

Mari Tee



## *Chapter 15. Part One. Inside.*

I will see my Lena today. My heart is pounding, just like it did many years ago when I declared my love for her. Will she be able to understand me now? What an idiot I am. I'm terribly ashamed that I've ruined everything with my own two hands. Well, that's ok; I'll try to fix it. I have a head and hands; I will get out, start a new life. But where should I start? In Russia? No one is waiting for me there. What am I going to do? The era of legal money earning and self-employment has gone. I don't think that I'll be able to do some uninteresting job, working for someone else. Maybe I should conquer new lands? No money. A new life in Goa? Goa is dead. Nothing remains of the Goa that I found for myself five years ago. Maybe it is good that everything happened as it did.

Maybe fate is preparing a new surprise for me? Maybe it is making me ready for something new, something even more exciting. All of my old Goan friends have dispersed throughout the world. Some of them are in Latin America, others – in Thailand. Some are living in Bali, Vietnam, Cambodia, and others are hanging out in Nepal. Where are all the interesting people I met in this magical land? And where did all the magic that I found here go? Why am I surrounded by mugs again? Scum, grasses, drug dealers, loonies, alcoholics and drug addicts. What am I doing among them? My thoughts are interrupted by the sharp shout of the guard: "Vasiliy, come out, your relatives are here." I walk down the hall, as if on the first date in my life.

"How beautiful you are. I'm so sorry for everything that has happened."

"Don't worry, everything is going to be alright," Lena says in a quiet voice, hugging me tightly. "You've lost a lot of weight."

"You look great, too. I wish I could look at you forever. Just watch you and be silent. I want to tell you so much; but time is short, so there is nothing to say. We have only fifteen minutes a week for a date."

We sit opposite each other, and for some time we are silent. Our silent dialogue is interrupted by the voice of crazy Psyu, who for some reason waltzed in with my Lena. When she was silent, we didn't notice her, but Psyu speaks, taking away our attention and the precious moments to be together. As usual, she speaks loudly and very quickly.

First of all, her doped up brain gives a signal that she needs to say something, then her mouth utters sounds, and only after that, with a delay of a few seconds, Psyu realizes what she has said. It's impossible not to listen to her. During the few minutes of her verbal incontinence, she pours a bunch of unnecessary information into our ears.

"Next time come alone; I can't listen to her nonsense," I whisper in Lena's ear. "How is our daughter?"

"We are ok, it's just this damn crisis is screwing everything up. No one has any money, and everything is insanely expensive. The real estate market prices in Russia have fallen by half. It is just stagnating. It's absolutely unreal to sell our apartment now. But don't worry; your mom gave us a loan of six thousand dollars to get you out of here. But I don't know what I have to do."

"You don't need to do anything now, we just have to wait. Lena, can you imagine – these assholes planted twenty grams of MDMA on me. The drug was sent to Hyderabad for expert analysis. The judge will only start the case after the results of the analysis come back. And that's when we'll need the money."

"Where is the money that was in the safe? I left you five thousand dollars."

"All the money was taken by the police."

“Honey, why did you slit your wrists?” Lena asks softly, gently touching the scars on my wrist.

“An old prison trick. I heard that Russian criminals do it when the cops start doing something unlawful.”

“Well, did it help, ‘the old prison trick?’” Lena says smiling, gently stroking my hand.

“I don’t know, but the chief of the drug police, Pashish, was a little scared, and out of the six thousand dollars that were in the safe, he left me one and a half thousand for a lawyer. He took the rest for himself and promised to help. However, I can only get that money after the case is closed, along with my passport and cellphone.”

“Darling, what do you think, how long will you be in here?”

“Lena, I don’t know. Everyone who has managed to get out of here was released not earlier than in a year and a half.”

“Don’t even think that you will stay in here for so long. I’ll wait for you for six months at the most. And anyway, we’ll get you out of here soon. Believe in it and visualize it. You know: if you think about something, then it comes true.”

I can see my Lena’s eyes fill with tears.

“Why did you get into this shit?” my beloved asks me with a trembling voice.

“I don’t know. I guess I wanted to become a hero for you; to be the best.”

## ***Chapter 15. Part Two. Outside.***

The Sun is slowly sinking into the blue ocean. It seems that the huge, yellow orange slows its progress as it touches the water. In this brief moment you can feel what time is. Flocks of parrots, seemingly scared of not seeing their Sun again, screech from the tops of the palm trees, the last to bid it farewell. Everything freezes, as if trying to delay the moment. But, despite the efforts of all living creatures, the huge star that gives us life quickly disappears below the horizon.

“Sunset is not over yet, the most beautiful sight will be soon,” Arik says, picking up a drum.

