

N/Ari Tee



МОНЕЖИ

КВАРТИРА

ЕДИНСТВЕННАЯ МОТИВАЦИЯ
В МОЕЙ ЖИЗНИ
ЭТО ДОЧЬ...

I want improve my English...

Chapter 17. Part One. Inside.

“I need to go back to Russia,” Lena says sadly, lowering her eyes. “Right now, I can’t do anything to help you here, and there, in Russia, our daughter is alone, without us, staying with your mom. Everything will be fine. I called Tamir, and he promised to help when he gets back to Goa. Until that damn expert analysis comes, nothing can be done. Don’t worry about us; we’ll be fine. Think about yourself now. You need to take care of yourself, in order to survive. We’ll be back in four months. I’ll bring Vasilinka; she misses us, and I have to be there for her. I’ll try to make some money somehow, and we will get you out of here.”

I hug her for the last time, trying to remember her scent. She kisses me on the lips, and this moment that seems to last forever awakens in me something that I had tried to hide in the remotest corners of my memory. It’s like an electric shock. The guards, who only see beautiful white women in the movies, stare lustfully at my Lena. For the last time, I cling to my beloved. The warden points at the clock; our date is over. My gaze follows her to the door. Before leaving, she blows me a kiss. Maybe it’s better that she is leaving. My soul won’t hurt from knowing that she is somewhere close by, while I sit in a cage, unable to touch her. The cell door closes from outside.

“How is your family?” Dominic asks me, turning down the volume of the screaming TV.

“They’re okay,” I say, opening the ‘The Tibetan book of the Dead’. Buddhist literature always helps me to restore harmony with the surrounding world.

“Why are you so sad? Some problems with your family?”

“No, Dominic, everything is fine. It’s just that the next visit will be in four months,” I say, taking off the clean shirt that I normally only wear when I go to court. “But I’m not sad because of that. I’m sad because I don’t know what to say to my daughter when I see her. How can I explain to her why I’m in prison? What should I tell her if she asks why her friends went to school, and she didn’t? I don’t even feel sad, I feel ashamed. Ashamed because I preferred my principles, my fucking psychedelic revolution, to simply being able to be with her. From her birth, she became my only motivation in life. After she was born, almost everything I did made sense. I knew that I was alive and that everything I did, I did it for her. Even taking drugs and exploring this uncharted path; I did it for her. Trying to go first and to protect her from future mistakes.”

“But, if you think like that, then you have also been locked up for her. You made a mistake and are sitting here so that she will never repeat it.”

I put on a prison T-shirt and slump down onto my place, staring at the high wall behind the barred window.

“I also sometimes feel sad about the fact that when my daughter grows up, the neighbors will point fingers at her and say, ‘Her father is a robber; he robbed a gas station,’ Dominic tells me, sighing. “But, we shouldn’t think about that now; first of all we need to get out of here. Don’t give up hope.”

“Yes,” I answer him, trying to calm my raging mind by imagining it as a calm ocean.

You can’t be sad in prison, or you go mad. I need something to occupy my brain for the next four months. Of course, I will try to meditate as they describe in the Buddhist books, but I am not sure I’ll be able to keep it up for long. What have I dreamt about for the last few years? Learning English, exercising, studying Eastern philosophy... that is what I’ll do here. I have two two-liter plastic bottles. I can attach some handles to them out of rags and they will make pretty good dumbbells. The wall opposite my seat will make a great school board. Sharpening a pencil stub with my small piece of blade, I write on the wall in big letters, “I want improve my English.” I am not going to waste my time; I don’t have so much of it. Pushing aside my mat, I start

doing push-ups, trying to recall the last time I did any. After recovering my breath for five minutes, I take a plastic water bottle, and start doing bicep curls. Well, I can do five push-ups and a hundred bicep curls with a two-liter bottle. Not a bad start.

Chapter 17. Part Two. Outside.

“How you have changed! You look great!” Both my wives say in unison.

“There were no tickets, so we bought two package tours for the two New Year weeks,” Irina, my first wife, says.

“You look a bit tired. How are you doing, Ira?”

