



My dreams

различные
оргии,
использование
ножи...

И это
ГоА???

Умись ждать, - это здесь главная медитация...

Mari Fox

Chapter 12. Part One. Inside.

Judging by the receding darkness, it's currently around five am. Woken by a horrible growl coming from the bathroom, it takes me a while to figure out where I am. Is someone being strangled in there? Ah, I remember: Indians have a silly tradition of starting their day with their toilet. First thing in the morning they rush into the bathroom to take a dump and brush their teeth, doing this simultaneously most of the time. After they are done brushing their teeth, they shove the toothbrush down their throat to scrape the base of their tongue, making this horrible loud growl. I had the same awful nightmare again, of me running away all night. I had a suitcase full of some kind of drugs, I was surrounded by the police and had no idea what to do. But I feel like I have finally got a good night's sleep. After using newspapers as my bedding, the filthy rag with holes – which the inmates cherish and call a 'bed sheet' – seems as soft as silk now. The jail is gradually waking up. I hear the noises of inmates clearing their throats in the neighboring cells. In every single cell someone is growling. The oldest inmates, who are used to not sleeping for long, are the first to wake up. My cellmates roll up their bedding, take their teacups, and squat, waiting for their morning tea. Then the floor is cleared to create a free space for movement. An Indian in a greasy shirt and dirty pants appears on the other side of the door. "Good morning, Mangaldas," Dominic greets him, taking a pile of round buns through the bars. Mangaldas pokes the spout of an aluminum kettle between the iron bars and slowly pours tea for everybody, one by one. My neighbor is thoughtful enough to bring two hot buns and half of a cup of tea with milk to me in my bed. No one has brought me breakfast in bed for a long time.

"What's your name?" I ask the old man, who looks like an old Eskimo.

"Budaram, my name is Budaram."

"Thank you, old man Budaram."

I examine the cell, while tearing off chunks of the hot bun and dipping it into the tea. Some inmates take butter from their bags and spread it over the bun, others place tea-soaked cookies in the middle of the bun. Nobody is in any hurry. The sunlight coming through the bars leaves a checkered pattern on the floor and the walls. The peeling walls are pretty much completely covered in mold and fungus. "I better not catch some sort of infection while I'm in here," I think to myself, looking at the feet of my neighbor. Budaram finishes his breakfast first, and is now fully concentrated on dipping a rag into red fluid in order to rub it on the rotten area between his toes. The nails on his toes are almost completely consumed by fungus. A disgusting sight. If I was on the outside and I witnessed something like that, I'd run for the hills. But there is nowhere to run in prison, so you just have to accept it. I wash my teacup, and once again immerse myself in memories. That's the only thing that no one can take from me. I'm doing my best to pretend that I am fascinated by the TV program about this year's crop of Indian carrots. Just so nobody bothers me with their questions. The space that surrounds me gradually melts away. My memories — much like a time machine — take me back a few years in an attempt to find what led me to this place. I can once again smell the sea and see Goa the same way I did when I saw it for the first time, back when I looked at things through large rose-tinted glasses. Glued to the TV screen, I lie on the floor and smile like an idiot. The loud noise of the door opening jerks me out of the illusory reality.

"Walking time!!!" the guard's shout brings me back to the prison.

A square yard: fifteen steps long and fifteen steps wide. Seven cells line the perimeter. There are iron bars instead of a ceiling. The inmates are slowly coming out of their cells. Nobody is smiling; nobody is in any hurry. I'm the only one who walks briskly around in circles, not paying attention to anyone. I'm filled with so much energy. I've got to let it all out during the hour allocated for walking. I will have to sit here for another three, maybe even six months, because of some Russian asshole. No, I shouldn't even be thinking about six months. If I walk for two hours each day at a rapid pace, I might

even lose a few pounds. Oh, and I should build some muscle. Big muscles are one of the essentials in prison. I just need to look for the positive in everything. I need to concentrate... I'm in a health resort, I'm being healed, and when the monsoon ends and I get out of here, I'm going to be handsome and healthy.

"Hey, Vasya," I hear my name pronounced correctly. "Welcome to Mapusa Five Star Hotel."

"I see you're not wasting your time around here, Vitya. You look good, I barely recognized you."

