

18+

Ilina Pimenova

No Names, No Signs

Technology | Virus | Life

Irina Pimenova

**No Names, No Signs.
Technology I Virus I Life**

«Издательские решения»

Pimenova I.

No Names, No Signs. Technology I Virus I Life / I. Pimenova —
«Издательские решения»,

ISBN 978-5-00-692806-0

НЕЗАКОННОЕ ПОТРЕБЛЕНИЕ НАРКОТИЧЕСКИХ СРЕДСТВ,
ПСИХОТРОПНЫХ ВЕЩЕСТВ, ИХ АНАЛОГОВ ПРИЧИНЯЕТ ВРЕД
ЗДОРОВЬЮ, ИХ НЕЗАКОННЫЙ ОБОРОТ ЗАПРЕЩЕН И ВЛЕЧЕТ
УСТАНОВЛЕННУЮ ЗАКОНОДАТЕЛЬСТВОМ ОТВЕТСТВЕННОСТЬ. XXI
century. Technologies and beauty. But the bright picture hides a problem. People
are getting too happy. Euphoria brings them to a sad end. While scientists do not
know how to deal with the “happiness virus,” uninfected people are being taken to
a secret orbital station near Earth. It seems that it is a save, but it is hard to live in a
cramped paradise. Also there are secrets. What adventures await the inhabitants of
the station? Will they be able to find a solution and return home to Earth?

ISBN 978-5-00-692806-0

© Pimenova I.

© Издательские решения

Содержание

IRINA PIMENOVA	6
Part I. Station	7
Part II. Earth	19
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	23

No Names, No Signs Technology I Virus I Life

Irina Pimenova

© Irina Pimenova, 2026

ISBN 978-5-0069-2806-0

Created with Ridero smart publishing system

IRINA PIMENOVA
NO NAMES, NO SIGNS

It takes 5 minutes for a rocket to fly away to the space.

It took us more than 150,000 years to achieve this.

Part I. Station

Chapter 1

Yaroslava was sitting on the bed. She has suffered from insomnia for a long time. The clock showed 3.12 am. More than 4 hours before the alarm clock.

Alarm clock! Long ago, she hated that little, irritating gadget. In the past life, it didn't let her get enough sleep. Now she treated it as something useless and unnecessary. Now She doesn't sleep anyway, and if she forgets herself with a heavy dream in the early morning, then be sure, it will be right before the alarm clock. At the station, the concept «in the morning» existed only due to earthly habits, but still...

She got up, drank a glass of water, and went to the monitor-communicator. The screen was silvery with a hazy glow. No news. The entire station was sleeping.

At such hours she had a habit to go to the library. She could just look through the books, the robot-librarian did not interfere her with his pieces of advices. The library was small and housed in one cabin, where instead of the usual furnishings, bookshelves were organized on the one side and a small table on the other. For it, perhaps most of all, Yaroslava was grateful to the captain – scarcely a sentimental person. To take books with you to the station at the time of evacuation is unthinkable! Apparently, everyone is trying to preserve his humanity in their own way.

Books! They stood in rows on the shelves, the real ones – paper books, with colorful spines, sometimes with gold embossing; somewhere they were covered with dust, somewhere they were left on a corner, as if someone carelessly left them forgotten. They still smelled that life, as if nothing had happened. They just stood and waited for a reader.

She wasn't an avid reader. Just it brought her peace of mind.

There were huge portholes for such a room. One could see the majestically floating Earth through them. At night, it shone with megapolices, as previously. Yara sometimes played a guessing game with herself – she had to recognize a city by the outlines of light.

Sometimes Yara looked at illustrations and photos in books. To be honest, she didn't like photography. Why is it needed? Only evidences of a lost life long ago. Everything is over; the events have sunk into oblivion. Why to stir? It is better to live the real life.

There was a communicator in every room on the station, just like in her cabin. Her dark thoughts were interrupted by its crackling.

«Wow, the end of the XXI century, and it crackles like an old museum radio» – she thought.

Chapter 2

The screen lit up, came to life, the face of the senior shift appeared. He was still sleepy. Reluctantly, she looked at her wristwatch – 6.45. It is not a «wake up time». Something must have happened.

– You're not sleeping again! You will be inattentive at the morning co-op! – He cleared his throat and scolded her in displeasure.

– How did you find me? – Yara asked without malice.

– You have two places for night vigils: a hut-reading room and a swimming pool. Unlike her, he did not like books, – I started from the library.