“After your move to India, I’ve had to deal with the business all alone. Nobody helps me now. I am tired... I’m tired of fucking Rashka¹. We have to work more and more, but there is less and less income. The corporations have crushed small business entirely. Out of the ten stores that we once had, only one is left. Rent and taxes eat up almost all of the profits.

“Well, what about your personal life? Haven’t you found a husband yet?”

“What personal life are you talking about? I don’t have any time for relaxation. And anyway, I’m over forty now; who needs me at my age.”

“Don’t worry, we’ll find you a husband. There are lots of interesting people here, in Goa. You are clever and beautiful; men are still going to be after you. Well, what’s your first impression of India?” I ask, dragging a suitcase into the hotel corridor.

“Actually, it reminds me of a poor imitation of a decent resort,” Irina says, pointing at a huge cockroach running along the wall.

“Although it’s supposed to be a four-star hotel, in my opinion, it is difficult to give it even one star.”

“Well, you should get used to it: this is India, everything here is fake. The Indians, due to their lack of a creative mindset, can only copy other people’s ideas, and they copy them in their own way, as best they can. Thirty years ago, they were still climbing palm trees, and now they are building hotels. Lena and I are going to head up north now, to Arambol. Give yourself time to acclimatize, get a good night’s sleep, and then come and join us. You are going to like North Goa.”

Lena and I race along on my scooter, away from the stupid hotels with their chlorinated swimming pools and air-conditioned rooms. We’re going to the place where my modest bamboo bungalow stands on the edge of the ocean, where you can fall asleep to the sound of waves crashing against the shore just a few meters away from the window. We are going to a place where there are no drunken Russian mugs wandering around.

“It’s so beautiful here,” Lena screams in my ear, clinging tighter to my back. “I’ve never seen so many palm trees. And how fresh the air is here! Now I understand why you don’t want to go back.”

“Lena, you haven’t seen the most important thing yet; this is just the beginning. The most important thing in Goa is the people. We’ll be there soon and you’ll see it with your own eyes. What’s new in Rashka?” I scream, trying to shout above the headwind and engine noise.

“We need to do something about Hemp. Revenue is falling dramatically.”

1 *Rashka* – a name given to Russia by Russians living in Goa.

“What about the package I sent you from India. Is it selling badly?”

“Your package sold out long ago. Indian Hemp can help us out in the offseason, but the Indians don’t make winter clothes out of hemp, and our winter is very cold. We need a serious supply of winter stuff. The suppliers haven’t sent us the new collection yet. The rent swallows up all the profits. We urgently need to look for new suppliers or open our own production.”

“Don’t worry, I’ll return to Russia in a month and think of something. I have a plan.”

“I’ve really missed you. How do you live here? According to my calculations, you should have run out of money long ago. How do you earn a living?”

“Lena, I’ve realized that India is a wonderful country. You can easily live without money here. And any money that you really need, falls from the sky in the quantity you wish.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, for example: yesterday, when I ran out of money and had to pay the rent for the bungalow and scooter, I sold a couple of grams of MDMA – the money is enough for me to not only pay for housing and the bike, but it is also enough for a week of living without denying myself anything.”

“Honey, isn’t it dangerous to sell drugs?”

“I’m not going to sell drugs. I’ll never touch any cocaine or heroin. And everyone sells psychedelics in Goa. Here, in impoverished India, the most serious problems with the police, for which the punishment can be up to ten years, can be resolved for as little as one thousand dollars. A crime for which you would be given five years in Russia, can be glossed over for a hundred bucks. India is a very corrupt country. The police recently raided a Russian drug-dealer, and he had a hundred grams of MDMA in a pile on the table. He gave the police one thousand dollars, did a line with them, and it was all worked out. In Russia, he would have been very lucky if the cops had demanded fifty thousand dollars. It’s more likely that he would have been sentenced for at least ten years. If India’s police start putting Europeans into prison, who is going to come here?”

“And is it possible to earn a living legally here? After all, we have a young daughter. I want to be able to sleep peacefully at night. Vasilinka misses you too; she is with your mother now, and I told her that you would come home soon. When are you coming back to Russia?”