Slowly, without hurrying, he begins to fill the space with pleasant sounds. We are sitting on top of a high hill, which offers an impressive view. It’s the highest point in Arambol. Ahead are the vast expanses of the Arabian Sea. To the side, a string of Goan beaches stretches to the horizon like a giant golden road. From this point Arambol resembles living lava, consisting of hundreds of small houses, restaurants and rickety bamboo shacks. It looks like a load of multi-colored lava has flowed out of the green jungle and frozen, not reaching the water. I love this time. Fifteen minutes after sunset. The most beautiful time. The sky slowly becomes painted in pink. As if a mysterious lighting technician, hidden behind the scenes of the horizon, is slowly changing the color filters on his spotlights. It is as if all of the colors of the world come to life at this moment. Nestled in the hills, the pale green sunburnt jungle is painted a bright green color. The red, yellow and purple flowers in the bushes and trees that surround us glow brightly in the pink light. All of the colors are changing their hues, and, as if by the wave of a magic wand, they throw off the red Goan dust, becoming brightly saturated. The color of the sky gradually changes from pink to purple. Despite the fact that the Sun is no longer visible, there is still plenty of light. Roma, leaning his back against

a large rock, is sitting in amazement with his eyes wide open.

“Fuck yeah!!! I’ve never seen such beauty,” he says softly, closing his eyes momentarily in pleasure.

“This is only the beginning,” Arik says, smiling enigmatically without ceasing to play the drum.

“Vasya, when will your drug start working?” Roma asks intently, looking like a child at an exotic flower he has plucked from a bush.

“Firstly, it is not a drug, but a psychedelic, or as it is called by the authorities a ‘psychotropic drug.’ And it’s called ‘lysergic acid diethylamide’ or, for short – LSD 25.”

“And what is the difference between a drug and a psychedelic?” Roma asks in surprise, not taking his eyes from the flower in his hand.

“You will get sick from drug abuse. From psychedelics: only psychological dependence and the expansion of consciousness.”

“Well, when does your mind start expanding?”

“Didn’t the sunset seem unusual to you? Or the flower in your hand, is it the same as always?”

“You’re right, Vasya, there is something unusual about it. Each time I watch the sunset here: well, it’s always as beautiful as usual. But, today is the first time I have seen such beauty... What else can I expect from the expansion of consciousness?” Roma asks, covered with a light sweat.

“Don’t expect anything. Look around and listen; the LSD is working. Don’t be afraid, and just let your perception restructure the way it wants. Look at the jungle swaying. As if it’s not a jungle, but an extension of the sea on the shore. Look how the breeze creates waves in the treetops.”

Watching Roma, I feel like the LSD has already been altering my perception for about fifteen minutes. My whole body feels the warm breath of the sea. The rich, bright colors of the altered outside world slowly began to merge into one indescribable flow with the music coming from Arik’s drum. The music becomes tangible. Its vibration spills over me in rainbow fractals in all directions. The jungle is dancing with the sea, gradually losing its brightness with the onset of darkness. The sea begins to sparkle with billions of stars reflected on its surface.

“Look, the Moon is laughing at us today,” Arik says, pointing at the sky.

“It’s fantastic,” Roma says softly, as if fearing that the new, previously invisible outside world will hear him and disappear in an instant. A crescent Moon hangs in the Indian sky. But it doesn’t hang like an inhabitant of Russia can normally see it, i.e. vertically. It hangs horizontally, like the huge mouth of the Cheshire Cat, stretched into a smile across the sky. Two bright spots of light, Mercury and Venus, complete the picture, sitting in the sky exactly at the place where the Cheshire Cat’s eyes would be.

“You see, nothing has changed in this world. The only thing that has changed is your perception,” I tell Roma, leaning back on the green grass. “Have you ever thought about that?”

His face is shining. It is relaxed and satisfied. He is enjoying the surrounding reality.

“Say, Roma, what do you think, what is the meaning of your life? Have you thought about such things? Why do you live in this world?”

When Roma hears my question, something strange suddenly happens to his face. As if being afraid of being seen as he is now, he instantly changes his facial expression, putting on the mask of an average, slightly aggressive young man.

“Well, that... that... I... I love driving my convertible around the block... You drive, and all the chicks look at you,” he blurts out abruptly, like a learned phrase.

“And this is the meaning of your life?” Arik says fearfully, having stopped playing music.

Roma’s face instantly changes once again. Strange metamorphoses start happening on his face. It changes, as if trying to find a suitable mask, but nothing comes out. He clasps his head in his hands, closes his eyes and is silent. When he opens his eyes, we see a completely new person looking at us.

“I got it,” he says in a whisper.

“I’ve been sleeping all my life. And today I woke up.”

We never saw Roma in the guise of a dumb ‘new Russian’ again. That night the merry Moon took that stupid guy, leaving us a new man. A man with a truly expanded consciousness.