



Chapter 16. Part One. Inside.

Viktor, cupping his hands, is standing quietly with his eyes closed, exposing his face to the still cool morning sun.

“Hey, bro,” I shout to Viktor across the prison courtyard.

“Wait a minute, Vasya, I’m greeting the sun.”

“You do that, and I’ll say hello to the guys. David, what’s new?”

“The same old shit, just another day,” the old Iranian says, yawning and stretching in the sun.

“Right you are. The same old shit, but this day is going to be good, not as hot as yesterday. At night we’ll sleep well. Hello, Adam, what’s new with you?”

“Hi, Vasya. They’ll take me to Delhi soon, and then – to Germany. It turns out that the German Interpol transferred a hundred thousand euros to the Indians for me. And there I will be sentenced to twenty years. The only good thing is that the conditions in European prisons are wonderful. TV, video game console, a refrigerator full of drinks, computer, and the Internet – what else does an officer in retirement need? The cells are equipped with all the amenities, in the bathrooms there are white tiles, the bed linen is clean. Bring it on! The rainy season is beginning here. It has been pouring for three days already. You could rot in here with such humidity. Nothing dries. The humidity is the same as in a Russian sauna.”

“Yes,” I agree, looking at the small pustules in the folds of my hands.

Your body is covered with moisture for twenty-four hours a day. All of your clothes stay wet and start to smell of mold.

“And here’s our ‘Al Qaeda,’” I point at a bald, long-bearded Muslim.

“Excuse me, Adam, I’ll go and say hello to Ashpak. I haven’t seen him for two days.”

“Hi, Ashpak.”

“Hi, my Russian brother.”

“I haven’t seen you here for a long time.”

“I’ve been learning the Koran in Arabic, and doing gymnastics. I have no desire to walk in the rain. I lost four more pounds. A year ago my belly was like yours is now. And now look at it – you can see my abs.”

“Well done, Ashpak, keep it up. Excuse me; I’ll go and say hello to Count Dracula.”

“Don’t give up hope, Don Alexandro!” I greet the permanently-depressed Italian. “What’s new?”

“Hi, Vasya, nothing new, everything is bad. No money, and progress is very slow.”

“You just reek of bad energy, Milano. I’d rather go and talk to Viktor, before my mood is spoiled.

“So, have you finished greeting the sun, Vitya?”

“Yeah, now I can say hello to you. Hi, Vasya, what’s new?”

“A rat came into our cell last night. It was huge, the size of a cat.”

“It came to visit us too. It’s not a rat – it’s a Gus. That’s what they call this creature here.”

“I woke up last night because I felt something crawling on my feet. At first, still half asleep, I thought it was a snake. But after a closer look, I saw a really long tail and a nasty snout. I threw a bottle at it and woke up everybody in the cell. We chased it all over the cell, but couldn’t catch it.”

“It happens,” Viktor agrees. “I once caught such a beast with a bucket. I kept it in the bucket for a bit and then let it go, I couldn’t kill it...” without finishing what he is saying, Viktor abruptly dives to one side, lying flat on the ground.

I don’t have time to understand what is going on. I stand with my mouth open, observing a strange scene. A dozen people, including Viktor, are crawling around on the floor, trying to snatch something from each other.

“Tobacco,” Viktor rejoices, showing me a small plastic bag in which there is enough tobacco to fill a matchbox.

“It costs one rupee, and in prison it is more precious than gold. If you have tobacco, it means you have everything. This is the main currency here.”

“But isn’t it illegal here? Where did it fall from?”

“You see that fence, Vasya?” Viktor points to a wall covered with moss. “There is a road behind that wall. Those who are released throw us some tobacco over the wall sometimes.”

“And the guards don’t try to take it away?”

“Look at them, Vasya, what can they do?”

Under a rain canopy, four fat guards sit on plastic chairs. Despite the fact that each of them has a bamboo stick in his hand, it is unlikely they’d dare to take tobacco away from a prisoner, especially from Viktor or me.

“They barely move their asses. Why do they need another pain in the butt? Tobacco is useful here, even if you don’t smoke.”

“The next time I’ll be more agile, and I’ll snatch some, too. I would smoke it in the evening with great pleasure.”

Chapter 16. Part Two. Outside.

“Will you smoke?” Roma asks me, holding out a neatly rolled joint. “Look what straight joints I have started making.”

