



ГОДА

Бери, не стесняйся, Его позтому и спонсорам и зовут, что он всех стареньких угощает...

Это Лёха...

ДЕТИ ЧУВСТВОВ

Мама!! Ван масала ти ддя нашего односельчанина

PARADISO

Mari Sel

Chapter 13. Part One. Inside.

“Vasya, they cooked crabs for us today. Can you imagine that? Have you ever heard of crabs being served in prison? Just today I had a dream about oysters. The oysters didn’t work out, but I managed to manifest some crabs,” Viktor shouts to me from his cell, smiling.

“Crabs – that’s good. I am fed up with peas; at least it’s something new. I want to eat something tasty, I have already lost twenty pounds,” I shout back to him across the prison.

“Khana, khana agya,” the prison begins to echo in different voices.

“Mangaldas has come, brought food, you better eat, or you be thin. What are you in here for, son?” mangling the language, my neighbor, old man Budaram, is trying to talk to me, using his meager vocabulary.

For some reason I want to call him Old Man Mudra. His whole face is covered with wrinkles like a soaked apple, and instead of eyes he has narrow slits. Twelve hours a day he endlessly mutters a mantra, apparently asking Buddha to release him outside.

“The cops planted twenty grams of MDMA on me,” I say with a sigh, once again feeling a surge of fury that I only manage to calm a little thanks to my morning meditation.

“Wai-wai-wai,” Old Man Mudra sympathetically shakes his head from side to side. “Bad, very bad. You will not be released on bail. More than ten grams – you will not be released.”

“It’s you, you old blister, who won’t be released; I’m getting out of here in a couple of months,” I say angrily, feeling the need to meditate again.

“What are you doing your time for, anyway?” I ask angrily, knowing that it’s unlikely he is capable of anything other than selling charas.

“Charas, two kilos. I have already been here for nine months, commercial quantity. I’m here for the same thing you are – from ten to twenty, no release on bail.”

“How did you get caught, old man?”

“I brought charas from the Himalayas, wanted to make some money. My grandfather made charas, my father made it. My whole family gathered this charas for a month. And here, in Goa, the police grabbed me and they want to lock me up for ten years. And I have a family in the Himalayas, four adult children, eight grandchildren, my own corn field, a horse.”

“And how did you get here from the Himalayas?”

“He came on a horse; he got on his mountain horse and galloped down here,” A bald Indian of thirty years answers for him, laughing out of his corner.

“He’s a little wild, like all mountain people, but he’s kind. He got here by car; transporting his charas for a whole week. And here one of his people tipped him off to the police.”

“And what are you doing your time for?” I ask, trying to guess what this innocent looking young man, who prays from morning till evening, could have done to get in here.

“Murder,” the bald guy answers, sighing and lowering his eyes for a moment. “I killed one with a pistol and wounded the other. It’s a pity that the

second one didn't die. They are my enemies – I should have killed them. Our families have been feuding for a long time. My uncle works in the ministry, he was running for office, and the opposition party set me up. The bastards organized everything so that I could not leave them alive. But I'm going to be released from here soon. I will serve half a year and get out of here. My name is Disay," he says, coming closer and extending his hand to me.

"And I am Vasiliy. You can call me Vasya."

"Vashya, you have a difficult name. Can I call you Vasa?"

"Call me Vasa, I don't care."

"Look," Disay points at a man covered from head to toe with a blanket. "That's a cop from Calangute. Hey, police, show us your face."

Turning to the wall and muttering something in Hindi, the policeman becomes silent again, having no desire to talk.

"He is depressed. He was denied bail again. And he's here for the same reason you are – "commercial quantity of drugs." His name is Chetsi. Hey, Chetsi that's enough moping around. Pull yourself together; you're a cop. You must set us an example."

"Look at him," Disay laughs, addressing the other inmates. "And this is our police? Stop embarrassing us and get out from under your blanket. You've had a lie-in for half of the day. Not only is the cell small, but on top of that you're sprawled all over the place."

"And this is your namesake, his name is Vasu," the cheerful bald Indian continues to introduce me to the other inmates. "Vasu is a soldier. Together with Chetsi they dragged a kilo of heroin from Rajasthan. And here they were grassed up by their own cops."

A guard approaches the door and opens it with a clang, smiling. My neighbor, Old Man Mudra, shudders, ceasing to mumble his mantras. Why does he need to rattle the bolts so much? Is it really that much fun to watch as the prisoners flinch from this awful sound? Although, on second thought, what normal man goes to work as a prison guard? It's lifelong, voluntary imprisonment.

