluttered our tents badly. In a moment light plastic bags flew up and whirled around the shore in their wild dance. The wind rose with every second. The tents were not just fluttering. It seemed someone was trying to tear them

from the ground with all their iron pegs in one stroke. A new rush of hurricane wind scattered about the fire. The serviettes lying near caught fire in a second. The burning lumps were hurled to the cars. Meanwhile big fire, like a furious beast, pounced on dry reed, devouring the canes.

Horror-stricken we jumped to our feet. The senior boys together with Nikolai Andreevich dashed to put out scattered burning serviettes. Volodya, Stas, and Andrew got down to blow out the ‘double fire’. Tatyana and I, out of fright, began to grab somebody’s clothes, beddings, towels – anyway, whatever our eyes met near the fire – and started running with those belongings here and there, not knowing what to do. For the first time I experienced a real animal fear before the raging elements.

The wind became so strong that only its blood-creeping howling and growing noise of the sea were heard. Something inconceivable was happening. The water now swiftly rolled away, now collapsed against the shore with a great din, crushing down its bigger and bigger parts. In the cool moonlight the sea seemed to be boiling up. It was ready to swallow anybody standing on its way with its storming jaws. Giant water ‘tongues’, with terrible hiss, were approaching the place of our recent ‘gathering’.

Nikolai Andreevich, proving his nickname of our ‘Common sense’ ran to the car, tried to start up the engine and cried on the run:

“Leave that stuff! It’s gonna flood! We won’t get out of here then.”

Everybody started rushing about. As for me I was absolutely ‘stunned’. My legs almost gave way. And then, among that disorderly fuss, I saw Sensei. My person erroneously supposed him to be putting out the fire or being somewhere near the car. But he appeared to have been imperturbably sitting on his place, not even changing his pose, and watching our bustle as if an action film at the cinema. To say, I was shocked, is to say nothing.

Meanwhile Eugene ran up to Sensei and shouted, trying to outvoice the hurricane and the downright risen sea: “Sensei! The tents are about to be carried away! What should we do? It’s time to skiddoo! The water is coming...”

Sensei replied to my and, judging by Eugene’s face, not only to my great surprise: “Bring me a cup of sea!”

“Do what?!” Eugene didn’t understand, thinking he had misheard Sensei at first.

“I said bring me a cup of sea!” Sensei shouted again.

Eugene couldn’t believe his ears and was taken aback. He stared at Sensei.

“A cup of sea??? I’m gonna be washed away together with that cup... Together with you! Just look at the waves behind!”

The waves were indeed very high already, and each new wave came closer and closer to the place Sensei was sitting. They hit against the shore and splashed around with noise. Carried by wind, these big cold drops were beating us hard in the face like hail. But Sensei, being wet through, never turned to look at really horrifying black waves. He just smiled in reply to Eugene’s tirade like a master satisfied with his work. As for the guy, having understood the senseless of his

attempts as well as uselessness of threatening and arguing, he just exclaimed in a fit of temper: “Oh my God!”

Apparently resisting his crying logic he began to search for his mug in that utter chaos. The others kept rushing about in panic, somebody was trying to save the tents, some were running about with belongings, somebody was fiddling about the car, cramming something into the boot. Eugene started asking if someone had seen the mug. It seemed the guys couldn't understand what they were asked. When Eugene inquired Stas about the mug, instead of answering the latter gave him a good shake, shouting almost in the very ear:

“Eugene! Have you lost your mind or something?! What mug?! We're are about to be washed away!” and not letting Eugene go, he turned to Nikolai Andreevich. “Doc, should I knock him cold and put in the boot? He seems to have gone mad!”

“Stop footling about!” ‘Common sense’ rumbled in response. “The spit is being flooded! Hurry up and get into the car, while it's still possible to drive through...”

And Eugene, torn himself from his friend's tenacious hands, yelled:

“You are crazy yourself...! I'm alright! It's Sensei who's gone mad!”

The word ‘Sensei’ was like a throw of cold water on Stas. Instead of running to the car as Nikolai Andreevich had called to, Stas, as if rooted to the ground, stared in astonishment at Sensei. At that moment I noticed that I was holding this unfortunate mug in my hands together with other belongings. I felt like I was struck with current.

“I have the mug, here it is!” I shouted at the top of my voice, dropped the other ‘trash’ aside and ran to Eugene with it.

The guy grasped the mug, as if I passed a baton to him, and rushed to the sea that was already not far from Sensei. The sea obviously didn’t like the idea of giving its water away. It splashed one wave, then another, knocking the uninvited guest off his feet. After falling, Eugene still stood up quickly and contrived to draw some water from the fleeing wave somehow, though with some sand and other dregs of the storm. But as soon as Eugene managed to do his task and take to his heels from the new billow, to my horror, far on the moonlight path I saw a huge wave, inexorably approaching us. I wanted to cry about it to others, but in an instant my throat became parched. Instead of a cry I was able only to produce some hoarse inarticulate sounds and make some feeble gestures pointing my hand at the sea. For the moment Eugene ran up to Sensei and stretched out the mug to him, trembling all over like an aspen leaf either with cold or with fear. Being in utter commotion, I looked at the big wave again. It was steadily approaching, with its destructive power of a famished predator, intending to swallow the entire shore prey at once. Apparently, the boys have also noticed its scaring blackness, because they started frantically shouting something to Sensei. Their heart-rending cry mixed with roar of the breakers in my ears. It was terrible to think what could be about to happen.

Meanwhile Sensei took the mug calmly. Paying no attention to the others, he covered it with his hands and

concentrated for several seconds. Those seconds seemed an eternity to me. The wave was approaching headlong, and Sensei was still. The others, near the cars, kept crying out something. Suddenly I felt that my ailment began to vanish suspiciously swiftly. At the same time Nikolai Andreevich, Victor, and Volodya, apparently having realized that they were not heard, ran up to Sensei.

But then Sensei opened his eyes and gave the mug to Eugene in the same calm manner, saying: “Pour it into the sea.”

When Eugene took the mug, he didn’t need to run to the sea, because it was already near his feet. With indifference he poured the water into the wave rolling away, gazing spellbound at the approaching high billow.

“We need to run, Sensei,” Stas came running, his gaze also fixed on the dark large-tonnage mass of water.

Instead of Sensei we heard Eugene’s doomed voice:

“It’s too late now. It’ll run us down all the same.”

The others, who just ran up, hearing the words of Eugene stopped, understanding all the senselessness of their actions. Only then Sensei turned to the sea. However, in contrast to us, he didn’t just watch – he was admiring the formidable element.

At that instant I felt everything calming down and sorting out inside me. The sickness and giddiness were over. My organism came back to normal. Even fear disappeared. There came unusual clearness in my consciousness. I felt so good and inspired as if it were the best minutes of my life, though the real picture was rather telling differently. Even that high

billow, instead of rousing horror and panic, actually started to impress me with its view of inimitable power of nature.

All of a sudden the wind quickly dropped. The waves became smaller and smaller as if a giant iron had pressed the black sheet of the sea along the moonlight path, smoothing out the creases. The big billow didn't roll only several hundred yards to the shore and, breaking all laws of physics, started diminishing swiftly. Its waters came to the shore only as an echo of a light splash. The water reluctantly abandoned the conquered shore, returning to its usual borders. The wind died down; and there recommenced calm, already unwonted to the ear.

I shifted my gaze to Sensei. And it dawned upon me. I suddenly realized what caused that unexpected storm. It was by no means a natural anomaly as my mind had been theorizing while in panic. But undoubtedly it was performed by a human thought! And though my mind continued to resist such conjecture, something deep inside me, that knew much more about the world around me than my material brain could express, – exactly it – gave me the opportunity to understand the true reason of what was happening. I was astounded with the real will-power of a Human, possessing the knowledge, which even elements were submissive to! How great the capabilities are that God put into each one of us. But can we possibly appreciate His gift in full, if we choose for ourselves the life of a worm in the darkness of our own egocentrism? Can we comprehend His true Love for us, if we take no notice of anyone except ourselves? Sheer outward show, sheer delusion, and the whole life goes in it. A worm is a worm

indeed. There it lived, and now it is no more. There is even no need for raging elements, the life itself will smash it with its heel just like that.