– Has something happened?

«No, just..., I can't sleep either,» he grumbled.

The morning was close. The station, like a big anthill, slowly came to life, came out of its unsteady slumber, and, finally, taking a deep breath, began to move. Couriers, teachers, doctors, coaches scurried everywhere. The station resembled a state that has everything beginning from the army to a kindergarten.

He was right. After chronic lack of sleep, it was difficult for Yara to come to working condition. She is easy-going, optimistic and hardworking, but lack of sleep has taken its toll. He, as a senior shift, needs a vigorous staff.

Her work was not very diverse. As always, in mornings – distribute math tasks to everyone, after a preliminary warm-up and a meditation session, and then the school day will go on as usual, group by group. Kids, schoolchildren, adults.

It was more pleasant to work with children. They don't need to be pushed too much. Even they could give odds to a beginner mind fitness trainer.

Well, having gone up to her cabin, having prepared for a working day, she jumped out for breakfast.

In the spacious dining room, which is not typical for old space stations at all, combined with a orangery, and having a transparent «ceiling» that opens temporarily – a dome, she waited for her shift. Altogether, smiling and joking on the way, they squeezed to the tables and proceeded to deliciously smelling pancakes, cheesecakes, cereals and omelets.

There was a good chef at the station. He believed that since they do not live on Earth, they should eat like at home at least. Some kind of magic always happened in his kitchen, shrouded enchanting smells.

– How are you, Yara? – a good-natured big man asked, taking the second helping of pancakes with jam; – Do you still stagger to the library at nights?

– I go there ... – she answered with a mysterious smile, – don't eat too much sweets, otherwise you won't squeeze into the lodgment! You will need to lose the weight! – The girl reacted pugnaciously.

– Today, everything is monotonous as always, – Kate remarked boring, – first a briefing, then work, lunch, and the whole day will pass.

Kate was the youngest of them. She was tall, slender blonde with the right facial features, she wasn't pretty, just cute. But her green eyes had always created a great impression. She had a habit to look long and researching as a psychologist, straight into the soul. It was amazing. But today she was a bit under the weather. Perhaps that's why her transparently green eyes were covered with a deep malachite mist.

– Let's see what's new. They brought another two guys during the night, – Sasha replied, chewing his pancakes.

Sasha was tall, a little plumpy, a little sloppy but a very active biosurgeon. He was always full of ideas, which never gave him any peace. He always wanted to check or test something. His dark brown hair

Sasha was a tall, a bit fatty and grubby but very energetic biosurgeon. Always he was full of ideas, which didn't give him any rest at all and he was always ready to test and check everything. His dark brown hair stuck out in different directions or due to the absence of a comb either neglecting it. His sharp, inquiring glance gave away a curious nature.

– When did you find out? It is only morning! Did you run to the arrivals area again? Kate couldn't resist.

– Well, I've run ... – Sasha muttered reluctantly, averting his eyes slightly.

The briefing passed cheerfully, quickly and without surprises. Everyone went to work. Yara went to school, Kate went to her study. She was a physiologist. Sasha, as always, went to the

bioengineering laboratory. His world was made of spare parts of bioprosthesis arms and feet. His laboratory made an eerie impression on Yara, she did not like to come there too often.

No one else heard anything about the night guests. Even if they were brought, they will spend the next two weeks in quarantine.

Chapter 3

One boy in the younger group brought Yara out of her thoughts. He was 11 and very active. If he finished a test early then others he couldn't sit still and wait, he started squirming, staring at Yara as if he asked «Well? When?» His results stood out. He was accurate and fast, although a little nervous and suspicious. However, who is surprised by this now? Yara thought that he should go to the next grade, despite his age, of course after visiting Kate and checking his psycho type again.

He will remain in her memory as «that boy».

Now she recalled his appearance at school.

They found him alone, «pure» – with an «unclouded» consciousness, mentally almost uncrippled. Even his nervous system was preserved almost completely. He was 8 that time. He was on the playground and didn't want to leave. He was waiting for his parents from work. Obviously, he is still waiting for them, already here at the space station, after so many months. They were never found. Completely «pure families» were very rare. They watched him for a long time. Everything was done neatly. He was picked up not too early and not too late. Andrey was told the legend about the «accident» and the need to fly to the orbital station, where he would find many new friends, and, at the same time, he would undergo a medical examination. When he asked what ailment, he had and why it was impossible to treat him on Earth, he was simply told the truth. Children are always easier to accept the truth. This is their biggest advantage. Adults begin to cling to work, lived years, lost relatives, some property... He was told that the treatment is possible only there, and the disease, most likely, has not yet come. However, it is needed to check. He agreed... Voluntarily... But he was waiting for mom and dad. He saw something there, something he could not explain to himself. But never shared...