"Well, Vasya, I've been free of drugs for three months. I do aerobics and yoga every day. I don't smoke, I don't drink, I sunbathe every day, and I've already lost twenty-two pounds. I feel like I'm in some kind of medical-labor clinic — we had those in the USSR, if you remember. Let's go for a walk and I'll tell you everything. First rule: don't be afraid, it's not a Russian prison. Nobody wants anything from you here. You don't bother anybody, and nobody will bother you. Second rule: learn to wait, that's the best meditation around here. Nobody knows when you will get out of here, except the Lord."

"Actually, I'm counting on getting out of here in three months," I say with a serious face, but Viktor begins to laugh hysterically.

"Yeah... I was counting on that, too," he says, still smiling, with his eyes filled with tears from laughing, chuckling like an idiot. "Come on, Vasya, I'm going to introduce you to my friends, they've been here for over a year. And all of them were counting on getting out of here 'in three months', too. Please meet our doctor, David, he delivers medicine to the prison cells."

An old Iranian man who looks like an Azerbaijani, stares into my eyes, then points his fingers like a gun at my head and says with a straight face, "Bang! Bang!" The Iranian pauses for a few seconds, and, smiling with his toothless mouth, extends his firm hand to me.

"My name is David. Welcome to hell. Viktor told me that you are here for twenty grams of MDMA. That's too bad. I've been here for two years. If I'm lucky, I'll get out of here soon. If not, well, then it's going to be from ten to twenty, but I'm ready for anything at this point. They got me with five kilograms of charas and eighty grams of cocaine. A Russian snitched on me, otherwise the police would never have caught me. I'm a professional drug dealer. I've been doing it my whole life. If I get out of here, I'm going to start dealing again. But first, I'm going to find that Russian guy, I'm going to make sure I find him. He is a dead man, and that's a promise."

David goes silent for a few moments, tensing his jaw muscles. Inmates of European origin slowly approach us from every direction.

"And this is 'Milano'. His name is Alexandro, he is from Sicily," Viktor takes advantage of the pause in our conversation with David, and points at a muscular Italian with an aquiline nose. "Look at his great physique. He is 52, but he looks better than most 40-year olds. He has been selling drugs his whole life, too."

"My name is Alexandro," Milano utters in a sing-song voice, like all Italians, and extends his firm hand to me. "I had only nine hundred and fifty grams of charas, but the police added fifty more grams of their own, and so now I'm looking at ten years."

"C'mon, Milano, don't start that again," Viktor interrupts our conversation with a displeased, tired face. "Please feel free to tell Vasya your story when I'm not around. Ever since I got here, all I've heard is his endless talk about the police being unfair. Milano shouldn't have touched the drugs in the first place, then he would be on the outside now."

Without taking offence at Viktor's words, Alexandro turns to David and continues to tell, probably for the hundredth time, the sad and unfair story of his arrest.

“Well, I’m not a drug dealer, my name is Adam. I’m from Poland,” a ginger-haired guy of about my height says in Russian with an accent. “I’m a professional killer, I was tracked down by Interpol. I’ll be sent to Germany soon. I killed some fritz for twenty-five grand there, and wanted to serve my sentence here, in India. But, well... it didn’t work. The only thing that cheers me up is that they have nice prisons in Germany compared to this one. When I’m there, I will eat and rest for fifteen years, and then, when I get out, I will get back in the business.”

“You see, Vasya, all that one talks about is his killings. He was a hired mercenary and can’t do anything but kill,” Viktor whispers to me so that the Pole doesn’t hear him. “We only have an hour to walk, so let’s get walking!” Viktor pulls me by the elbow away from hearing the whole of the Pole’s story.

We walk briskly around in circles. Sitting in clusters in the corners, Indian inmates observe us curiously.

“What are you in here for, Vitya? If I’m not mistaken, you were selling pharmaceutical amphetamines. Do people go to jail for that now?”

“You won’t believe it, Vasya, but I’m in here for a jar of Indian Novocain.”

“How is that even possible? Isn’t Novocain an over-the-counter drug, like an anesthetic?”

“Vasya, it’s India, everything is possible here. Do you recall the freak carnival in Arambol back in March?”

“Of course I do, Vitya. We had a great time on the beach to the sound of the drums.”

“Well, listen to this, Vasya – the next morning I woke to the sound of the police knocking on my door. Some plain-clothed Indian policemen came to my house and started a shakedown. And I had a 200-gram jar filled with anesthetics in my refrigerator. They opened it up, smelled it, and the powder looked exactly like cocaine. They tasted it: it freezes the gums just like coke. So they sent me here, to prison. As for the powder, they sealed it and sent it for an expert analysis to Hyderabad, the other end of India. Well, I’ve been waiting for the results of the analysis for three months now. The judge won’t set me free until the results come back. Once every two weeks they drive me to the court, where I am given an extension, and then they drive me back here, to this health resort. If the police didn’t frame me and didn’t mix anything into my powder, they should set me free. If those assholes did frame me, then I’m looking at ten years.”

