



Chapter 3. Part One. Inside.

“Vasya, Vasya, come to the window,” I hear Vovan’s familiar voice in my sleep.

“Vovan, what took you so long?” I shout happily through the bars, touching the cold metal with my forehead.

“Hush, Vasya, don’t shout, I am here illegally,” Vovan whispers, looking around. “I gave the guards two hundred bucks in order to get to the window. We only have five minutes.”

I take cigarettes and matches from Vovan and start smoking right away.

“Don’t worry, Vasya, I have good connections with the ministry, I might be able to get you out of here. Although you will have to spend some time here, whatever happens. First and foremost, you need to hire a good lawyer. He’ll be able to close your case in six months and you’ll get out of here.”

“Have you lost your mind, Vovan?! What six months are you talking about?” I shout, unable to hold in my anger, forgetting that Vovan could be jailed for being there illegally. “Get me out of here right now. Didn’t I give you five thousand bucks two weeks ago. Give it to somebody, it’s big money for the cops.”

“I don’t have it anymore, Vasya, I spent it on safrole oil, nitroethane and other chemicals. And when the police arrested you, I flushed it down the toilet.”

“Well, Vovan, what else is there to do? Call my wife, tell her to sell our apartment and come here. Something has to be done.”

“OK, I’ll contact Lena today. Look, the guard is pointing at his watch, it’s time for me to go, time’s up. Don’t worry, it’s going to be alright. The day after tomorrow you’ll be transferred to a better jail. Be strong, hold on. I hope to see you soon. Don’t worry, you’ll soon be out of here. We’ll do everything we can to get you out,” Vovan says, waving his hand before he disappeared into the darkness.

“I’m counting on you,” I shout after him, for some reason not believing his words.

Chapter 3. Part Two. Outside.

“Dymkov, I told you everything will be alright. Here’s a report for the three months, and here is the profit – ten thousand dollars. Not too shabby, don’t you think?”

“Ten grand is not bad,” Dymkov replies, making a serious and slightly discontent face. “But this sum will go to Sam. You received a salary of sixty thousand rubles for the three months and returned ten grand to Sam, and what about me?”

“And this is for you. Here, as we agreed, your ten per cent commission off my salary,” I take a bag of money out of my pocket with a smile.

“That’s much better,” Dymkov says with a big grin, stashing the envelope in his table drawer. “If we’re done discussing money, why don’t you go ahead and tell me about your relationship with GosNarkoKontrol1?”

“We seem to have settled everything, why?”

“They’ve been checking the club frequently, recently. We have nothing to be afraid of, we’ve got no drug circulation. But I wouldn’t want them to shut Hemp down.”

“Why would they shut it down? I don’t have drugs in my store either. We have three months of negotiations behind us, everything has been settled. They tried to shut us down for propaganda, but I have some connections in the city that helped me straightened that out. Too bad they didn’t let us use the seven-leaf marijuana symbol in commercials.”

“Damn bastards!” Dymkov says, inhaling a joint that he has just fired up. What about ‘Red Poppy’ candies? Isn’t that propaganda right there, Vasya?”

“The GosNarkoKontrol people told me that these are the last days of ‘Red Poppy’ candies. They are about to be renamed ‘Red Valley’ later on this year.”

“They must be out of their minds. Instead of fighting heavy drugs, they’re involved in some sort of nonsense.”

“Damn it! Forget about the candies. I had to sign a paper saying I won’t give any interviews without a comment from GosNarkoKontrol. Now I have a female officer who gives interviews together with me. These days any article about Hemp in the mass media ends with her comment: “GosNarkoKontrol cannot ban sales of clothes made from hemp, as it does not contain any narcotic substances. However, our youth should understand that hidden promotion of drugs is attached to it. This wear is not magic; entrepreneur Vasiliy Karavaev is using this infamous drug to make his dirty money on it.”

“Assholes! It’s okay to advertise booze and cigarettes, but it’s not okay to sell clothes made from hemp. They want everybody to be alcoholics. They want everybody to be dumb. Look at their faces, Vasya,” Dymkov says, all excited, pointing at a group of young people outside the window, drinking beer at the club entrance.