When he reached the station, he was sent to the youngest group in school. He lived in boarding school.

Meanwhile, the lesson was easy and even boring.

The space station school was combined with a kindergarten. It occupied one of the compartments, which is closer to the orangery and dining room, and far away from the control center, the arrival areas with its bustle, transport shuttles and medical flyers.

The school was organized hastily, and volunteers from those who had the necessary profile worked as teachers. A long time ago, programmers assembled assistant robots, and now they scurried between the rows of utterly serious students, who were looking at puzzles on screens, which shined in front of them in the air. The robots checked the tests, looked at kids who could do it faster, whose marks would be higher, and this greatly helped the teachers.

The teachers remained; no digital technologies have completely replaced them. There were such attempts, but it immediately became clear that if there was no a person in front of you, there would no interest or understanding. Robots, checking homework and holding tests, made individual training plans, and the teacher allocated more time for the student, assessed the need for additional material.

Artificial intelligence has made great progress! These scurrying between the rows robots not only checked the work instantly, but also prompted their pets. One of the programmers tweaked something in the head of an assistant robot, just for fun, and now some of them had the ability to empathize and facilitate the curriculum. Right now, Yara was looking at one of the robots who obviously stuck with one of the students for too long, and he was feverishly showing something on the screen, quite humanly.

– Philly, what are you doing there? – She asked him with a suspicious smile; – I will apply to the commission on the ethics of artificial intelligence! – Knowing that these threats were not destined to come true, everyone laughed, and Philly, as if scalded, jumped to the side, almost knocking down a nearby chair.

When the test was over, her screen showed grades, individual programs, and topics that would have to be repeated.

Yara taught unusual lessons. She was a mind-fitness trainer. After such classes, children read better, looked for solutions to non-standard problems better, which is necessary in any profession. While working with adults, tasks for logic and imagination, critical thinking helped to restore cognitive functions, to get used to the new reality. Especially here, and after the illness.

Now, while working with kids, she thought that she loved it when everyone developed relatively evenly in her group and Andrey had to be sent to the elders.

...Kate, seizing free 15 minutes, was drinking coffee. She needed to regain her composure. Difficult patients came often. They were among those who lost their loved ones. They felt helpless and unnecessary.

– A pie? Yara asked cheerfully. As a sensitive person, she immediately saw that Kate was resting and she decided to bring in a little joy. Yara knew that Kate did not want to be questioned. If she wants to, she will tell, maybe she will just let it slip... Later. Psychologists knew how not to accept someone else's pain as their own. Work is like work. However, they also need rest.

Looking at a piece of a chocolate cake and a cup of mind-blowing space coffee, Yara thought about going to the orangery.

The coffee here, of course, is not real, but they are used to it, calling this mixture cosmocoffee derisively.

– I have schoolchildren only in an hour. Shall we go to the orangery? – She suggested.

– Let's go! – Kate responded, coming out of the twilight of thoughts.

The orangery was big, with large portholes, like a library. However, the library is darker, but here the greenery gave freshness to the walls. Against the backdrop of the black «sky», the brightly lit orangery with real earthly trees, bushes and flowers was mesmerizing. When the glow of distant stars appeared in cosmic infinity the garden was especially beautiful. Usually this happened when the station was «hidden» behind the planet, and found itself in the shadows.

Looking at the flowers, Yara leaned back on the bench. «Just like at home in the park, by God,» she thought.

Kate suddenly said:

– You know, he dragged his smartphone again and tried to figure out why he couldn't call home.

She said it quietly, but so clearly that Yara opened her eyes abruptly and straightened her back. She didn't want to answer. Kate did not wait for the answer. People got used to the space station hard, especially adults. That one not old man, quite stubborn, regularly came to her not to a consultation but just to talk. His consultations finished some time ago but weren't successful. Clearly, he needed more attention. He was suffering from sorrow.

They returned to the cafe, left the cups and Kate went to the next session. Yara walked in the orangery a bit more and decided to visit Sasha. The sector of scientific laboratories, engineering and medical research was located on the second radius of the station. So that it was necessary to take the elevator and go past the hospital block.