Nature calmed. Yet no one made a single move, evidently profoundly amazed with the experience. The moon illuminated the chaos left by element on the shore with its weird cold light.

In this silence that seemed to be unreal suddenly we heard the voice of Sensei: “It would be nice to make a fire and get warm a bit...”

Those simple everyday words took us out of stupor. We turned to Sensei in astonishment. Meanwhile Sensei took off his wet-through short and began to wring it out, pressing sea water out.

“I say it would be nice to make a fire and dry up a little,” repeated Sensei looking at our amazed faces.

This phrase brought us back to our senses, as it is called, for good. Seniour guys silently took out flashlights from spared tents and roamed about the beach searching for dry firewood, as all our stock was either wet or burnt. The others crowded near Sensei as if it were the safest place on the shore.

“Maybe we shouldn’t make a fire?” Nikolai Andreevich cautiously advanced his opinion. “Maybe we’d be safer in the city? There certainly is a storm front somewhere near, and we’ve seen the first gusts. It is possible that it recurs.”

Sensei answered him in good-natured manner: “Relax, doctor. We’ll make some tea and dry up a little. Then we’ll see.”

“Well, you know better,” Nikolai Andreevich said with a tinge of incredulity in his voice.

Soon our wet clothes were hanging on the strings of our hurriedly picked up tents. We put on dry clothes and sat around new place, further from the sea, warming ourselves and waiting for the water in a kettle to boil. Curiously enough, despite the circumstances my spirits were high. It felt like I got my second wind. New inspiration came upon me, owing to which it was so good and calm that my soul was singing.

As soon as the water boiled, Tatyana and I made sweet-scented marjoram and balm tea. Our doctor insisted that we take white honey out of our survival stock as a means of cold preventive measures. And we made a small dinner with this refreshment, or it is better to say a ‘night-picnic’.

When the first drops of the beneficial tea spread about our organisms with warmth, relaxed Nikolai Andreevich said: “What a hurricane! What an element! There! My, the human psychology is so curious in extreme situations. Theory is one thing, but practice is quite another, especially your own one.”

“Oh, yes,” smiled Sensei. “Reasoning is not acting.”

“And how quickly the values change,” continued psychotherapist with excitement. “Just when you see the slightest chance to save yourself and others, life becomes the only value. But in the last minutes as soon as the threat became inevitable... it’s strange, but the value of life disappears as well as the value of this body! And inside... it’s amazing... you feel clearness and absolute calmness. Some kind of extraordinary, amazing feeling of your consciousness broadening...”

Sensei smiled cheerfully and interrupted the speech of Nikolai Andreevich at the most exciting point for me. I turned out that I was not the only person to experience such, incompatible with an extreme situation, sensations.

“Leave the introspection alone, doc. Let your soul saturate with this instant ‘here and now’.”

Nikolai Andreevich took a long look at him and nodded with a smile, seeming to understand something unvoiced.

We sat in silence, prolonging our pleasure of having hot tea. I still had that unexplainable feeling of joy at silence inside me. Indeed, appreciation of that fantastic feeling of ‘heavenly’ peace comes only after spending some time in the very ‘inferno’. The interrupted discussion, as our company was returning to its usual state of consciousness, renewed.

“My aunt! Such a storm! That’s awful!” Victor couldn’t calm down, too.

At that moment Sensei, sipping his tea, said, as if by the way: “That was just a drop of water.”

These words didn’t come home to people immediately. The first ones to ‘enlighten’ were Nikolai Andreevich and Volodya, who stared at Sensei in astonishment. A bit later their meaning reached us, too.

“What do you mean... a drop?” Victor asked with a puzzled look. “Do I get it right? You mean *the* drop in that mug Eugene was betting?”

Sensei nodded with contented air. Meanwhile Eugene nearly choked by his tea, goggled at Sensei, at the same time trying to figure out whether he was joking or not.

“It’s a provocation! Objection!” our doubting Gagger became indignant in jest, just in case, when a good half of our company gave him by no means an ambiguous gaze. “That was a mere coincidence. The hurricane was purely accidental...”

“Accidental?” wondered Sensei with a smile, slightly raising his eyebrows. “I can repeat.”

“No, no!” Stas anticipated Eugene’s answer. “Don’t take the trouble standing up, Sensei. I’ll kill him myself.”

And with those words, he charged Eugene with all his weight, jokingly catching him by the throat, and started to shake him. Eugene floundered about comically and, having caught a white serviette lying nearby, he started to wave it as a flag in request for truce.

“OK, Ok! I surrender! I believe!..”

“You dare!” ‘threatened’ Stas, letting him go.

The company laughed, while Eugene, rubbing his neck, asked Sensei timidly: “Did it really happen because of the mug of sea water?”

“My patience is over,” Stas stood up resolutely, but before he had time to pounce on his friend the latter disappeared into thin air. Eugene jumped aside and began explaining in a hurry, sawing the air with quieting gestures.

“No, no, it’s not what I meant! I wanted to say, ‘oh, my, what a power’!”

“You’d better’ve said it right away,” Stas murmured, returning to his place at our laugh.

When numerous jokes stopped, Sensei elucidated: “It’s not the limit for a human thought. Both destruction and creation

are within its power. People just don't possess real knowledge about that power. And this knowledge won't be given until they change for the better. Otherwise, people will remain dependent, like any other animal, on whims of the elements. The Earth is a living creature too, you know. And it won't endure its oversaturation with mankind having Animal nature as dominant. A manifestation of mass human negative force, for the planet, is like a gaping wound on its body. Therefore, additional forces are gathering around it, like leucocytes in blood that are able to absorb bacteria and other foreign bodies. And then a cleansing process simply occurs, and that's all... Humanity as a whole, alike every single individual, unconsciously makes changes in the memory of water with its own thoughts. And then, pardon, we get what we've deserved."

"That means water can be programmed in a certain way," Nikolai Andreevich summarized. "And with that program it's possible not only to destroy but also to create."

"Absolutely right. What you've seen is just a trifle, really. Now, imagine what power Agapit possessed, if the Holy Spirit Himself abode in him. Gabriel, Rigden, Jabrail, name this Creature as you like, he has many names. Imagine what strength his creating thought had, that even after his death people continue recovering physically and mentally near his relics, especially during the days of the so-called superactivity of the 'background'" Sensei looked at me with a smile, using my not quite proficient vocabulary.

"During his lifetime Agapit was visited by many different peoples, irrespective of their communion to religion at that.

Beside Christians there were Buddhists, Muslims, and people of other religions. They came to him not only because he was a healer, but also because he was a Wiseman, a man who knows the true way to God. Many religious leaders had no special liking for him because of such pilgrimage, for he didn't call upon changing people's religion, like they did for widening their rule. He related true words of Jesus to people, that God is one, and that there are many ways to Him. I'm not very surprised at the fact that all the records about the pilgrimage to Agapit were thoroughly removed from the annals. It was because Agapit told people about the true Teaching of Jesus, which had been transformed into religion by that time. He related about freedom of choice, about soul eternal.

“Though Agapit healed people delivering them from various corporal and spiritual ailments, he also edified them: **‘It doesn't befit to disturb God about anything except for salvation of your own soul. Ask not for your body or for your health; it is not the belly of yours you should concern yourself with – all this is empty decay, insatiable in desires. For there is no petition more deserving, than a petition for salvation of your own soul’.** Many people actually came to believe in God owing to Agapit, because he had always been an example of true service of God in his spiritual pureness. So powerful was he in his inner spirit, that there was nothing impossible for him. Agapit had been proving it with word and deed time and again.