“Yeah...it’s kind of hard to call that a face. They don’t seem to be fortunate enough to be blessed with intellect. All they care about is getting some booze after work and getting in a fight. I can’t see any other desires in their eyes.”

“Exactly...” Dymkov adds after a long pause, taking a sweet cannabis bud out of a bag.

“It’s good that Lisyutsky schmoozed GosNarkoKontrol for us. If it weren’t for him, we wouldn’t be able to sell our merchandize.”

“How do you know Lisyutsky, Vasya? Tell me how you managed to make an appointment with the chief of GosNarkoKontrol?” Dymkov asks, reclining in an armchair, handing me an empty cigarette ready to be stuffed with marijuana.

“I’ve known Konstantin Sergeyeovich Lisyutsky for a long time. A highly intelligent person, a professor, he opened the Psychology Department at the State University. He used to be my professor at university. He wrote several books on drug abuse and drug addiction. For many years he’s been actively fighting hard drugs, opening free rehabilitation centers and offering psychological support to former drug abusers around the city. Once when I was a student, he invited me to watch him work with junkies in one of those psychological support centers. He showed me some miraculous things. He was able to get registered junkies back from the other side, inducing a trance to make them believe in a happy life without drugs. He really put his soul into helping people and gave each of them a bit of his heart, receiving a pittance for his work. At that time I was exporting Chinese stereos from Poland. I was eager to help those people, so I gifted a stereo to their center. At that time minimal funds were allocated in the federal budget for such social projects. Lisyutsky has a good command of a unique technique of hypnosis. Giving up drugs is easy, he says, it only takes a week of going cold turkey. It takes a strong will

not to resume taking drugs, and this strong will is usually something drug abusers don't have. And that is what he focuses on: making those people strong willed. Former junkies come to him during their hard times and tell him about their problems. He listens to them, puts them into a trance and sets them on leading a happy life without drugs. For somebody to fall into trance, he needs to listen to special relaxing music at that moment. To cut a long story short, my gift was just what was needed. It was then that Lisyutsky told me: 'If you are ever in trouble, give me a call. I will help you with anything I can.'"

"I just wonder, Vasya, how is it that your drug-fighting professor agreed to help our Hemp? Marijuana is a scheduled drug, isn't it?"

"Well, unlike GosNarkoKontrol, Lisyutsky knows the difference between light and heavy drugs. I've talked to him. He thinks that marijuana does less harm than alcohol or tobacco. One should beware of heroin and cocaine and their derivatives, everything else is toys."

"I wonder, Vasya, how did he manage to convince a GosNarkoKontrol colonel to let you sell your merchandize?"

"Oh, that was a hell of a circus. I can tell you, if you have time."

"I never do, Vasya. But I am interested to hear about your visit to GosNarkoKontrol."