“To your cells, go to your cells!” the guards start to shout, banging their bamboo batons against the bars.

“Vasya, after lunch, from three to four pm, we have another walk. I’ll show you Mapusa beach¹ then,” says Viktor, who smiles and heads toward his cell.

Chapter 12. Part Two. Outside.

“Where is the beach?” I ask Yair, looking around.

Is this really Goa? We are in complete darkness on a deserted street, watching the rickshaw that brought us here heading off into the night. It probably looks funny: three silhouettes with a heap of backpacks illuminated by the dim light of the only working restaurant. A painting entitled “This is Goa?”

“The sea is somewhere nearby, I can smell it,” Edie says soothingly, hugging Yair. “Tomorrow morning, we will figure it out.”

1 *Mapusa beach* - as the town of Mapusa is not located on the coast, it does not actually have a beach.

We've made it! A two-week trip across India is enough to tire you out and make you just want to lie on the beach.

It's nighttime. The smell of some strange flowers makes the air slightly sweet. We stand at the entrance to a place called Manchis, a fairly large establishment by local standards, built out of sticks, bamboo and palm leaves. Having waited until the Israeli couple finishes kissing, I suggest going to a restaurant to eat. We carry our belongings into Manchis, and finally hold a normal menu in our hands, with understandable names of dishes. After traveling across the whole of India, I have realized that Indians have an unhealthy love of all things plastic. This Indian love manifests itself in this place in all its glory. Can it really be that here, in a place where bamboo grows everywhere, plastic furniture is cheaper? Red and blue plastic tables and chairs are everywhere. Can it be true that I'm going to eat normal food, by European standards? I imagined Goa differently. After visiting Kazantip² many times, and listening to seasoned freaks³ and trancers, I imagined Goa as something similar. The sea, the beach, dancing people everywhere, dozens of bars and restaurants, loud music all night. I can't see any of this now. One restaurant, darkness, and no music. And this is the so-called capital of freaky Goa – Anjuna?

“Look, there's the first flipped-out⁴ character,” Yair interrupts my thoughts, moving a bowl of hummus closer to him and pointing at the entrance.

Out of the darkness, like a ghost, a tall European with a strange facial expression and light, waist-length dreadlocks, comes into the restaurant. Gently swinging his hands as if to the tune of music, he paints an intricate, invisible mosaic in the air. He suddenly stops, locking eyes with me, as if seeing something very important in them. Without taking his gaze from me, the strange character begins to approach our table. Scrutinizing me carefully for a few seconds, he abruptly falls on his knees and starts praying, trying to kiss my feet. Not knowing how to react, I sit with my mouth wide open, and try to hide my feet under the chair. Several couples from different tables eat their meals, indifferently observing the show. As if it is normal for a man to kiss another man's feet.

“Ok, alright, alright, go away, go,” Yair comes to my aid just in time and begins to drive the crazy guy away.

“What's wrong with him?” I ask, watching the strange man, who as if nothing happened, once again starts to draw a pattern in the air that is visible only to him.

“Don't mind what just happened. Here, in Goa, there are a lot like him: they stuff themselves with drugs and go crazy.”

“And what, they just wander around like that?”

“Who needs them? They have neither money, nor brains. If they are lucky their relatives come to collect them, but usually they get hooked and die.”

Pushing the empty plate away, I understand that finally, for the first two weeks, I have had a delicious meal. This, of course, could not be called a first-class meal. It's more like some cheap food from a roadside eatery, but it is undeniable: compared to what I have eaten for the last two weeks, it was just wonderful!!!

2 *Republic of Kazantip* (in different years it has also had the names Republic of Z, KaZantip) - an annual international music festival that was held in Crimea until 2013, the most famous electronic music festival in the former USSR. Club and electronic music is played at the festival, with DJs and musicians from all over the world performing on its dance floors.

3 *Freaks* - a counter-culture group uniting punks, hippies, etc. Happy, colorfully dressed hedonists, frequently not opposed to the use of drugs, who live outside the normal social matrix.

4 *Flipped-out character* - a person who has gone mad, usually as a result of excessive drug use.