



Hospital

MAINE

НЕ ВЫСПАЛСЯ DREAMS

ТЫ СДЕЛАЛ НАМ ПРОБЛЕМУ САМ ВИНОВАТ.

ASISH

Откройте, сэр, эту полиция... Сопrotивление бесполезно. ВАШ дом окружен.

НАДО НАЧИНАТЬ ПРИВЫКАТЬ К ПЕРЦУ ...

СДЕЛАНО

В Непале

ХАУ МАЧ?

Two rupies

СТОП, ЕГОП. ТЫ ВОИ, ЕВРЕЯМ, СМОТРИ КАКИЕ ВУТЕР-БРОДИ ЕДЕМ, А МНЕ ПУСТЬШЮ ПРОДАТЬ ХОТОВИ?

PREAD

EGG

KETCHUP

Ten rupies

Mari Joe

Chapter 7. Part One. Inside.

To my disappointment, I don't manage to get any sleep while in the hospital. Having fixed my wounds with a rusty medicinal needle, the doctors declare that I will survive, give me some sedative pills and send me back to my cell. "I've got to do something!" my poor brain starts playing the usual tune again. Should I try to escape? Jump out at the intersection and run for my life? But where to? I must get out of here somehow. My chances of doing it right now are equal to zero. I'll get caught and then ten years in jail will be guaranteed. There are three cops from the drug police and two jail guards together with me in the police car.

"Hey, Neanderthal, will you see your boss today?" I ask a tall Indian with a scar on his hand.

"Yes, why? Do you want me to tell him something?"

"Tell him that I've understood everything. I'm ready to pay him money, just like Tamir. Tell him that."

"OK, he will stop by your cell before the hearing," the officer smiles and hands me a cigarette.

Before leaving me alone in my cell, each of the people accompanying me makes me promise that I will not try to slit my wrists again. The Indian guard gives me a cigarette. Having taken two Valium pills that the doctor gave me, I quickly fall into a deep sleep. I dream of a house: a big, spacious Indian house with lots of rooms. I'm standing at the window and notice police cars pulling up outside. The cops get out and start to knock on my door.

"Open the door, sir, this is the police. Don't resist, your house is surrounded."

At this moment I realize that I have a suitcase full of drugs in my possession. I start rushing about the house. I must hide them somewhere! No, I must run! No, I must hide the drugs first! The loud sound of the iron door drags me out of my sleep, relieving me of the need to make such a serious decision – whether I should run or hide the suitcase full of drugs. Pashish himself, the chief of the drug police, is standing in front of me. Before entering the cell, he starts shouting something in a language I don't understand.

"Why did you do this?" he points at the bandage on my arm. "I will arrange for another five years in jail for you, if you ever attempt to do it again."

"I understand everything, sir. It will not happen again."

"Why did you do this?"

"I have a little daughter going to school here, in India. My wife has a breast tumor; she needs money for her surgery. You've taken all my money, how am I supposed to look my child in the eyes and tell her she can't go to school? What will I tell my wife? Should I tell her I don't have the money for her surgery, that I'm looking at ten to twenty years in jail, and that I don't have money to hire a lawyer?"

"You gave us a problem, you've only got yourself to blame," Pashish deadpans, giving me a very serious look.

"Everybody makes mistakes, give me a chance. I am ready to pay you any amount of money every month, just like Tamir."

"I don't need anything from you. Tamir is my friend. Of all the Russians, he's the only one who pays me money. Promise me that you will never try

to commit suicide again, and I will help you.”

“I promise.”

“What did you use to cut your hand?”

Pointing at the pile of trash and hundreds of flies buzzing around it, I feel like a schoolboy that has just messed up and gotten himself into trouble.

“I found it there.”

Pashish frowns scornfully, turns around in silence and steps out, leaving me alone in my cell again.

Chapter 7. Part Two. Outside.