“Good for you, it’s a pleasure to watch. It’s not like stuffing a ‘Belomor’¹. You’ve reached the international level. It’s only been a month since we met, and I already can’t recognize you.”

A completely new person sits in front of me, sipping fresh strawberry juice. Instead of a crew cut, a fashionable Goan mohawk is shaved onto his head. And in his ear there is a metal tunnel instead of an earring. Nothing is left from the European clothes that he arrived in. Now it is difficult to determine where this young Aztec came from. His skin is tanned and his body has become lean.

1 *Belomor Kanal* – traditional Russian cigarettes used for smoking marijuana.

“You’ve become a real Goan guy. Are you going to the party at ‘Monkey Valley’ tonight? Tamir is throwing a trance party.

“Well, if it’s Tamir, then we’ll probably have a good time. All the freaks go to his parties,” Roma agrees, smoking his joint. “When he threw his first trance parties in Moscow, he was already considered the best DJ. No wonder that even then he was called the ‘Rave Master’.”

The ‘Rave Master’ is standing proudly behind the decks, holding the headphones with one hand, and choosing the disks for the next track with the other. He looks like a shamanic leader. His hands, covered with mysterious oriental tattoos, deftly play tracks, not giving the dancers a chance for a break. With a serious and wise look, he closely watches the dancing mass. A thousand different beautiful boys and girls dance captivated among the thickets of bamboo. Everyone is looking at him, transmitting their feelings into their dance moves. And he feels their vibrations. It is like he is hypnotizing all of them. Thousands of people move in the same shamanic rhythm.

“How will we expand our consciousness today?” Roma asks, screaming in my ear and dancing around.

“Let’s start with ‘Dymich,’² and after that we’ll see. I’m saving the drops³ for the morning.”

Finding an empty seat next to a chai-mama, we sit on mats, sipping hot tea with spices, watching the people around us. MDMA crystals begin to dissolve slowly in our stomachs, covering our bodies with goose bumps of pleasure.

“Tell me, Roma, do you believe that it is possible that in our country too the majority of people will one day have kind, happy faces? Look at all these people who surround us now. They are not from another planet. And they can be happy.”

“I don’t know, Vasya, maybe one day, but not soon, I guess. The slave mentality has been engrained in our country for too long. Look over there, they are definitely Russians,” Roma says, pointing at a strange couple dancing five meters away from us.

“That’s for sure.”

They stand out from all the other people dancing around in every respect. It seems like the man dressed in a tight white T-shirt with a ‘D&G’ logo has intentionally pulled his shorts of the same color up to his navel, in order to emphasize his big belly. His plump girlfriend, apparently believing that it’s cool to be in matching T-shirts, shakes the logo of the well-known brand on her huge tits while dancing. Apart from them, there is no one wearing white here. The dancing people’s clothes are of all different colors. Orange, yellow and black dominate, but no one else is wearing white. Their movements are also radically different from the movements of the people around them. It looks like they can only hear the top layer of the music, consisting of a single beat. The guy, marking time on the spot, looks like he is boxing an invisible enemy. His girlfriend, occasionally tugging at her vulgar short skirt, reminds me of a cheap whore. She dances clumsily, wiggling her big ass.

“What do you think, Roma, is it possible to change these people by expanding their consciousness?”

“And why should you expand their consciousness?”

“I don’t know. I guess I want to make everyone happy. I feel sorry looking at them. Everyone around is smiling, and look at them: they can’t even

2 *Dymich* – Russian slang for MDMA.

3 *Drops* – liquid LSD-25.

force a smile.”

“You want proof of the theory of the psychedelic quantum leap,” Roma says, smiling and putting his empty tea glass on the mat.

A few minutes later, we are sitting together with them near the chai-mama.

“My name is Zhyora, and this is my wife, Natasha. If you hadn’t come up to us, we would never have guessed that you are Russians, too. You must have been living in Goa for a long time?” Zhyora asks, sipping from his bottle of beer.

“No, I also arrived recently; it’s my second month here,” I say, eyeing Natasha. The MDMA is already in full effect, smearing all the defects of her body in my mind’s eye.

“We only came for two weeks. It’s impossible to escape from Moscow for longer. In Moscow, I work for a construction company, and my Natasha is an accountant in a bank. And what do you do?”

“We are psychedelic warriors,” Roma says, smiling. “The material world is currently not very interesting for us.”