“Spiritual people longed for him, while those who hungered for gold feared him. Agapit taught people to keep

their thoughts pure, because any bad thought engenders doubt. And there can be no pure faith in doubt. Doubt can ruin everything. Agapit often used to say: **‘Believe, and you shall be rendered according to your faith. It is simple, but it’s difficult to comprehend. The whole difficulty is in simplicity’.**

“Let me give you an example of Agapit’ spiritual power from his life. Prince Izyaslav’s warrior Ratimir was once brought into the monastic cell of Agapit. He was badly wounded, both legs being fractured. Everyone considered him to be not long for this world. However, within an hour the warrior came out of the cell accompanied by Agapit. That incident astonished many people then.”

“You’ve said the warrior had fractures!?” Victor said amazed. “How could Agapit knit the bones so quickly, if the warrior was able to walk by himself?”

“Oh, it’s very simple. Agapit gave him some decoction to drink.”

“Decoction?!” Nikolai Andreevich was amazed even more than Victor. “I’d understand if it were for anaesthesia... But he knitted the bones, didn’t he?” the doctor asked with doubt. “Sensei, excuse me, please, but no matter how good the herbs were, bones cannot be knitted so quickly.”

“Why do you think herbs have something 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.

“How can they be knitted so quickly?” Nikolai Andreevich asked distrustfully.

Sensei grinned for some reason and said: “With the help of such healing power as Agapit possessed, with his knowledge about true properties of water, any bone can be knitted much faster than you think.”

“Really? How’s that?” Victor wondered in his turn.

At that moment Slava, who seemed to have decided to settle himself in a more comfortable position, broke a reed burnt at edges with a crunch. He gave no heed to it. But Sensei, having noticed that, asked him: “Let me have that broken reed.”

At first Slava didn’t understand what was required of him, so he started twisting his head looking around. Finally his eyes found the broken reed. He picked it up hurriedly and gave to Sensei.

“For example, let’s take an ordinary reed stem. It’s possible not only to knit it solid, but also to make it firmer than steel...”

Apparently, Sensei was in a good mood and disposed to conversation as well as demonstration of unusual experiments. Perhaps we had never spent so many tremendous minutes with Sensei as we had that day.

Sensei handed the mug to Eugene and said smiling: “Would you be so kind to pour some sea water into the mug.”

Everybody took alarm exchanging glances, and Eugene even recoiled from it as if from fire.

“Oh, no, Sensei, noway. I have a luckless hand,” he said hiding his arms behind his back and added hastily with a nervous smile: “I mean, both hands! And moreover, I’ve got childhood disability for all parts of body.”

“Relax, it’s a joke,” Sensei calmed him laughing softly. “Mineral water will be enough.”

We heaved a sigh of relief. Eugene also feigned ease, though he kept an eagle eye on Sensei’s hands. Sensei poured some mineral water into the mug and covered it with his palms. These movements caused everybody to become involuntarily tense, fearing even to move once again, to say nothing of remonstrance. After that ‘purifying’ hurricane – for our minds in the first place – all doubts about the abilities of Sensei were gone with the wind. So, our company watched his actions with bated breath.

Meanwhile Sensei concentrated for several seconds as usual. Then he completely broke the cane into two halves. He dipped one broken end into the water and did the same with the other half. After that he joined them together into a single cane. To our amazement the reed became absolutely solid. Finally Sensei took a handful of water and moistened the entire cane. Satisfied with the result, he offered it to us to test it for durability.

Oddly enough, for all the lightness of the cane it turned out to be as solid as steel. In the beginning the guys tried carefully to break it in two. But there was no way they could even bend it. That only agitated them even more. Everyone was already doing his best to break the reed. But all efforts were fruitless. What haven’t they tried to do with the cane! They made attempts to fold-break it with hands. They jumped on it. They hit it against a tree trunk lying nearby. By the way, the sound was similar to that of a super-durable plastic or some special metal. At last Stas and Volodya took the reed at ends as a

horizontal bar and Eugene, of Herculean build, hung on it and started twitching with might and main, trying to break it with all his weight. But that was all in vain too. After wasting quite a bit of time with the cane, almost everyone lost hope to break it, calmed down and sat back wondering at yet another astonishing fact that fell upon their unfortunate logic. Only Eugene as a doubting Thomas was stubbornly persisting in his experiments. He sat near the fire exercising the reed.

“Damn it!” exclaimed Eugene in warm blood, glaring at the unyielding cane.

But as soon as he said it the reed broke up into two halves, no efforts being made. Everybody sat still. Eugene was taken aback himself, staring now at the stem, now at Sensei. But Sensei only smiled. Then Eugene grew bolder, took one of the halves and broke it in two.

“Oops!” he said guiltily bending down his neck.

“Well, there you go,” said Sensei not without irony. “A valid example of a fly capable of spoiling the ointment. That’s why Agapit taught purity of thoughts. For one bad thought can spoil everything.”

After those words, said with unconcealed smile, Sensei continued relating the story about the Russian Bodhisattva.

“In general Agapit worked a lot of wonders. And by the way, he had an excellent sense of humor. He used to chaff those who obviously had vices dominating in them. Once a noble Kievan merchant exhausted with ailment was brought to Agapit. So, the merchant started promising Agapit the best of his valuables, if only the healer delivered him of his illness. And he was shaking two money-bags with golden coins all

around at that, as if implying that there was nothing he wouldn't part with. Golden coins were items of great luxury at that time. They had Prince Vladimir Svyatoslavovich image on the one side and ancestral sign of Rurik Dynasty, shaped like a trident, with a lettering saying 'Vladimir, and this is his gold' on the other side. Those golden coins were a feather in his cap, an indication of his close links with those who stood at 'control levers' of the Old Russian State. Not everyone could boast such valuables. But everything loses its meaning, when a disease overcomes. The merchant was ready to part with this money to return his past health.

"Agapit healed the merchant. The latter had promised in public to repay Agapit's kindness, but the greed seized him. So, the merchant decided to swindle the Saint. Nobody saw what was there in the bags, so the merchant put cheap silver coins into the bags instead of the promised money and added only one golden coin for his conscience' sake. He was glad he could both recover and save so many valuables owing to his guile. He came to Agapit again with his retinue. Agapit only smiled glancing at his proudly held out bags with money and said: 'I have not taken pay from anyone, and I won't take any from you. But you shall keep your word. Come out and give away all this gold to beggars'. The merchant rejoiced even more and went off, his retinue attending him, to carry out the order of the Saint. But when he opened one of the bags to take the money out, all coins turned out to be golden except for one.

"So, the merchant became upset and thought he must have confused the money-bags. But he kept the promise given in

front of his retinue. When he came home, however, he was terror-stricken, because all his gold and jewelery had turned into cheap silver coins. And among this pile of odd money he was able to find only one golden coin.”

“Huh, it appears that such swindlers existed even in those days,” Volodya uttered in a bass.

“There are enough of them at any time,” Sensei said with a sad smile. “Greed is the favorite vice of the human beasts. Not only among the laity, but, unfortunately, also among monks. Even during Agapit’ time many of the monastic community, where he lived, had more love for gold than for God, and they exploited their monastic rank to swindle money out of simpletons...

“During the lifetime of Agapit many were afraid of him, though Agapit never condemned anyone. After his death the hidden gold-cravers respired, for He who hadn’t let their Conscience have a minute’s peace was no more beside them. Afterwards, writing the life of the monastery, they concealed many of the true deeds of Agapit. In an effort to raise their self-importance, they ascribed his wonders to themselves. Likewise they concealed the Teaching that Agapit had related, speaking with true words of Jesus – for it contradicted their desires for money and power. As for the public renown of the monastery, which had been acquired due to Agapit and his disciples, those people used it for their own enrichment, inventing even more new styles of earning money and achieving their political goals.