Sasha has been fighting with a bionic prosthetic arm for the third day already. It was very hard to program it so that the fingers felt the temperature of objects. At first it was difficult to find a child's prosthesis, now – problems with the computer interface. Sensors implanted in the brain have not yet transmitted signals to the «hand» as expected. Sasha hasn't yet found a breakdown yet. Being displeased and disheveled, he gave her a sharp, short glance.

– Well? Have you talked to Kate?

– Hello! – Yara pulled away dumbfounded, – not yet. She has enough patients.

The laboratory was equipped with the latest technology and more like a computer center. Sasha gave the impression of a half-surgeon – half-crazy programmer, conjuring something at the monitors and adjusting it in such a way as to return the lost functions to the body. Now in his left hand he held a semi-working prosthesis, which was repeating the movements of his right hand.

Chapter 4

She returned home from the dacha, opened the door and entered an empty apartment. Nobody was supposed to be at home. Everyone stayed at the cottage. It was summer. It was very sunny and hot. Suddenly in the room, she saw her father, or rather a person who was very similar to her father. He was sitting at the table in the living room waiting for her. He calmly looked at her and smiled, like father. He was waiting for her. She was frightened. She knew for sure that this could not be, because her father was in the countryside. They were all there when she left.

«What do you want here?» – flashed through her head. She never doubted it was not him. Despite, she stepped away in fear and cried out:

– This cannot be! It cannot be! That's not you! – She tried to run into the kitchen.

But there was another person sitting there who looked exactly like her father! Or the same one?

A chilling terror washed over her. These copies faced each other, and, it seemed they were even surprised to meet each other.

She tried to seize the moment and lock them up somewhere. The washroom door handle came her way. She even managed to push them in and slam the door. She was very surprised how all that happened. They both were very tall and wiry. Maybe it was the effect of unexpectedness. They didn't expect her to be so fast. Yara wasn't a very trained but she was sporty. Of course, she could not resist their pressure against the door for a long time, and, slamming the door back and forth several times, they jumped out.

Next was darkness. Then she realized that it was a kidnapping. She was being held in her own apartment. It was very scary and weird. It seemed that everything was as always; things were in their places, no one stole anything and run, she was not constrained in her movements, it was sunny outside the window, but some man posing as her father explained to her, very politely, that tomorrow they would go on a long trip together. And if she wouldn't agree voluntarily her closed people would suffer.

His voice was calm and quiet and very distinct. It went straight into the heart; his yellowish eyes looked just at to her. He had a very unpleasant cold piercing look as if he was a robot, without emotions.

They spent the whole day at home. The real summer weather worsened the depressing mood. It became clear that she could not escape.

It was so quiet all around. There was nothing in this ringing silence. No talking, no threats. She thought someone must have been looking for her. At least to find out how she arrived from the dacha. She kept thinking how to convey a cry for help, how to say that she was being held and they were going to take her somewhere.

She tried to talk to him cautiously.

– Where are we going?

– To Kineshma.

She was very surprised. Nothing ever connected her with this town.

Her braked state longed till evening, her head and feet got heavy. She thought they hit her with something and she didn't remember it. Suddenly Yara thought:

«Where is the second one? There were two of them! Absolutely the same as one», but she never asked.

The next morning, a little windier, he came in to her room and told her to get dressed, get ready for the trip, and gave her a pill. The tablet was not very large, white, without a name on the shell.

«Swallow it if you want to be all right,» he said with hidden menace, looking at her intently.

She made an awkward movement, and the tablet fell on the blanket, but still did not roll away. She picked it up and held it in her hand. He was distracted for a moment, and she threw her over the head of the bed, pretending to swallow.

A bright ray of light entered the darkened room through the curtained window. The day promised to be sunny.

They got ready, went out into the yard and got into the car. Completely unaware of why and where she was going, she looked around as if in a fog. There was no one in the yard this early morning.

It turned out on the way that they would stop by some camp. There were many strangers. No one spoke to each other, they wandered in a large park, as if they had forgotten something and were looking for a loss. There were many trees, but everything was visible. It became clear that they all were being watched closely.

Suddenly Yara saw her mom, she walked towards her hurriedly.

– Where have you been? – Yara felt something bad is happening. She couldn't speak openly, scream and run away.