“Lena, I’m sure that I’ll be back soon. But I’ll only come back to resolve everything, and then I want to come back here. I don’t know yet how I can legally earn a living here, but I’ve got some ideas. I’ve been searching for a place to open a restaurant, and I need at least a month to reach an agreement with the owner. We will have a restaurant on the beach.”

The two weeks of the New Year holidays that year were the last in Goa’s history when trance parties were held almost every day. Thousands of Russians, Israelis, British, and Japanese still prowled the streets of Goa in search of the night’s best party. For two weeks, every night we moved from party to party, smoking hash and taking soft drugs, and during the daytime we lay on the beach, sipping fresh juice. Lena was happy, and so was I. We didn’t want to leave at all. My first wife, Irina, was also fascinated by North Goa. Having escaped from the four-star hotel she had paid for in South Goa, she moved into a bungalow near us, without air conditioning, television, or maids; and she was blissfully happy. Thoughts about escaping Russia were also maturing in her mind, just like in mine. The thought that it wouldn’t be bad to spend the rest of your life here in paradise, on the shore of the Arabian Sea.

For a whole month after the departure of my wives, I continued to live in Arambol. It was a turning point in my life. I woke up and went to bed with the thought of how to stay here forever. Over time, the parties ceased to be something exotic. I went to them like going to work. I liked making money,

dancing and talking to interesting people. Moving all over North Goa, I met thousands of people. I was already known by all the Russians who lived permanently in the north, from Arambol to Anjuna. I sold my fellow countrymen LSD, mescaline, MDMA, ecstasy, charas. I didn't just sell psychedelics; I was a psychedelic preacher. When I arrived at a party, I chose my victims and worked on them the whole night. Sometimes they were loners, sometimes a whole crowd. I didn't care whether they bought something, because I earned at least a hundred dollars a day without putting much effort into it. I was interested in watching their transformation, the transformation of their perception of the world. I watched as within two weeks, notorious Russian gangsters turned into ordinary nice guys, and 'new Russian' businessmen who were previously unable to talk about anything but money, started discussing the meaning of life. On their departure home to Russia, many people thanked me for their awakening. They shook hands with me, promising to return. Everyone was transformed. Everyone became more human and more kind to some extent. Dozens, perhaps hundreds of such dedicated psychedelic preachers moved around Goa from one mama-chai to another, from one party to the next. Everywhere that at least one such preacher appeared, all conversations revolved around the psychedelic revolution, the expansion of consciousness, or the quantum leap in perception. Books by psychedelic professors and spiritual gurus propounding the expansion of consciousness through the use of natural or synthesized psychotropic drugs, were discussed everywhere. Hard drugs and alcohol were universally condemned.

People like me, psychedelic preachers, explained to people the difference between good and bad drugs, telling them the things that society tries to conceal, as society considers all drugs unequivocally bad. People who embraced the faith of the psychedelic religion, refused to return to their place in society. Having realized the futility of the endless pursuit of the Golden Calf or a happy future, people threw away their expensive clothes and cell phones, burned their passports and return tickets, preferring the simple life of a fishing village to the hectic life of a big city. If only we knew then whose toes we were stepping on. Society did not seem like a cruel monster capable of easily crushing anyone who tried to undermine its conservative principles. It seemed that it needed just a little longer, and our imperfect world would enter the final sprint in the race of evolution, where love and harmony would be the core values.

I returned to Russia in the middle of winter. Moscow met me with dirty snow and gloomy, worried faces. Having discarded all illusory problems, I shone, standing out like a sore thumb in a crowd of average Russians. Despite the cold weather, I wore a knitted Nepalese jacket that resembled a small rainbow from a distance, fluorescent orange pants, and I had a pink scarf around my neck. Over my shoulder hung a bag with a drum protruding out of it, and I had summer sandals on my feet. The smile didn't leave my face. Nobody could spoil my mood.

Dymkov, like all the other Russians I meet, greets me with a gloomy gray face.

"Tell me about your trip" he says without smiling, and pulls a pack of cigarettes and a little box of ganja out of his desk.

"I don't know what to tell you. I was on another planet."

"Did you fuck a lot of chicks?"