“But there was, by and large, no more sanctity in those oddities who misappropriated other people’s achievements,

than in a stingy huckster in a market.” Sensei sighed and added: “People remain people, whatsoever clothes they put on... Among those, whom the human mind attributed sanctity to, Agapit was the One verily Saint, for the Holy Spirit Himself abode in him.”

A short silence fell.

“When did Agapit die?” enquired Tatyana.

“In October of 1095.”

“And what about Antony?” asked Victor.

“In 1073. By the way, before Antony died, a rather curious conversation between moribund Antony and Agapit had taken place. It was witnessed by a young novice, who was taking care of Antony. It was the novice, who left the record about that event in his memoirs, after he had gone to the Athos. So, when Agapit came in, Antony was lying half in a delirium and was whispering one and the same prayer over and over. Only some of its words reached the novice’s ears. Agapit looked at Antony, smiled and added to his words: ‘...and I pray unto You for salvation of my soul. Let Your holy will...’. At those words Antony started and opened his eyes. His gaze met with that of Agapit’, and his face lit up. He began to repeat hoarsely: ‘Gabriel! Gabriel!’ and stretched his arms to Agapit. Tears streamed down his senile cheeks.

“Agapit came up to him and took his hands. Meanwhile Antony, being in raptures, uttered: ‘My Lord, Agapit, it is You! How could I have failed to recognize You? How blind I was in the radiance of Your beams!’ He started to mutter hurriedly as if afraid that there wasn’t enough time for him to say everything he felt in his soul. He spoke of his youth, and

the elder, who had given him the prayer, and that he had been waiting for Him for all his life, while He turned out to be near. And now, before they had time to meet, they were to part. Agapit answered him: **‘Thou hast been by my side all thy life here. Canst thou really think I shall leave thou there? An thou hast been in unceasing Love for God, who will now bereave thee of the paradisiacal fruit created by thine own faith and heart? Thy faith hast ever thinned not during earthly moments, thy mind hast ever yielded not to the temptations of decay – with goodness being what thy conscience craved for. Heretofore thou hast asked Him not for anything save salvation of thy soul, uttering words of the prayer from thy soul. Thou hast opened thy soul wide towards God, and now God openeth His Gates afore thee. Thus delight in God’s grace. Verily I say unto thee, within this life thou hast achieved the eternal treasure – the Kingdom of God, where I shall guide thee to’.**

“Agapit and Antony closed their eyes. While Agapit whispered a prayer soundlessly, Antony breathed his last with a blissful smile on his face. And his soul went to the Paradise Gardens, for Archangel Gabriel himself prayed for him at that moment.

Sensei became thoughtful and then said, shrugging his shoulders: “Though I don’t get it why they divided the whole into parts... Ah, no matter,” Sensei slightly waved his hand, “They are to live with that...”

After that, as if coming to his senses, Sensei continued the story: “Now then, when Antony died, his body was left in the cell at Agapit’ insistence. And while Agapit was alive,

Antony's body was lying as if alive, even an unusual fragrance emanated from it.

"Yet a more remarkable story happened after Agapit's death. As I've said, there were a lot of people of that time who envied Agapit for his popularity among people. And when Agapit foretold the day of his death..."

"Foretold the day of his death?" Ruslan repeated in amazement. "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, unlike it is for an ordinary man, somersaulting in his reincarnations. As bodhi Agapit could abandon his body anytime. However, according to the rules of staying among people, a Bodhisattva must live his life in a human body to the full, irrespective of its length, short or long. And it surely was not that difficult for him to calculate the time when the Prana of the body was to expire..."

"A-ah..." drawled Ruslan.

"So, when Agapit foretold the date of his death, there were not only his disciples, harking to his last spiritual precepts, who started preparing for that day, but also his foes. They decided to take the Saint's body after his death out of the monastery and bury it in an outlandish place so that nobody could ever find it. Nevertheless, they weren't able to fulfill their plan right away, because the renown of Agapit did not wither with his death, as they'd expected. On the contrary it grew manifold. A mass pilgrimage to his body began. Four months had passed, but Agapit's body was lying imperishable, as if he had died only a day before. The flow of people didn't

cease. So the foes, consumed with their own envy and enormous hatred for the Saint, decided to steal the body of Agapit.

“They prepared meticulously for that event and thought out a plan with devoted participants, two of them being monks. On the decisive day, the 24th of February new style, their people were burning fires all day long in spite of sharp frost and hollowed out a grave in a chosen nook not far from a deep ditch. On the night of February 25th, they finally managed to carry out what they had planned. But when the doers of that truly barbarous command completed their ‘black deed’ and returned to the monastery in the morning, they found a real stir there. However, the whole commotion was not caused by the loss of Agapit’ body, as they assumed. It appeared that one monk of the community found... Agapit’ body, and not lying at that, but sitting in his cell in an unusual pose. There was a sheet of parchment in front of the body, on which a strange inscription was accurately made with new ink in Agapit’ handwriting.

“Those, who had buried Agapit’ body not so long ago, were especially terrified. There were three of them. Two of which were the monks, who actually stole the body of Agapit on orders from the top ranks. They threw it down into the grave and earthed it, and masked the place. Now then, here’s what happened exactly to them at that moment. At the sight of sitting Agapit one of the monks went mad. The other one lost his sleep forever. He never slept a wink for the rest of his life, diligently atoning for his sin by prayers. That monk subsequently became the most ardent follower of Agapit and

the most zealous keeper of his body. The third accomplice, who was of laymen, hurried to inform those who had engaged him for realization of that insidious plan. Together with the ‘customers’ he returned to the place where Agapit’s corpse was hidden. Opening the grave proved it to be empty indeed. There were no strange traces on the snow around it. The body simply disappeared from the grave and inconceivably reappeared in the cell. After that incident nobody dared to lay a finger on the body of Agapit.”

“And what was written there on that sheet of parchment?” Kostya asked with curiosity.

Sensei only smiled mysteriously and avoiding the answer he said: “By the way, this sheet of parchment had an extraordinary power, and before this relic was ‘requisitioned,’ it had been used in secret for a long time. When the parchment was put behind an icon, it started to shed holy ointment, and people miraculously healed from it. And when...”

“Why in secret?” Ruslan interrupted Sensei’s narration with his question.

“They wanted to conceal what had been written by Agapit on the parchment from people.”

“But who and why ‘requisitioned’ that sheet?” Stas asked in turn.

“That’s quite another story, and it is not related to this topic. I can only say that this temporary ‘requisition’ from human environment was connected with the threat of a complete loss of the parchment because of human envy and stupidity.”

“Still, what’s there so special that was written on it I wonder?” Kostya obstinately continued making inquiries.

“The truth,” Sensei replied and continued telling about the unusual spiritual power of the parchment of Agapit.

At that moment I had an inspiration, a ‘stroke of genius’ as Kostya liked to say. How great it would be to paint a portrait of Agapit (all the more my uncle’s friend collaborated in restoration of the Saint’s actual appearance) and put the sheet of parchment behind the portrait. That is, of course, if we could find it. The portrait would acquire an extraordinary power then. Then give it to the Lavra. Let it be available for everybody in the world! How many people would then be able to get a healing, find hope, and strengthen their faith! Only recently have I passed this terrible period of an internal commotion myself. When your life hangs by a thread, and you can neither save yourself nor understand what you’ve been living for in this world. Don’t I understand those who suffer and search for true values for their spiritual salvation in this life. A disease makes people think about their death, and death – about God. And pursuits for God bring you together with unexpected people and circumstances, changing your life drastically and opening an entirely unknown side of reality for you.