"When Lisyutsky and I came GosNarkoKontrol and entered the colonel's room, he was in a meeting. The cops were sitting there with sour, hungover faces, drinking water and discussing the possibility of getting our store banned. They didn't expect me to show up with Lisyutsky. When the colonel saw us he jumped to his feet: 'Good morning, Konstantin Sergeyeovich, we didn't expect to see you here. How should we take it? You are the main anti-drugs ideologist in town and you are here to defend this individual here today?' He pointed his finger at me. Lisyutsky said: 'Vasiliy has done nothing wrong. He doesn't sell drugs, one may say, he's on our side.' 'We don't understand you, Konstantin Sergeyeovich,' the colonel made a face that was half surprised, half dumb. 'You shouldn't be surprised, comrade colonel. You've seen banners around the city advertising Hemp. Did you look at the slogan that's written there?' 'That's what we are here for, Konstantin Sergeyeovich. We're having a meeting to discuss whether or not Hemp is propaganda of the drug cannabis,' the colonel said, pointing at a newspaper on his table that featured my picture and the heading 'How entrepreneur Karavaev became a cannabis dealer.' 'It's too bad, comrade colonel, that you haven't read their slogan. It says right there: 'Hemp... and no addiction.' Do you have any idea how the average Joe becomes a drug addict?' Lisyutsky asked him, and not waiting for him to reply, started to explain. 'Usually, a young person decides to try an illegal drug because it is considered cool in his circle of friends. He is not a child anymore, and by doing this he proves that he is an adult and he's not afraid of punishment. 'I also want to be cool' he declares to the world outside when trying ganja for the first time. So there, thanks to our 'entrepreneur Vasiliy', young men have an alternative for being cool without having to do drugs. Putting on clothes supposedly made from a 'drug', they automatically associate themselves with the 'cool, adult and advanced' category of people. Now they don't have to prove how cool they are by smoking these drugs. Not everyone wants to be a junky when they are young, but everyone wants to be cool. Nowadays almost every main character in contemporary movies and books smokes a joint at least once. Otherwise, he's not cool! That's our reality these days.' "There is some truth in your words, Konstantin Sergeyeovich. Had you not come along, we would have made it illegal for your protégé to sell his merchandize,' the colonel said grinning, and looked at me with disdain. 'But since you've come today, Konstantin Sergeyeovich, would you please rate our project,' the colonel said. "We want to lobby a law in the State Duma, according to which all students applying to university would have to pass a drug test in order to be admitted. Whoever doesn't pass would be turned around and kicked the hell out of the higher education system. How do you like our new project?" Lisyutsky opened his mouth with astonishment. 'This is a blatant abuse of human rights,' he said. The colonel replied: "What rights are you talking about? We shouldn't waste our time on junkies. You write books about the harm of drugs, Konstantin Sergeyeovich. We should all fight this vice any way possible. Human rights will remain untouched.' Lisyutsky did not argue, he only added: 'Well, well, we will see. Then we left GosNarkoKontrol, got in my Jeep, and sat there in silence for a while. I took out my

Amsterdam pipe and put some ganja into it. ‘Would you like to try, Konstantin Sergeevich, I grew this strain of marijuana myself. In Canada, California, Israel and some European countries they sell it in pharmacies, it is considered medicinal marijuana.’ Do you know, Dymkov, what his answer was? He said: ‘I do it very rarely, but sometimes I allow myself to smoke with good people.’ We had a puff of hydroponic ganja, reclined and started to discuss a group of young people passing by our car with bottles of beer in their hands and cursing. They looked exactly like the people who are drinking cheap booze outside the windows at your club entrance now. Once they finish, Dymkov, they will enter your club to smash someone’s head in. Smoking pot is not a matter of ‘like – don’t like’ for Lisyutsky. It’s not a matter of mental helplessness or a matter of flirting with anarchists such as myself. For him, it’s a matter of understanding the fact that the world we live in is not simple. Smoking pot with me is an opportunity for him to get to know the reasons behind mental struggles and methods of salvation and demise...”

“Vasya, why did you switch to talking about the club? What did your conversation with Lisyutsky result in?” Dymkov interrupts me after I lose my train of thought.

“Yeah, do you know what Lisyutsky told me? ‘You’re doing a good thing, Vasya. If somebody gives up alcohol thanks to weed and uses it to relax instead, the world will change for the better. Weed has helped many people abstain from the terrible habit of getting drunk every day. Many people have given up hard drugs thanks to it. Lots of people, smoking it occasionally, lead a socially responsible life and take care of their own business. And the most important thing is that everybody who quits drinking, also changes their social circle. If all they used to talk about was business, vodka and prostitutes, now they go to the movies and read books. They have increased their level of spirituality, so to speak. I wish the GosNarkoKontrol people could understand it. You have just seen yourself how they fight drugs. They put all drugs into one category. Heroin and marijuana are one and the same thing to them. How does the youth react to that? What can a young person think about it without the necessary information? ‘If marijuana and heroin are the same thing, why not indulge in the latter?’ This is how the new generation gets addicted to heavy drugs. We will see, Vasya, what your Hemp will turn out to be. Personally, as a Psychology Doctor, I don’t see any threat to society coming from your project.”

“If I didn’t stop you, Vasya, you could go on talking for hours on end,” Dymkov interrupts my story. “Well, Lisyutsky is a diamond, such wise people are rarely to be found in our city. Okay, Vasya, go take care of your business; I’ve plenty of things on my to-do list. Good job, I’ll give the money to Sam later today and tell him about Lisyutsky.”