They sat down on a bench. Mom had a rolled-up newspaper in her hands. Yara took it and began to write in the margins with a pen that had come from somewhere on the bench: «Mom! I was forcibly detained and taken away. Help!»

Mom read it. Her face didn't change. She nodded slightly, stood up and walked away. Yara did not follow her, she just watched her mother, slowly, moving away. Her skirt was rustling and shimmering in the sun. Mom used to wear a light jean midi and summer white sandals with high heels, with a clasp pulling the ankles.

For some reason Yara felt a little better. Yara gave the news and maybe they will help her.

Soon, many of them were gathered together on the square in front of the main entrance. The square had three long streets, two of which were side and stretched along not high, one-story wooden, very long building with one corridor. It had many glass doors to the camp's territory and out.

That building stretched along the camp like a boarder. The third street went in the park.

A terrible wind rose, nature itself became the personification of the fact that something bad was happening. The dark, almost black trees' crowns were bending under the onslaught of the wind; they shook from side to side, like old burlap. It became cloudy and cold.

People were gathered at a low, one-story, wooden building with one long corridor, from which glass doors exited to the right and left – back to the camp and out. This building stretched along the perimeter and, as it protected the camp. People passed through these doors, leaving its territory. The glass in the windows rattled every time the doors were opened. With a strong gust of wind, the doors slammed mercilessly, and the glass in them rang desperately.

After a while, when everyone had gathered and the hostel was empty, the observers, making sure that everyone had come and no one had escaped, began to load everyone into several large buses. Leaden clouds and a strong wind accompanied this procession. The wind blew in her face, blowing and tossing her hair.

Yara kept thinking on what kind of pill it was and how it was supposed to work, and whether the people who were with her took it. Suddenly, a terrible thought occurred to her. It was not mom, but her double, the same as her father. She felt even colder, loneliness and uncertainty fell at once, and her feet became heavy. She barely got on the bus.

She had this dream often. It was painfully sticky. She felt cold wind, fear, and danger under her skin. It has already become a habit for her to go to the pool after it to remove this numbness.

It wasn't a memory of how she happened to be at the space station. However, some feeling, albeit unreal, but a connection, prevented her from clearing her mind, and in order to shake herself up, she went swimming.

The swimming pool was a nice feature of the space station. For this, not a very modern station, a swimming pool was truly a gift. The artificial gravity contributed to the complete illusion of earthly habits. Alone, at nights, when the pool was at her full disposal, she «made» more than one path there.

She tried not to recall her arrival at the space station.

They were put on a flyer, and after a short time, they were already standing in the arrivals area, next to the huge, unremarkable, gray-metal docking airlock. What was surprising to her – the huge crowds of people, operators, porters, and pilots. Well, exactly, neither more nor less – an ordinary airport.

She did not remember her group only that it was a flock of peers, huddling fearfully to each other, not understanding anything and abandoned, apparently in a fuss. Only a few minutes later probably the only normal person in this entire buzzing hive, with an open face and specific information, approached them.

This is how she met her shift commander. She was always drawn to direct, honest people who have an inner need not to leave and not to keep others in the dark.

They were invited to a quiet office at a different radius of the station and explained how they would live here.

That's how she stayed at the space station.

By that time, large-scale rumors were already circulating, acquiring more and more speculation about the capture of the planet by an unknown mind.

However, no one wanted to believe. After all, life went on as usual, ordinary. Only the rate of unexplained deaths was rising year by year. The reasons were attributed to personal tragedies, illnesses and financial failures. Rumormongers were seen as obsessed with crazy conspiracy theories.

Immediately upon arrival, they were offered the opportunity to fly to the Moon for good. There was a well-developed scientific colony. More importantly, it was isolated from the outside world. Yaroslava did not want such a future for herself. Once upon a time, when life was still normal, she flew there on vacation on an excursion. She no longer remembered what those scientists were doing, but the constant, dense darkness that accompanied her from the window of the hotel forever repulsed even an attempt to settle there in her.

Everything was alien, even the artificial sky of the lunar orangery did not resemble the real sky of the Earth – high, infinitely blue and windy.

The colony itself was interesting. From above, it looked like a huge octopus with long legs – tunnels that stretched in different directions bizarrely for many, many kilometers.

People have created large, closed, one-level rooms connected with each other by diametrical corridors and gateways between laboratories, orangery, residential compartments, places for recreation and entertainment.