Those thoughts inspired me so much that I began to think how great it would be to realize them. Though there were no problems with Agapit’s appearance (my uncle would help me), it was not the same with the sheet of parchment... Where to search for it if it were ‘requisitioned from human environment’? Suddenly Sensei, who continued telling the

story during my exuberant reflection, fell silent and fixed his eyes at me. And then he uttered with a kindness in his voice: *“...There is nothing impossible for a wishful soul.”*

I didn't understand what was that all about. Either Sensei answered to my thoughts, judging by his look; or he ended the story, which unfortunately I had missed because of my pondering. Anyway I didn't dare to ask him about his words in public.

All the more, at the moment Nikolai Andreevich wondered: “They say the Pechersk Caves have a special microclimate, so the relics remain undecaying. Is it a peculiar feature of the surroundings?”

“Peculiar indeed,” Sensei emphasized with enigmatic intonation. “But the trick is that not all the relics of the Lavra caves were imperishable. There are a lot of remains that have decayed like ordinary corpses.”

“What does the ‘relics’ mean?” Ruslan suddenly gave his rather late question.

“Oh, you've woken up!” Eugene hemmed.

We laughed but Sensei answered seriously.

“The word ‘relics’ comes from the Old Russian language where it meant ‘bones’. But there were two concepts then: ‘body’ and ‘relics’. For example, people spoke of some Saints that they ‘lay in relics’ and some that they ‘lay in body’. Earlier in Old Rus by ‘imperishable relics’ they called simply undecayed bones. There were cases of natural mummification too. It is only in modern times that the Church has been calling both bones and mummified bodies of Saints as ‘relics’.”

“But why?” Ruslan couldn’t stop asking.

“Well, why... For instance, should an ecclesiastic, who held a high post in a religious structure, be proclaimed a Saint after his death. And suppose his body just rotted, though it had been buried, for example, in the Lavra Caves, which as you’ve said has a special microclimate,” Sensei drew Nikolai Andreevich’s attention. “But should they just take their words back, if the holiness was already proclaimed to the public? So, they extricated themselves from it as they could and smoothed over some moments in the history, lest a discord should appear among the flock. As it happened with Theodosius for example.”

“And who’s Theodosius?” Ruslan asked still more bravely.

“And what’d happened?” we also joined in.

“Theodosius? Oh, he’s the greatest joke in the history of glorification of the Russian Saints. Theodosius Pechersky is recognized as the Father of Russian monasticism,” uttered Sensei with a smile. “He is presented as an ideal example of monastic life, and all Russian monks are reckoned among his children. However, this false glorification is through no fault of nowadays pastors, because they are guided by unreliable in many respects ‘historical documents’ extant till their times. I mean not the fact of those documents existence, but the information they contain. The roots of such replacement go much deeper, precisely to the days of Agapit.

“The fame of Agapit’ wonders, deeds, healings spread rather quickly in those times. The hearsay always was: as Agapit taught, as Agapit said, as Agapit did. So, who among those high ranked ecclesiastics of the ‘flock’ would like an

ordinary monk to be honored more than their highly spiritual selves? That's why, some of the higher ecclesiastics harbored vile envy towards Agapit even during his lifetime. However, they feared to undertake anything against him, as I've already mentioned. For even their attempts of poisoning the Saint had failed. It harmed him in no way. So, his strong personality, wide renown, uncommon strength he possessed, and free-thinking inspired fear on the powers that be. Having failed to destroy Agapit neither physically nor morally, they began to act differently. They decided to put forward their own candidate for public worship and, if possible, perform his official canonization. The lot fell upon already deceased Father-Superior Theodosius, who, by the way, was not the first Father-Superior of the monastery and was far from being an ideal candidate to be canonized. However, his image was the most congenial one for those gold-lovers, whom Agapit hindered from earning money out of the name of God.

“In order to fulfil that design, there were urgently created ‘*chronicle codes*’ and ‘*Hagiography*’. Thus, already in 1077-1088 there appeared the texts of ‘*Reverend Theodosius Pechersk’s Hagiography*’, where, in fact, there was very little true information about the actual life of Theodosius, and a fat lot of fake additions. The same was with the appeared in 1077-1088 records of Nikon ‘the Great,’ as Illarion had been named in his monkhood, and who was deprived of a Metropolitan’s seat in the Saint Sophia Cathedral for his avarice. He also was irreconcilable with Agapit’ fame. Subsequently in 1093 those records were supplemented by Father-Superior John. And it was based on those records that

the *Paterikon* and the ‘*Primary Chronicle*’ of 1113, were written. That is, 18 years after Agapit’ death. However, the ‘*Chronicle*’ itself was edited later on, and further alterations were made in it.

“Thus, in 1116 when Father-Superior Sylvester of the Vydubychi Monastery, so to say thoroughly ‘remade’ the text of the ‘*Chronicle*’. By the way, it was he who interpreted the record about Andrew the First-called. When remaking the material, where it was written how Andrew the First-called had come to lay the seed in those lands – the Christ’s burden; Sylvester interpreted the ‘burden’ as a cross and the ‘seed’ as faith. And since they were exactly the records of Sylvester that came to descendants, it turns out, according to them, that Andrew the First-called raised a cross on a hill in the Kiev lands, blessing those lands, and foretold that God’s grace would shine on it.”

“And those descendants got it like in a ‘Chinese whispers’ game,” Eugene sneered. “Instead of ‘seed’ they got ‘steed,’ instead of ‘burden’ – ‘bur man’.”

“You bet,” Sensei sighed. “Now then, in addition they decided to exhume Theodosius’ body in 1091 and expose it in the Uspensky Cathedral for worshipping. But when they opened Theodosius’ cell in the Far Caves, they discovered that his relics had already decayed. The date of ceremonial transference of Theodosius’ relics to the Cathedral had been already announced. In order to conceal the incident they hurriedly started to open other graves in the cave. And again, who participated in that shady enterprise? Mark, later named the Grave-digger for that, one assistant monk, and Nestor,

further named the Chronicler, who as the matter of fact was appointed to head the 'jolly crowd'. Luckily to them they had finally found a well preserved mummified body of a recluse, an early disciple of Agapit. As soon as the next day his remains were stately pretended for Theodosius' ones. Those people didn't know whose remains those were. And those remains were unusual indeed. The person they had once belonged to had left into Nirvana or, speaking the Christian language, he got to Heaven. For yet within his lifetime he had been able to defeat death and leave the cycle of reincarnations. The monk's name was Dobroslav or, as Agapit and his disciples used to call him in a friendly manner, – Dobrynya.”

“Are those remains still being kept in the Cathedral?”

Sensei grinned.

“No, of course not. For all that, justice has triumphed. Dobrynya was delivered from scoffing in 1240. At the time of Batu Khan's invasion his remains were withdrawn by Mezhane and carried to a more deserving place.”

“Mezhane? Who are they?” Kostya asked with curiosity.

“They are people who have access to Shambala and can communicate directly with Bodhisattvas of Shambala.”

“And what about 'recluses'? What are they?” Andrei wondered in his turn.

“A recluse was a monk, who settled in a small cave-cell on his own free will and developed it in such a way that the cell communicated with the subterranean corridor only with a narrow window. This window served for the purpose of passing some frugal food though it later on. A recluse would often confine himself to some water and bread and even then

not every day. And there he would live and pray until his death.”

“I should say!” escaped Kostya’s lips. “In complete darkness and solitude?”

“Certainly. In complete renunciation of everything earthly.”

“But what for?” the guy wondered sincerely.

“It’s one of the ways to reach Nirvana.”

“Oh, man, I wouldn’t endure such a thing,” our Philosopher shook his head negatively.

“I would try,” Andrew voiced.