There are flies everywhere, thousands of them. The moment I stop moving, the nasty creatures begin to tickle my face in the most disgusting manner. I am hungry. However, everything sold on the street is surrounded by a cloud of flies, which swarm over from the nearby sewage pipes to land on the food. The memory of the puddle of blood is still resonating in my head. The restaurant menus contain names of dishes that are unknown to me. Each time I enter a restaurant, I point at a random item on the menu in the hope of getting something tasty. After waiting half an hour I am finally brought a cup with a liquid of a questionable color and a piece of local bread. Having taken a few sips, I start coughing due to the huge amount of chili they have put in it. I start to gasp, my eyes full of tears. It looks like I need to start getting used to chili. I try to chase down my meal with some tea, only to realize that they have also put spices in my tea. Just like the restaurant personnel, the street sellers refuse to understand me. I can only buy whatever I can point my finger at. I have been to many countries, but this is not like any other country I've seen before. Everything is different here. The dirty narrow streets are overcrowded and stuffed with everything that moves. A lively crowd drifts past the shabby shop-windows, filled with God-knows what. The moving mass consists of bike-cabs, pedestrians, dogs, cows, and wagons with all kinds of crap. Sometimes I see elephants and blue sheep pass by me, and all of it is diluted with a multicolored mass of humanity. It is impossible to stop in the middle of this living stream. No sooner do I stop, than gaping tourists immediately start bumping into me. You can't even stand on the sidewalk-shores of the stream. Seeing me as a potential customer, workers of street stalls, hotels and restaurants immediately start to drag me by the hand. Drug dealers and street touts are the most annoying. They follow me through the crowd and continually try to get me to buy something. I can only get rid of them by entering a store, as hard as it is to call these wretched premises located on the ground floor stores. Nevertheless, there is a lot of buying and selling of some weird merchandize going on inside them. There are no European style stores at all. Everything sold in these stores looks like it is either defective or a laughable fake. I see clothes made from hemp, but their quality leaves much to be desired. They aren't meant to be sold in my hemp store. They aren't fit to be sold anywhere. In the end I manage to find some appropriate hemp clothing, having walked around the whole Main Bazaar area. After going through a hundred kilos of different stuff that is either discolored, moldy or with holes made by rats, I am able to put together a package to be shipped to my homeland. I am surprised to see 'Made in Nepal' labels on the hemp clothes. “I might have to go to Nepal,” I think, for some reason realizing that I haven't been stoned in a long while. Too bad I only have one month; that isn't enough. I'll go to Nepal next time.

And now I need to get some food and some hash. No, first I need to get some hash, then some food. It's taking me too long to establish a connection with the local dealers. Either my basic English is too basic, or the local pidgin language is too pidgin. It doesn't take long before I find the drug dealers.

No sooner do I stop moving within the living stream and look around, than two unshaven characters came up to me and offer to sell me some hash. I follow them down a back alley, where one of them takes a matchbox-sized piece out of his sock. The drug dealers, who looked like Azerbaijanis, turn out to be Kashmiris who have come to Delhi to work from the territory disputed by India and Pakistan. Having told me how neither Pakistanis nor Indians like Kashmiris, they offer me a price of thirty dollars. Knowing that a piece this big would be worth no less than three hundred dollars in Russia, I still knock the price down to twenty and, happily, run to my hotel to get stoned in peace. On the way to Hare Rama I finally spot some food that doesn't look disgusting. In a big cast iron pan, a street food seller is frying potatoes, onions and tomatoes in filthy brown oil and swiftly making sandwiches out of them. A crowd of Israeli tourists has gathered around him, hungrily devouring the sandwiches. Squeezing through the crowd and pointing my finger at the pan, I tell the seller: "One." The Indian, as though making fun of me, asks: "What one?" Losing my temper, I point again at a slice of fried bread. The Indian swiftly wraps a newspaper around the slice of bread, hands it to me and pronounces with a smile: "Two rupees."

"You could have put something in the sandwich," I say in Russian, pointing at the wrap.

The Indian unwraps the newspaper, waiting for additional instructions. I point at the pile of fried vegetables, but the seller keeps waiting for something else.

"Why are you staring at me? Put the filling into the sandwich," I say in Russian, trying to keep cool.

The seller quickly puts a fried tomato on the bread, covers it with another slice and starts to wrap it up.

"Stop, stop," I start to shout, showing my discontent, pushing away the wrap he is handing to me. "Look at the sandwiches you made for the Jews, why are you giving me this empty one?"

The Indian unwraps the sandwich once again, puts a fried egg in and pours some ketchup on it.

"Ten rupees."

"Here's a twenty, give me change."

"No change," the Indian makes a gesture with his hands that is apparently supposed to denote the absence of change.

What kind of country is this? They are all crooks!

"Choke on your change," I say, taking my sandwich.

When I get back to my room, I unwrap the sandwich and discard the oily newspaper, happy to have something to eat. To my disappointment, the smell of the rancid oil kills my appetite completely. A big fat drop of ketchup falls off the sandwich onto the floor. Instantaneously, my brain retrieves the fresh memories of the morning's corpse and the stream of blood flowing down into the muddy sewer. Sudden stomach spasms cause me to dash to the toilet. Having roared into the toilet bowl for some time, I calm down and flush the disgusting sandwich away. I must do something. It would be a disgrace to just go back home. I need to smoke. Smoking has always helped me find a way out of hopeless situations. Having put together a device for smoking from foil and an empty plastic bottle, I take my first two puffs in this country.