“We are actually in India for the first time. We still prefer Turkey. Usually, we go to Antalya with a big crowd, booze for two weeks, and return to work. We are tired of our colleagues; everywhere, no matter where we go, all of the conversations are about work. Any boozing eventually turns into a conference.”

“So we decided to run away from everyone to India for two weeks,” Natasha adds, once again adjusting her short skirt, baring a little triangle of her lacy underwear.

Under the influence of MDMA, Natasha no longer seems too plump. I struggle to drive the overwhelming lustful thoughts out of my head.

“And why didn’t you change your clothes into normal ones?” I ask, hardly able to avert my eyes from her charms.

“What, don’t you like our clothes? In Russia we always dress like this when we go clubbing.”

“This is not Russia; look around – look how people are dressed. If you want to feel what Goa is, forget about Russia and its fashion. In those clothes they probably sell you everything three times more expensive. It’s like you have a sign on your foreheads that says: ‘We came here for two weeks. Our budget is five hundred dollars a day. Cheat us out of our money.’ You are treated like walking wallets now, not as people.”

“And where can we buy clothes like yours? You have cool boots.”

“These are not boots, these are ninja shoes⁴.” Roma boasts, wiggling the big toes of both feet.

“I see that almost everyone here walks around in such shoes. I haven’t see them in Russia.”

“These are the best shoes for dancing in the open air,” Roma says, stamping his foot on the dusty ground.

“Honey, please buy me a rum and Coke, and get something for the guys to drink. Boys, what would you like to drink?”

“We prefer tea,” Roma says proudly, showing his glass.

“What, you don’t you drink alcohol?” Natasha asks in surprise, again adjusting her constantly riding-up short skirt.

4 *Ninja shoes* – Japanese knee-high boots made of cloth, with a flat rubber sole and a separate section for the big toe.

“Almost none.”

“And how do you manage to be so cheerful? Is it the tea?”

“Tea, of course, also invigorates. However, today Roma and I ate a crystal of MDMA each. Do you want some?”

“What is MDMA?”

“MDMA is the main chemical element used to make ecstasy pills, it consists of crystals. Some Russian chemists, the Shulgins, invented it. Never heard of it?”

“No,” Zhyora replies with surprise, carefully watching as I unfold a small plastic bag.

“Will we be tormented by a come down like drug addicts?” Natasha asks in a frightened voice, looking at her husband.

“Don’t worry. Look at us; do we look like junkies? This is not a drug, it is a psychedelic.”

“And what will we feel? We won’t feel bad?”

“You’ll feel love for everything around you, universal love.”

“We like love,” Natasha says, flirting and hugging her husband.

Tipping two doses of crystalline powder into a glass of tea, I give it to them.

“Well, what will be, will be. If we came to Goa, we must give it a try,” Zhyora says, taking the first sip.

“I’ll see you in an hour in the same place. Sorry, but I can’t sit still any longer. I urgently need to dance,” I say, putting on my big pink glasses. The MDMA burst of energy is so strong that I run up to the loud speakers. I want to let this energy out somehow, before I explode from happiness.

The incredibly beautiful music doesn’t allow me to stand still. The people dancing around me draw the music with their bodies, moving unbelievably beautifully. Everybody has their own unique dance. It’s not even a dance; it’s a flight. It is simply impossible to stay in one place. Through dance I communicate with the others, moving around the floor to the beat of the music. The diameter of my dance movements stretches several meters now. Meeting the sparkling eyes of the dancing people, I understand that everyone here is saturated with love energy. I love this beautiful world, I love everyone. Tamir, behind the DJ booth, feels this energy and is revving up. Thousands of people feel unity with the whole Universe. Everything around is saturated with love. It seems like time has stopped, because it is irrelevant for love. Time only reminds me of itself through a dry throat and strong thirst. I should stop and get a drink. I see my new friends; they are also dancing, having merged into one long, passionate kiss. Their movements don’t seem like the movements of two goblins anymore; their bodies feel the music deeply, and they move beautifully and harmoniously.

“Well, how is it? Do you feel universal love?” I say to them, drawing a big heart in the air.

“Yes,” Zhyora and Natasha cry in unison, trying to shout above the speakers. “We got it. Thank you, Vasya, you’re just a kind magician. It turns out it’s possible to enjoy life without any reason. Life is beautiful and unique,” Natasha shouts, twisting and dancing around Zhyora.