“Do you think it’s so simple?” Sensei asked. “Before undertaking the technique of seclusion one should have learnt at least the basics – to control his thoughts... A person didn’t just seclude himself in a dark cave, praying to God. At first he learnt a special breathing technique, next he learnt controlling his thoughts, bringing them into a stable state of agathodaemon, a positive thought, that is. Only then could this person withdraw into seclusion, doing a consecutive series of meditations bringing him to a certain level, from the simple to the complex. Ultimately the person consciously passed to Nirvana, to God, that is he liberated himself from the chain of reincarnations. It’s not that simple. Though,” Sensei shrugged his shoulders and mused: “from spiritual point of view this way is too easy and simple. Kind of a way for lazy ones. It’s very easy to retreat from human world and become a recluse-monk. However, to live in this world and come to God through doing good among people, that’s quite another story. That’s what I call the right thing! It’s hard, but it’s really

valuable.” Then he returned to the subject of his speech: “And the technique of seclusion is quite ancient. It had been practiced from time immemorial. Agapit imparted it to his disciples as a secret knowledge. Though, this technique was lost afterwards, because the last person, verily possessing it, simply found nobody deserving to entrust this knowledge to.

“Imitating the disciples of Agapit, many people tried to seclude themselves, knowing absolutely nothing of the practice itself. As a result, they either did not endure the seclusion or went mad. It’s natural. If a person cannot manage his fears, negative thoughts, has a constant domination of cacodaemon, it will only increase manyfold in seclusion. It’s almost impossible to endure a seclusion for an untrained person.”

A short silence fell.

“So, it means that Nestor was a bit insincere?” Victor asked.

“He just wrote what his dignitaries had charged him with writing. He was to prepare a book of Theodosius ‘*Hagiography*’ for canonization. In simple words, he was to create an image for worshiping. That meant that Theodosius was to be written about accordingly, up to the mark. So Nestor did. He took only some facts of Theodosius’ real life and copied the rest of his ‘holiness’ word for word from other sources. You see, the author wasn’t a witness of the actual events. When Theodosius came to Antony’s cave in 1056, Nestor was still singing in swaddling clothes, as they say. That’s why Nestor was charged with writing the work and that is why several followers of Theodosius from old monks, who

had caught the period of his being a hegumen, were assigned to him, as helpers so-to-say, in order for the history to be more ‘veracious’.”

“Now, that’s a fine credible ‘history’!” Eugene sneered.

“What do you expect? There is more in it than meets the eye. At that time The Church needed an image of life of the first saint in Rus. So they chose Father-Superior Theodosius for his ‘outstanding service’. They couldn’t choose Agapit, could they?!” Sensei laughed. “Who was needed? A hegumen. So, Nestor did his best. He took a little from Theodosius’ real life, concerning his childhood and youth in the monastery, and cribbed the rest from various Greek and Palestinian Saints’ hagiographies, as his ‘fathers’ had incited him. In Rus there already were many translations of ancient patericons, ascetic and edifying treatises as well as ascetic hagiographies. The most readable and favorite ones were the hagiographies of Saint Antony, Theodore the Studite, Theodore of Edessa, John Chrysostom. There also existed less popular but in full versions ‘*Hagiographies*’ of Palestinian sixth century Saints, whom Cyril of Scythopolis had written about. Such were hagiographies of Euthymius the Great, Sabbas the Sanctified, Theodosius the Cenobiarch, John the Silent. In short, there was a lot to choose from for creating a new image.

“Nestor’s fancy, for example, was taken by hagiographies of Saint Euthymius and Sabbas. That’s why the new image of Theodosius turned out alike Sabbas’ in many respects. Sometimes even literal extracts were used in the text. Spiritual exploits he copied from the Oriental Asceticism, then added some elements from Saints’ hagiographies, and there you

have the image of the great Theodosius, the father of Russian monasticism.

“In truth, however, Theodosius was far from being such as he was presented. It is true that he had a difficult childhood in a rich family. His father died when Theodosius turned 13. His mother used to beat him often. The chap’s state of mind was quite unbalanced. In short, he was a feeble fellow, always seeking to please those who were stronger. So, when he came to Antony in Kiev, having escaped from his mother again, out of kindness Antony accepted him, hoping to re-educate. At that time there was a small community living in the cave together with Antony. Agapit was among them. He warned Antony concerning that ‘meek’ fellow: ‘That’s a snake thou cherishest in thy bosom’. But Antony let the guy stay out of pity. By the way, Nestor described this episode of Theodosius coming to Antony and alleged refuse of Antony to accept him, in his own perspective, exactly duplicating it from the hagiography of Saint Sabbas, though it had nothing to do with what happened in reality.

“As for Theodosius, though shy when being around fraternity, inside him there was a ‘seething cauldron’ and far not of good thoughts. Theodosius felt that Agapit could see him through and that he knew his concealed thoughts. So, he did his best not to meet the Saint’s eye once again. And afterwards, throughout his entire life he experienced inner fear before Agapit, for Theodosius was performing deeds incompatible with spiritual life.

“What Agapit had foretold Antony about that guy, so it happened. Later when Varlaam, a son of John, who was the

first boyar of Prince Izyaslav – joined the monkhood, there flared up a scandal with the high and mighty. From entire fraternity, Theodosius, due to his feeble spirit, became an informant of Izyaslav. He let Antony down more than once later on. And afterwards when Varlaam, being the first hegumen, came to Izyaslav asking for lands above the caves, Izyaslav agreed to give it, stipulating that a pleasing to him ecclesiastic would be heading the fraternity. Varlaam had no other choice but to agree. The same year Izyaslav transferred Varlaam (who was set in the head of the community by Antony in due course, when Antony himself became an ordinary monk) to the Dimitrievsky monastery; and his place was taken by the ‘insider’ – Theodosius. However, Nestor presented it in such a way that the fraternity itself had chosen Theodosius to become its Father-Superior for his ‘monastic exploits’.”

“‘Exploits,’ right,” Volodya sneered, “One would be certainly given a good dressing-down for such ‘exploits’ if it were with us.”

“An unspoken separation existed ever since that time in Pechersk monastery,” Sensei continued. “The followers of Agapit strived for spiritual life. While Theodosius and his followers, – including a prominent among them Nikon, who had made monk of Theodosius and whom Theodosius was smitten with a peculiar love for,” Sensei smiled, “exploited their position for their own enrichment. Having obtained what he wanted, Theodosius magnified and consolidated his power so much that life turned not so sweet even for Izyaslav.”

“Haw,” Nikolai Andreevich said pensively. “You shouldn’t expect anything good from a person like Theodosius, when he is given power. A stable depressive state in adolescence often leads to serious damages of mind and abnormal psychopathologies. Such adolescent poorly adapts to life among his peers, quite often loosing sense of reality in the world around. And this in turn may lead to sense of inferiority, self-deficiency, and understated self-appraisal, a whole complex of fears. As a rule such people are shy, timid, and tend to withdraw into themselves. But as soon as they get a chance to have real power over people, they show quite a number of mental illnesses...”

Eugene listened to the words of our psychotherapist and said: “Quite a Chikatilo portrait... He was all shy and modest in public too.”

“Well, where do you think maniacs come from?” the psychotherapist said seriously. “Megalomania has done even more sinister things to people.”

“Absolutely right,” Sensei agreed. “Theodosius was serving his own megalomania in the first place. As for the spiritual, he was awfully lazy at that. All his prayers were just an outward show. Looking at spiritual work of Agapit and his disciples, he taught the other monks to keep vigil and pray in the night. Meanwhile he slept and so well that he had to be waken up in the mornings. Later on it was presented as the secrecy of his asceticism. Jesus said once about those like Theodosius: ‘For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers’.

“Theodosius was painted in eulogies as a ‘bibliophile and enlightened person’. It’s a sheer anecdote taking into account his poor knowledge of grammar. But then he loved to edify others at every turn, to exalt himself so that others would bow low, and kiss on his hands, and call him the ‘holy father’. Showing himself as next door to God was an integral part of his nature. But, you know, Jesus said: ‘Call no man on the earth your father, for one is your Father, He Who is in heaven’.