"You won't believe it, Dymkov; it was so good there that chicks didn't interest me at all. Well no, they interested me, of course; but only as interesting people, not as sex objects."

"You are getting old, buddy. When you and I used to visit prostitutes, they didn't interest you as people at all."

"No, Dymkov, it is you who is getting old. I learned to feel unconditional love. It's cooler than usual sex. What do you think of first after you sleep with a woman?"

“How to get rid of her, what else I can think about? You know, I have a family, kids.”

“There you are. Well, I’ve learned to simply love everyone. For me, if I haven’t slept with a girl she remains a mystery, the invisible Universe; and for you, everyone you have fucked is a thing of the past.”

“It’s obvious you took too many drugs in Goa. Let’s have a smoke,” Dymkov says, handing me a joint. “Chicks, drugs, Goa... I’ve got you. Let’s talk business. Do you know what’s going on with Hemp?”

“Of course I know. But, I don’t think there’s any reason to panic. Don’t worry, Dymkov; I have a plan. I know how to get us out of this crisis. We need to open our own production, and I’m ready to put together a business plan.”

“And where are you going to get the money from, Vasya?” Dymkov asks me, suddenly serious, leaning back in the leather chair.

“What do you mean ‘where from’? You said that Sam personally promised to support our project. Or is Legalize no longer of interest to him?”

“Legalize is Legalize, but in our corporation we have a rule: if someone takes money, they have to return it before asking for more.”

“But it was clear from the very beginning that the project is new and risky, and that it would probably require additional investment. Besides, the main purpose of Hemp is not commercial, but political.

“Don’t confuse politics with business.”

“But it’s not our business. I’m just a manager; you are a supervisor. Our business is to work. And theirs is to invest the dough.”

“If we don’t give back the money on time, the security service will come to your home and propose that you sell your apartment. And, if you object, they’ll cut off your ear first, so that then you will run to sell your home yourself.”

“No, Dymkov; we didn’t agree on anything about my apartment. We need to get out of this crisis some other way. The business still works; it just needs upgrading. I am ready to sell my jeep and invest in Hemp.

“Well, that’s more like it. Tell me, what’s your plan?” Dymkov asks me, his face relaxing immediately, and passes me the joint.

“We have to go to Nepal. According to my information, they make a lot of fabric out of hemp there. We’ll open our own production.”

“Well then, you better get ready for a new expedition,” Dymkov pats me on the shoulder approvingly. “Just stop smiling all the time, you’re not in Goa now. Your cheerful smile ruins the working atmosphere.”

After that, I managed to smile for another month. For a month, nothing could upset me. I continued preaching my psychedelic religion in Russia. I met with my friends and acquaintances. I called everyone to quit their businesses and move to Goa. Many people listened enviously to my adventures and dreamed that someday they too would abandon their stupid jobs, and go in search of the Promised Land. Some of them looked at me like I was crazy, as though I had taken too many drugs and gone completely mad. But after a while, I noticed that almost everyone was irritated by my happy face. Everyone raced around at high speed, pursuing a rich and happy future, pushing aside anyone who got in their way.

Happiness was somewhere just beyond the horizon. You only had to pull your socks up, and run for it. But no one managed to run with a smile. Happy, smiling people, like me, either relaxed you or irritated you. For exactly one month I managed to keep going on the energy I had accumulated in Goa. Then, unexpectedly, depression hit. The harsh Russian reality surrounded me like a heavy gray fog. It was as though my battery had suddenly died. There was

absolutely nothing I wanted to do. I didn't want to go outside to see the faces of my disgruntled fellow citizens. I really missed fresh juice, fruit salads, freshly prepared seafood and the Sun, which for some reason didn't show up very often. Eating tasteless Russian food, I again gained the twenty pounds that I had lost in Goa.

I tried to give other people a smile, hoping to get at least a little bit of positive energy in return, but on meeting my gaze people either averted their frightened eyes, suspecting me of something bad, or responded to me with an evil grin. "Look, Petya, that dude is dressed like a rooster. He's probably a fag or a Hari Krishna," I often heard behind me. But then, finally, it was time to sell my car. I had money, so I began to prepare for a new expedition. It was an expedition from which I never returned, an expedition that radically changed my life.