Going out in the morning for a run or a walk with a dog or a beloved cat, through such tunnels one could go far into the lunar landscapes not entering the open, still hostile, space. The orangeries, with their solid and transparent dome, brightened up the lunar desert, interspersed with craters or mountain ranges of a monotonous black and gray color. The Moon has never been terraformed and people have never created nor an atmosphere neither a landscape reminiscent of Earth. There were such scientific projects at the beginning of the century, but those who captured the Earth's satellite for mining were not distinguished by a romantic desire to turn the Moon into the Earth. Some even thought it was for the best. The Moon should remain the Moon, and not the likeness of the Earth.

Yaroslava remembered the bewitching feeling of the vast, starry distances, although illuminated by the Sun, but so cold and dark that she preferred the space station.

Chapter 5

Many years ago, circa in seventies of the XXI century, the founders of the project «Station» had the opportunity to use old one in orbit. It was a transit point for scientists, colonists and just travelers into deep space. Some of the bright minds began to realize that something inexplicable was happening on the planet, as if an invisible enemy was taking over... no, not the territory, but the consciousness of people, making them absolutely controllable puppets. Although, people continued to live as if nothing had happened – go to work, send their children to school, and go on vacations.

However, painstaking, analytical work was carried out in quiet offices of military research centers. They wanted to study global changes in the minds of the population. It soon became known that this misfortune struck more than one country. Some kind of force spread its «tentacles» across the planet, changing society slowly but surely. So slowly that people had time to get used to the new, albeit absurd reality that they could not seriously think about, well, at least three years earlier.

The authorities were discouraged... If this is a capture, then by whom? An unknown mind – where is he? There is no open aggression, no demands. With whom to fight? Where to send our fearless space fleets?

They did not declare a state of war or a state of emergency – no one needs panic. Attempts to deal with the situation were unsuccessful.

The more studies were done, the more surprising the findings seemed. People, mostly, became happier. However, behind narcissism, there were burning through life, indifference, the desire for risk. Their outlook on life became easier. At first, such excessive optimism, a kind of confidence that everything was for the better, made it possible to find ways out of downs of life, but over time, it became obvious that people were beginning to relate to life and death too easily, and they were easy to manage. Their values and beliefs became flexible. In the end, they were haunted by inexplicable euphoria, incredible frivolity, tormented by mental burnout from the quick satisfaction of desires, and they ended their lives in mental hospitals or by suicide. Medical studies of such «patients» showed paradoxical changes, when the body produced the hormones of «happiness» for a long time firstly, and then, because of a sharp onset of depression, unable to cope, fell into a real psychosis. At the same time, all body systems suffered. It resembled the spread of a virus, but people who were not related to each other by family or friendship ties «got ill».

Then a seemingly crazy plan was developed – to take out «clean», uninfected people to the orbital space station. The «objects» were carefully and imperceptibly studied, then they were offered a «voluntary evacuation», before which, of course, the candidates were given time to think everything over.

Getting used to the space station be not easy. First, the shock of the voyage and doubts about the correctness of the decision to change life completely, then the realizing of a possible non-return to Earth. All this came slowly and painfully.

The people who had already settled here gave the impression of being strong in spirit, and this was a little encouraging. Of course, the doctors helped, they assessed of the general state of health, but the internal, spiritual war, did not let go of almost anyone. Many refused to accept the reality.

Chapter 6

The observation at the space station was superbly equipped. The medical staff, the wards, everything was designed to provide comfort and peace to the frightened arrivals. And there were reasons to be scared...

The newly arrived couple turned out to be a married couple. They were looking around with wide eyes. So many questions appeared at once, that it is impossible to express!

Not surprisingly, it was a completely different reality.

Having landed in the medical bay, where everything directly screamed with its cleanliness and sterility, they were immediately taken to the ward. There is a rule at the space station – all arrivals must go through the quarantine. On Earth, they were tested, then tests were repeated here, and they faced another two weeks of seclusion to guarantee the preservation of the colony.

To live these two quarantine weeks, they were supposed together as a married couple. It was a violation, allowed because they lived together on Earth. Perhaps, exactly that became a mistake.

In the meantime, a married couple, not yet elderly, got acquainted with their new home. The conditions were very comfortable. Two-room cabin, there was everything you need, and even comfortable. There was a double bed with high and very soft mattress at the one side of a big, for the station, bedroom. And the opposite wall was empty, but later they realized if someone waves a hand through the air very closely to the wall then there appears a screen to watch local news or movies. The wardrobe was so huge! They didn't take so many clothes. The dim light in the hall let reach the bathroom without getting bruises in an unknown place.