The inmates go out into the corridor, holding their plates and mugs. I follow them. In the hallway, an Indian is sitting in dirty, greasy clothes on a small stool. Surrounded by three pots, he deftly dishes out rice, vegetables and gravy. In a moment, a few spoons of rice and boiled cabbage appear on my plate. In the iron mug: a thick brown mixture consisting of small crabs, peas and coconut. Returning to the cell, everyone immediately begins to eat. No one has a spoon, everyone eats with their hands. Old Man Mudra, having poured all of the gravy into his rice, quickly begins to eat. Everyone is sitting on the floor eating. After a few minutes the floor around Mudra is covered with rice and drops of gravy. He immediately places the large lumps of rice that fall on the floor back into his mouth, without a thought for the dirt on the floor. He swallows the small crabs whole, including the shells and bones, almost without chewing. I should practice using my fingers instead of a spoon so deftly. The rice slips through my fingers, the gravy drips from my hands, and my mouth burns. How much pepper do they put in the food? I desperately want to wash it all down with water.

"Where do you get water here?" I ask my neighbor with gestures.

"Over there," Mudra calmly points to the empty bottles near the toilet.

From the bucket near the hole, I scoop warm liquid into the empty bottle with a dirty, slippery ladle. Who could have thought that I would ever drink water like this? Holding the bottle up to the light, I can see some sort of sediment floating in it. But there is no other water and it seems that there isn't going to be. I have to get used to it. I am very thirsty.

Chapter 13. Part Two. Outside.

It is morning. I am very thirsty. The fan no longer provides salvation from the heat. So here it is, my first morning in Goa. A chorus of wild sounds produced by awakening birds, animals, and insects is coming from the street. Stepping onto the porch, I knock on Yair's room next door, hoping to find something to drink.

"Yair, are you asleep?"

"No, come in, my Russian friend," I hear from the inside. "We're not asleep."

Edie opens the door, wrapped in an colorful Indian sheet like a sari. Smiling widely, she holds a chillum in one hand, and a bottle of water in the other.

"Will you have a chillum with us this morning?"

"For two weeks my morning has started with smoking a chillum in your company, why would I change this tradition now? Of course I will! Just give me some water to drink first. It was so hot all night, I thought I would die of thirst. I had to take a shower three times during the night, but I still didn't dare to drink from the tap."

"That's right; it's easy to get water poisoning here. When buying water, always make sure there is a plastic seal on the lid. The smart-assed Indians don't even care about our health, selling water from the tap under the guise of mineral water. At first, I didn't pay attention to the seal, but having been sick a couple of times, I've begun to carefully examine what I buy. So be careful if you value your life."

"Greetings from Shiva. Bom Bolenath," says Yair, holding out the smoking chillum. "Will you come to the party with us today?"

"Are you asking me seriously? I made this trip to Goa specially to see the world-famous trance parties with my own eyes. I'd like to take a drop of real LSD and meditate in the dance. In Russia, it is very difficult to get LSD-25. They sell Shulgin¹ substitutes: DOB, DOET, PSP, and PCPY. But I want LSD-25, the effect of which was described in the writings of Timothy Leary, Stanislav Grof, Robert Anton Wilson, and the other founders of the psychedelic movement."

"Well, then you have a great opportunity today to see the latest generation of psychedelic 'flower children'. Rent a bike or scooter, tonight we're going to Paradiso.

"Hello Lena, how are you? I'm alright; I'm finally in Goa. How is Vasilinka, how is Hemp?"

"Everything is Ok. I received your parcel with the Hemp stuff. It's shit quality, but we have already sold half of it. When are you coming home?"

"I'm thinking of hanging about for a couple of weeks, maybe I will buy some more hemp goods, and then I'll come home."

"How is Goa? Is it everything you dreamed of?"

"I don't even know what to tell you, Lena. It's not like Kazantip at all, and not like anything I imagined. There is dirt everywhere, and during the whole

1 *Shulgins* – a family of world-famous chemists who invented more than 160 psychedelic drugs.

day I have been here I haven't heard any trance music. I'm going to a trance club tonight. If that sucks too, then we can assume that all of the rumors about Goa are total baloney. But still, there is something about Goa that I cannot quite put my finger on. It may be its energy, or the people, who aren't like those that surround us in Russia."

"They are probably all crooks and drug addicts."

"In some way, you're right, Lena. Almost all of the Indians are crooks. But they are sort of good rogues. Everyone is trying to trick you in relation to the smallest things. And the Europeans who have been living here for a long time look like aliens. Everyone walks around and smiles at each other. And their faces are all clever and kind. You want to meet them and talk to them."