“I’ve finally managed to get rid of thoughts about my work,” Zhyora adds, trying to show with his dance how he managed it. The eyes of both of them shine with overwhelming joy and happiness. I’m happy for them, because I managed to change their perception of this imperfect world. If I only I

knew then what kind of a cruel joke fate had in store for them in the future. Their expanded consciousness would shrink unpredictably a few years down the line, changing their destinies.

“Listen, Vasya, sell us some of your powder,” Zhyora says, hugging Natasha tightly around the waist.

“Actually, I’m not a drug dealer, but I have almost run out of money. If you give me two hundred dollars, I’ll sell you my last two grams.”

“Of course we will, no question. We came here to spend our money on our vacation. We’ll be back in Russia soon, and we’ll earn more. You live here; you need it more. Moreover, you do good work, helping people to wake up,” Zhyora says, handing me two American bills.

“Look, Roma, how quickly people change.”

“Yes, psychedelics work miracles on people. Still, Goa is an amazing place. For forty years people from all over the world have been coming here. And they still dream that someday the whole world will be ruled by love, not hatred.”

“Look at that chick dancing to your right. I think she’s from the same planet as you, and I think she wants to establish contact,” Roma says, smiling and pointing out a girl dancing nearby.

Turning and focusing my sparkling eyes, I see an extraordinary creature: a beautiful young girl in a floor-length gypsy skirt, spinning to the rhythm of the trance music, with movements that remind me of a Mexican shaman. Big brown eyes, bushy eyebrows and, just like me, three dark dreadlocks on her clean-shaven head. Her perfectly slim body is moving so beautifully to the rhythm of the music that I can’t take my eyes off her. She sees my fascinated gaze and blows me a kiss, inviting me to join her magical dance with a gesture. Once again time stops for me. Another DJ replaces Tamir and plays no less beautiful music. We keep on moving in circles across the dance floor, never taking our eyes off each other. The Full Moon is reflected in her large, bottomless brown eyes. I can’t stop. I am very thirsty, but her gaze won’t let me go, like a magnet.

“What’s your name, wonderful creature?”

“Zhozel,” she answers quietly, touching the lobe of my ear with her lips.

“And my name is Vasiliy,” I say, breathing in the smell of her skin. The hair on my body begins to stand up due to this divine scent.

“Vashiliy?”

“Yes, Vashiliy, you can just call me Vasa. Where did you come from, beauty?”

“Uruguay.”

“How did you get here? It’s on the other end of the world?”

“And where are you from?” Zhozel asks, embracing my waist with both arms.”

“Russia.”

“Russia? Where is this country?” Zhozel asks in her broken English, pressing closer and closer to me.

“Well, how can I explain it to you, beautiful creature? Do you know such a country as Japan?”

“Yes,” she nods, pressing her breasts against me.

“Do you know such country as Germany?”

“Yes.”

“There is a large country between them, and that’s where I live.”

Suddenly the huge eyes of this beautiful bald girl fill with tears and she starts crying, throwing herself onto my neck.

“What? What’s wrong?” I try to calm her down, not knowing what is going on.

“Why, why is the world so unfair? You see, all my life I’ve been waiting for you. Since my childhood, I have seen you in my dreams. Why were you born so far away from me?”

I try to reassure her, pressing her tightly to me. Like a little girl, she shudders and sobs in my arms.

“Let’s go somewhere; I have a lot to tell you.”

Forgetting about Roma and my new friends, I rush on my scooter towards the sea, cutting through the fog that has fallen on the road. The music doesn’t stop, it sounds in my head, and it sounds from everywhere. Millions of cicadas sound to me like a trance rhythm. Even the motor of my scooter plays music; my head wiggles and the muscles of my arms and legs flex to the beat. Coming down to the sea, we drive along the water’s edge, leaving a sparkling fountain of splashes. The Uruguayan beauty presses her warm body against my back, hugging my chest with her hands. The sea water, sparkling under the Full Moon, reflects the stars, which also dance to the music in my head.

“Let’s stop here,” my Uruguayan girlfriend tells me.

Stopping the scooter on the beach and without get off properly, we throw ourselves into each other’s arms. Our lips merge in a long kiss.

“Will you stay with me?” Zhazel asks with hope, hugging me tightly. I can’t lie to those eyes.

“Forgive me, but I love another woman. I have a family and a beautiful little daughter.”

She cries in my arms again.

“I can’t do this. My wife Lena is coming to Goa tomorrow.”