“Theodosius was fond of edifying not only his ‘flock’ but also ordinary laymen, showing himself as a fierce and irreconcilable stickler of Christianity, drumming them that ‘he who praises another faith, walks on the verge of heresy’. He used to repeat Agapit’ words ‘God is one and the faith in Him is one’. But while Agapit spoke about the one inner faith inherent to every human aspiring to God, which was the same as what Jesus had been teaching; Theodosius on the other hand twisted those words from religious point of view as well as that of his Animal nature, saying that ‘only my faith is true, and others are worthless’. He was especially fond of edifying wealthy people, regularly visiting their feasts. He had made believe his duty was to edify the princes while their duty was to listen to his precepts. That is, to call the tune over powers that be. Such ‘pharisees’ people were mentioned even in the Gospel, canons of which Theodosius was trying to proclaim: ‘But all their works they do to be seen of men. They make their phylacteries broad, and enlarge the fringes of their garments’; ‘And love the place of honor at feasts, and the best seats in the synagogues’; ‘the salutations in the marketplaces,

and to be called `Rabbi, Rabbi` by men.’; ‘But don't you be called `Rabbi` for one is your teacher, the Christ, and all of you are brothers.’; ‘Neither be called masters, for one is your Master, the Christ’...”

And then Tatyana, offended by the words about the single faith, said: “Somehow I don’t see the difference between words of Theodosius and those of Agapit about single faith. I think Theodosius was right. As my granny used to say, one should have faith only in Christianity because it is the only religion leading to God.”

“Well, you see, your grandmother considered it this way because she had been brought up in a Christian environment. And someone’s grandmother, living in the Middle East, would tell her granddaughter that Islam is the only true religion. A Chinese grandmother would say that the right religion is Buddhism, and so on. But all these are just exterior conventionalities, ultimately leading – provided that a person completely tunes himself to a positive wave, that is domination of his agathodaemon (and not to supporting aggressive fanaticism of the cacodaemon), it all leads to one and the same inner result. A person may often not even surmise what processes take place within him. He only begins to understand what the real faith in God is, feeling an unusual fit of spiritual energy. That is, everyone who sincerely believes in God – no matter how they address Him, ultimately comes to one and the same door and steps over one and the same threshold. It’s said that many a way lead to God, but narrow is the Gate.”

“Now, as for me, I seem to understand it all, I guess,” Kostya began reasoning. “But, to be honest, it’s by and large too hard to believe in all this... Well, take that Agapit, for example, that the Holy Spirit abode in him... How does this Holy Spirit look like, anyway? And was it really that important for Ancient Rus? And why up to now haven’t I ever heard or read about it before? Why only those, like you say, twisted stories came to us? Whom do we have to believe anyway? And if there is God, why he admitted that saints were taunted, Jesus was crucified, and the truth about Agapit was concealed?..”

Sensei sighed wearily and said: “Don’t try to understand the works of God, which are much concealed from people. It is equivalent to an attempt of an ant to swallow an elephant. A human brain is very limited. Man cannot perceive elementary things: how he hears, how he sees, how he thinks, how he lives, and who in truth he is. By and large he doesn’t even know what death is, to say nothing of his ability to understand, with his limited brain, what the infinity of the Universe is. The only thing man can do is either believe, or not believe.”

“Well, how’s that, believe or not believe?” Kostya retorted, having relished arguing. “But any belief needs evidences, even belief in God!”

“Evidences, huh, is that what you say?!” Sensei’s voice changed. “Go to a mirror and take a careful look at yourself. If you do believe you’re a random compound of amino acids that led to mutation of a monkey resulting in its becoming wise, then why do you need to search for God? Go to the

market, buy a banana, and enjoy your life! But if you don't agree with this, and if you believe you are a wonderful creature of God, how can you demand from God evidences of His existence?! Who are you, and who is God?"

Sensei spoke with such a power in his voice and his gaze that Kostya, involuntarily taken aback, shrank, and cast down his eyes. He seemed to wish the ground to swallow him up. A short silence fell.

"Haw," Nikolai Andreevich broke silence. "It turns out that Theodosius served Caesar, and Agapit served God."

"Absolutely right," Sensei answered already in his usual voice. "Starting from that time a separation took place in the Lavra. While some monks performed true spiritual exploits, including living in seclusion; at the same time the others enjoyed self-will, dissoluteness, egoism, and love for gold, fleecing the laymen by showing them the places, where true monks, aspiring to God, were accomplishing their exploits... So, as ever among people: such a holy place they defiled by their avarice; twisted everything, and stirred up. But it could be quite different, you know. For the Holy Spirit Himself created His Abode there. Oh, people, people..."

Sensei became silent for some time and then uttered pensively: "All in all, Agapit influenced the Ancient Rus' greatly and not only it... And though this influence was indirect, it changed the future world. Though, it wasn't actually Agapit' task as a Bodhisattva for that time. It was rather an own initiative of Agapit. Well, in short, a bodhi is a bodhi.

“Agapit founded a spiritual abode where throughout all time of its existence nobody has ever counted how many people could get a healing from lethal diseases and, thank God, are getting cured still. But this is not so essential. The most important fact is that many could get spiritual health there, which is more important than physical one. On a large scale the Pechersk Monastery’s name has resounded for ages owing to Agapit as well as his relics, in which there still remains the healing power of the Holy Spirit.

“Even nowadays many people from various countries and of various religions, even those who consider themselves ‘atheists’ spend more time near the relics of Agapit when attending the Pechersk Caves. Why? It’s because people intuitively feel true Holiness, for soul cannot be deceived, you know. But if only people could know that they can ask not only for healing of their bodies, but, what’s more important, for salvation of their souls – especially during the days when the Holy Spirit abides in the relics, beginning every 25th of February and lasting for the whole week, – now that would bring incomparably more good for their souls. **For there is no holier place on Earth during those days other than that one, where any person, irrespective of his religion, can be so close to God’s Ear with his petition. And such a chance has each person, who can use it during the seven days of a year. Since the following year may not come for him. For brief are human days at the crossroads of times. For sorrowful are their deeds before the face of God. Every human instant is already on the scale. And there is no concern for souls more important than the craving for**

finding salvation. It is not in the outside faith, but in the inner faith that the key to the Gate is. Only a sightless man, blinded with dust, can fail to see it.

“All a human is able to give to God is his faith and his sincere prayer. There is nothing else he can give to God. For everything around a human is God’s creation. It doesn’t befit to offer the Master His own property. You see, God needs nothing from human, except his Faith and Love! What can a small child give to his Parent to gladden His heart? Only Love and Respect.”

Sensei stopped, fixing his eyes at the fire. Then he pronounced pensively, seeming to speak to all and sundry: “While you’re alive, human, you have a chance to beg an eternity of God’s love for your soul. And while you have this CHANCE, go to Agapit on the holy week and pray unto the Holy Spirit only for your soul. For your body is perishable, it is dust. And all earthly concerns are empty. But remember, human, that everything you promise in your petition before God, do fulfil! For He, like every parent, brooks no lies; He forgives, but does not entrust after...”

Sensei took his eyes off the fire and looked at us attentively. His eyes were shining with some enormous power and purity. And then he voiced:

“Dare, human! Verily I say, as you are not to avoid death, so you are not to avoid the Judgment of God!”

A silence fell, and no one dared to disturb it. The dawn was breaking. A bird started singing its tuneful song. Looking above the sea, Sensei sighed and said in a tired voice:

“Alright, guys, I guess I’ve fatigued you with my stories. It’s high time for you to rest...”

Everybody dispersed and went to sleep. Only Sensei stayed on the shore near the fire burning low. His meditative look was directed to the East, where the first rays of light were swiftly tearing the darkness of the night sky, clearing the way for the Sun.

Sayings of Sensei.