The second room was a mixture between a living room and a dining room. They didn't wait for guests except medical staff so they decided the room would be a reading room. Besides here they found the same screen. It is convenient when people want to watch different movies. The Earth was visible in the window.

Olga is a tall, pretty blonde, who retained her femininity and figure, by late middle age, was wary and a little slow to master the territory. It was usual for her to get accustomed to everything new. She was reasonable, level-headed, calm, even cold that helped her in stressful situations. But these features could overturn to stubbornness, excessive introspection.

Andrey, a stocky, short, dark-haired man, was distinguished by an accommodating character and tried, from a practical point of view, to accept everything unusual.

What caught their eye was the snow-white sterility and very good medical equipment, downright cosmic, which, ultimately, is logical.

Immediately the doctors came and began to test them and do researches. They were checked from all sides, but nothing was explained. No comments were given. The doctors were extremely polite and smiling. And this was very disturbing. Andrey and Olga did not like to sit in the dark.

One evening she asked her husband:

– What do you think about all this? Are we sick? – she blurted out at once everything that bothered her in her usual manner. But she still retained her most unpleasant presentiment. – We have had already all needed procedures.

– I don't know, they will tell soon, – Andrey answered.

He was used to accepting fate as it is, he did not have a special ability to push his way in life, but you could always rely on him. Now he had no answer...

There was a good film library in quarantine. It was only necessary to select a movie, and an almost invisible, a very thin screen on the wall would light up. That way they could pass the time...

In mornings the nurse usually came, she took tests before breakfast, smiled cheerfully. Nastya was the most cheerful of the medical staff. Her bright, perky eyes and smile – the only thing that could be distinguished through the heavy, completely covering the body, medical suit. Such people

in almost anti-plague suits frightened Olga at first. Then she got used to it. And in fact, this is already too much. She never considered herself contagious leper. But here things were different.

– You, guys, have a week left, – said Nastya, – and if everything goes well, we will go to the station.

– Are we going to stay here forever? —asked Olga caustically? She could not resist longer.

– All in due time, – cautiously answered Nastya.

There was another rule at the space station, a very reasonable one. DNA analysis was taken from all arrivals and compared with the DNA of locals. This contributed to the identification of relatives. If relatives died, then they could be carried out on their last journey in a relatively human way. If they turned out to be uninfected, then the family reunion took place in a very touching atmosphere, although not without difficulties, of course. Well, it was a good way to create a database of station residents – such a kind of population census. The station has grown over the years.

DNA analyzes of Olga and Andrey showed that little Andreyka, «that boy», is their son. The doctors have not yet told anything to anyone; they decided to let the quarantine period pass first.

– Well? How are our new ones? – the head of the medical unit asked their attending physician. He was very tall and completely thin. He was just a pole, not a figure, with a cold expressionless face. Sergey Sergeyevich glasses were sparkling slightly.

– While everything says about the absence of the disease.

By the end of the second week, Andrey and Olga's anxiety grew. When they were taken out, they voluntarily took this step, but now, having lived in an unknown place for so long, not knowing their future, the previous arguments to fly to the station seemed doubtful. Suspicions accumulated, misunderstanding, lack of news, all this was very depressing.

– Why aren't they telling us anything? Like we're some kind of criminals? – Olga, with her impatient nature, was finding it increasingly difficult to survive isolation.

– They don't know yet. Everything will become clearer later. Be patient, – tried to calm her husband.

– When later? Are all these rumors about some kind of disease really true?

One evening she asked him:

– What do you think, how is Andreyka? Where is he now?

Sergei did not answer. He shook his head more to his own thoughts than to hers.

This burden fell heavily on both of them. Everyone experienced the loss themselves. Probably, this alienated and brought them closer at the same time, became decisive to fly away.

So many forces were thrown into his search, volunteer search teams, all those sleepless nights. All in vain. His traces were never found. Why? It's hard to say now, but he's gone. For them, who lived for his sake, this was a terrible blow. Olga never acknowledged his death aloud, but the fact that she decided to leave the Earth became a sign for her husband that she considered her son was dead. As for Andrew, he took the blow silently. Nothing connected him with this unnecessary world. Flying even meant deliverance – a completely different life, a different job.

So, they flew away.