"The most important thing for you is not to meet any girls. I miss you so much; come home soon."

"I will do my best, kiss Vasilinka for me. I'll call you in a few days. Kiss you, bye."

"Well, here it is – now I can see the real Goa. I'd started to think that everything people say about it is bullshit," I say to Yair, who is descending the stairs of the club.

Paradiso is the oldest open-air trance club. Open-air trance parties have recently been banned, but here people party hard every day. The club is located in a sort of a cave with a view onto the sea. Having spotted a number of his Israeli friends, Yair forgets about me and heads directly to the center of the dance floor, getting out his chillum in the process. Beautiful trance music plays loudly and clearly. Hundreds of people are sitting on mats around the dance floor. Old Indian women are constantly making coffee and tea on paraffin burners. It feels like everyone around me is smoking charas non-stop. A large, sweet cloud hangs over the club. Goa parties are so different from anything I've seen before. Hundreds of happy people, not burdened by any problems. It is as if the air is imbued with the spirit of freedom. It's surprising that this freedom doesn't get out of hand: that it doesn't turn into alcoholic chaos, as so often happens in Russia. Beautiful girls and guys dance in their own unique style across the floor, moving around the club. It's not even a dance. It's a special kind of language that people who have gathered from all over the world in search of their own kind use for communication. I am glad that I understand this language of signs and gestures. I also want to immerse myself in this dialogue, because I also have something to share. This is my tribe. This is my language. Finally I've found you! Overwhelming feelings of joy make me want to laugh and cry at the same time. It feels like I have been brought to a meeting of shamans, who have come to share their knowledge. The people resemble characters from futuristic movies, where the protagonists experience a global catastrophe. Tattoos, piercings and dreadlocks are an integral part of each of them. Unusual, weird clothes glow in the ultraviolet light. There are very few Russians. Most of them are Israelis. You can spot the Russians from a mile away. The majority of Russian men have white 'Dolce Gabbana' shirts and shorts, pulled up to the navel, with aggressive, but at the same time frightened, looks on their faces. Most of the Russian girls look as follows: gaudy, short tight skirts, puffy white thighs and make-up. They look like prostitutes, like aliens. Aliens from the planet of the white monkeys.

"Hi, where are you from?" A tall, beautiful girl, not at all like the standard Russian girls, suddenly knocks me out of the flow of my thoughts. "I am from Russia."

"I'm Russian too."

“My name is Nadine. Let’s go find a mat, have a smoke and a chat. We have a nice crowd. Everyone is from our tribe,” Nadine says laughing, as if reading my thoughts. “Do you want tea?” The Russian girl asks me, motioning to sit down.

“Yes, with pleasure; I don’t like booze, but I respect psychedelics with tea.”

“Mama-chai, one masala chai for our fellow countryman.” She calls loudly to an old woman with a kettle, and sits down next to me on the floor. “Did you come here long ago?”

“Last night.”

“Well done! You look good; you don’t look like a Russian. You can spot the recently arrived Russians a mile away.”

“We’ve been hanging out here for two weeks already. By the way, this is Lyokha.”

A tall, thin guy extends his hand to me.

“Everyone calls Lyokha ‘Sponsor’. You can call him that too. And this is Ira, she has been hanging out here for a year.”

Ira, waving her head and smiling seductively, straightens her long pink dreadlocks.

“You lot don’t look like Russians at all. My name is Vasiliy. You’re not dressed like Russians.”

“Yes, we quickly realized that we get treated like mugs in European clothes.” Lyokha answers, hugging both girls around the shoulders at the same time. “So we drove to the Night Market and got dressed up in line with the latest freaky Goa fashion. Now the locals have started treating us like humans, ‘cause when they see an ‘Armani’ T-shirt, they immediately try to sell you something, and the price skyrockets five-fold. And you, Vasya, you don’t look like a Russian, either. You’re dressed like an Israeli.”

“I’ve been travelling with some across India for two weeks. I met them in Delhi and we came here yesterday.”

“It’s obvious at first sight; they have their own separate Goa fashion. Do you want something to bring you up?” Lyokha asks with an enigmatic smile, holding out his open palm to me.

In it are several pills with ‘Mitsubishi’ signs embossed on them and a small bottle.

“Help yourself, don’t be shy. That’s why he is called ‘Sponsor’. He loves to treat everyone to sweet things.” Nadine says cheerfully, placing a pill into my mouth.