1.If you’re indulgent towards evil, you won’t notice how you become indifferent towards good. However, when punishing evil it is necessary to be able to stop at the proper time. Only this way you can avoid the danger, hiding within yourself. The vanquishing one does not pride himself, he does not violate, he does not exult. He vanquishes... himself in the first place. So, when punishing evil one should remember about good.

2.People often want to look with dignity not in the eyes of God, not before their own Conscience, but before other people. The entire reason of this evil hides in human desire. People value only what they want to see as valuable for themselves. And what they do not want to see as valuable for themselves, has no significance for them. Envy, hatred, embitterment grow not because of external stimulus, but they grow from the inner root of pride.

3.The whole world toils at causing as many desires for a human as possible to purchase something allegedly necessary for his becoming absolutely happy. The whole

world trades in illusions. It's weaved of lies, and its threads are bonded by envy. People themselves produce an illusion, feed it with impurity of their thoughts, and they live in this illusion, misapprehending it for the genuine reality.

4. Whatever power a human may have on the Earth, he will never be satisfied with it, because he will remain a slave of his own desires all the same. A true power is the power over one's own self.

5. It is foolish to give a fish to a hungry man, for he would eat it up and get hungry again. To give him a fishing tackle and teach him to use, that is much wiser.

6. While there lives love in the soul, parting is impossible. The main thing is that you know you love that person. How can you lose him, if he is truly dear to your soul, if Memory and Love for him continue living within yourself...

7. Human is temporary. Death puts an end to old age and torments, setting free from the burden of existence. It's a reward for loving souls. For, by and large, we don't become different only because we die...

8. Every person doesn't live in essence his real life. He picks an image he likes and plays a role, and usually even more than one at that. And he gets the feel of this role to such extent that he starts thinking it's in truth his real life. Like any actor he stays unsatisfied with his role and dreams of a new one, where he would see himself more important. Whatever the person achieves, it seems to him that he hasn't been performed his major role yet. He stays

in his dreams all the time, amusing himself with these fairy-tales.

9.Wouldn't it be better to quit dreaming and choose a role in this life worthy of the title of Human? To become the one you should be. So that when going to sleep, you would be peaceful that your conscience is pure. So that when dying, you would not be ashamed of your thoughts and deeds. So that even when standing before God, as Christians say, at Judgment of God, you would have something to say. So that your basket with good deeds would be full, and basket with bad ones would be empty. That's what it is to be Human. For life's too short. And it's given to man in order for him to prove to God that he is worthy the title of Human...

10.Become yourself, your Essence. Life and death as one stream. The Essence moves within the stream. In its movement it acquires the eternal. No one can truly appreciate a storming stream, without entering its waters, for it is the future. No one can enter the same water twice, for it is the past. There is only the motion of the stream, for it is the present. Sooner or later any water reaches its source and becomes the source, returning to its primordial pureness.

11.Clothing are a merely a particle of the one process of creation and destruction. There is nothing as stupid as pleasing the whims of your clothing. Because it is the essence of your clothing that locks you up in the limits of its narrow space, estranging you from the world and plunging you into doubts and fears, engendered by that

estrangement. It makes you continue living for the sake of its forms and external illusions, made for others by its appearance, embroiling yourself into greater concerns about it. Every form has its own rules. And the rules are merely a scope of contrasts.

Your clothing has limit. It gets worn out in time. Whereas you are free not to wear it. But having worn out one, you put on another. However, chasing the limitless without breaking the limit is ruinous.

12. There is no sense in chasing a lifeless dry bur, for it has no life in it. It is a lifeless thing, which has nothing to show itself with, but for its thorns. Lifeless defends lifeless. Lifeless will not become living because there is life, and living will not become lifeless because there is death. Both death and life depend on something, there is something that unites them.

13. Eulogizing those who see you just as prospective food is fatuous. You were fascinated with the flying height of the bird. You followed it thinking about your benefit. But the flying bird's pursuits were quite different. Though it flies high above the desert, it feeds on its victims. The bird that eats carrion doesn't suffer from variations of its 'dish', for rot is its essence. You've deceived yourself. You've seen the reality, and your illusions disappeared. But your reality is an illusion too. The big bird was but a shadow before the essence of things. Things have a property to be born within the Formless and to return to the Base.

14. He who relies on the external can only conjecture. He who relies on the internal has credible knowledge. Body is decay. Its essence is dust. You could have acquired the Wisdom of eternity. Your single step was enough. But the fear your decay perishing was stronger. The decay ran away. You were left in anguish, for the Spirit always aspires to the eternity. The Wisdom of eternity cannot be perceived through power of decay, for it would turn it into nonsense. Running away from fear does not mean salvation. To kill the fear within is to obtain perfection. While perfection allows to make a step to the edge. For only at the edge can you perceive the source of Wisdom.

15. A phantom resembling Wisdom only seems to be Wisdom. Empty vanity is the beginning of discord. He, who wants to seem a Wiseman to boast before others, is rushing about alone, dreaming of fame. But his essence is emptiness in a shell of Ego. When knowledge comes from ignorance, there is no end for questions.

16. The sky and the Sun rule over changes. They are able to transform, so that every living thing follow its nature. The sky and the Sun multiply the full and destroy the empty. The desert rules motion in stillness. The desert is lifeless, but it can create mirages to deceive the living with its illusions. The desert destroys the full and fills the empty. Whereas grains of sand in its mass follow the moving of sands, therefore the elements determine its direction.

17. You've come to the place as given to you from birth. You were brought up among what was pleasing to your

nature. You've reached maturity in what became your destiny. And you will leave for the place as given to you by death. Death is just a beginning of life. Life is just a successor of Death. Life's coming cannot be rejected. Life's leaving cannot be stopped.

18. A stranger's trace isn't similar to that of your own. Traces appear where they are left, but they aren't those who leave them. Following another's trace you were chasing external images, not knowing their inner essence. But everyone tracks such path for himself, that answers his authentic purposes. The desert covers all traces with its sands in time, lest a new Wayfarer should repeat mistakes of the previous one. That is why own experience is important. In order to become a Human one should track his own path.

19. Human foot takes up little space in the endless Desert. Nevertheless, it can step where nobody has ever trodden. By stepping where nobody has ever trodden, Human is able to go farther and obtain greater. Knowledge of his mind is not vast, but Human, entrusting to the Unknown, is able to reach the One, Who created him.

20. He can be perceived, but He cannot be passed on. He can be reached, but He cannot be apprehended. He can be Loved, but He cannot be embraced. He can be understood in the Beginning, but He cannot be cognized to the End. For He is the One, Who created everything. For He is the One, Creating with His Will.

21. Gold indeed is litter for soul and temptation for thoughts. It is filth, which many thirst for, but which in truth is a shadowy delusion. The true value for a monk is in sincere prayer for his soul. It is not satiety of a belly and health of a body that one needs to be concerned about. For whatever food you eat, sooner or later you will be hungry. And whatever health you've got, sooner or later your flesh will die. While the soul is eternal. And only it is worthy of a true concern.

22. It doesn't befit to disturb God with anything except for salvation of your own soul. Ask not for your body or for your health; it is not the belly of yours you should concern yourself with – all this is empty decay, insatiable in desires. For there is no petition more deserving, than a petition for salvation of your own soul.

23. There is nothing impossible for a wishful soul.

24. Brief are human days at the crossroads of times. For sorrowful are their deeds before the face of God. Every human instant is already on the scale. And there is no concern for souls more important than the craving for finding salvation. It is not in the outside faith, but in the inner faith that the key to the Gate is. Only a sightless man, blinded with dust, can fail to see it.

25. Dare, human, verily I say, as you are not to avoid death, so you are not to avoid the Judgment of God.

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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, win victory over oneself and do real good deeds. The books of the writer - **"Sensei of Shambala"** (four volumes), **"Ezoosmos"**, **"Birds and a Stone"**, **"Crossroads"**, **"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.

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