At first, of course, they were suspicious of the lanky man who was preparing them for the flight. It is hard to say goodbye to the Earth. The Earth is a home. Everything is native here. Especially, at their age. And there? What will be there? Uncertainty. New life. Is it that good?

Already here, at the station, Olga often remembered this young man with an open face and a very inviting smile. He was among the volunteers and immediately stood out from the general mass of search engines. He sincerely grieved when Andrey was never found. It was he who told them about the station.

Olga thought about all this for a long time – about the loss of her son, the decision to fly. Would she have taken this step if Andrey had been found, or if he had not been lost at all? She wasn't so sure.

With her husband, in recent years, they did not talk much, and did not spend much time together. Did they live together out of inertia? Who knows? It is highly likely or it was some kind of internal mutual respect and distant understanding....

And here they are, together, and they need to talk again somehow.

Yet their seclusion was not absolute. They could watch station news like at home on TV. Sometimes, Nastya told the news, she even brought dominoes. She asked not to tell anyone – it was forbidden. This couple was sympathetic here. In general, time somehow passed.

– I do not like this slight deviation Olga has, – one nurse said to another, carefully studying her tests on the computer screen.

– Should we tell Sergei Sergeevich? – Another responded, – or let's look at the morning tests?

– Come on, let's monitor it for a bit.

Since no symptoms of the disease were revealed, their exit to the general compartments of the station was scheduled for Tuesday.

Everyone was very happy, smiled like a mountain fell off their shoulders. Olga freshened up, began to get ready, she was afraid to plan, but the feeling of the end of quarantine and the curiosity to see the station, their new home, even had a therapeutic effect.

For such a solemn event, a small welcoming ceremony was usually prepared. Finally, everyone was informed about the DNA results, Andreyka was prepared and the parents. Everyone was very worried. They really wanted to meet as soon as possible, and to hug each other.

Kate was the wariest of all. She understood that potential patients were coming to her, and she would have to conduct a whole series of sessions not only to get used to the station, but also to reunite the family.

The med bay was separated from the common corridor by a large glass walkway. When the doctors went first, before Olga and Andrew, they immediately saw a very excited, but trying not to show it, little boy with goggle eyes, who was obviously outstood of the entire group of five people who were meeting newcomers.

Andrew smiled happily, Olga was a little pale, but also visibly happy. There were only ten meters to the airlock doors.

Unexpectedly, Olga stumbled, then inadvertently swayed and began to fall sharply. Her smiling face froze, replaced by a grimace of fear, she was overtaken by a strong attack of suffocation. She clutched her throat with her hand, desperately pulling the other towards her son. Her hand was sliding horribly across the glass.

Everyone was incredibly anxious. There was a commotion around Olga. She fell and barely moved. At this time, Andrew began to lose his balance. They also ran up to him. Doctors helped, but very quickly it was all over. Sergey Sergeevich, pale as chalk, not understanding anything, ordered that a stretcher be brought to pick up the bodies.

The stunned greeters froze. Everything happened before their eyes, behind the glass partitions of the airlock corridor.

Kate rushed to Andreyka, trying to hug him, so that he would not see any of this. Yara fell into a stupor, slowly realizing everything that had happened. From the other side, everyone returned to the med bay, and no one else came out. Since the illness of the spouses showed itself so unexpectedly, it meant that it was impossible to leave the infected gateway. The head of the Yara's shift understanding that Sergey Sergeevich would disappear right now, quickly and abruptly came to the communicator, told something to Sergei Sergeevich on the communicator, and they left.

It was so quiet that it was possible to hear the working ventilation. Yara finally came out of her stupor and also rushed to Andreyka. He'd rooted to the floor. He was all white, only eyes, huge, blue, drilled the empty corridor.

His parents died overnight. To say that Sergei Sergeevich was discouraged would be to say nothing. He was furious, the disease manifested itself at the very last moment, the life of the entire station was practically put in jeopardy. But there were no symptoms...

The briefing on the causes of the undetected virus was held in a closed atmosphere. The doctors, although they completed all the protocols for examinations and autopsies, answered the questions «Why?», «How did it happen?», evasively, as always. Perhaps, new features of the behavior of the virus have actually been revealed.

Chapter 7

The ceremony of farewell to the deceased at the space station had a very sad character. Here in space, the coffin was a one-man shuttle. The body of the deceased was immersed there and released into the open space. There was no other way. Relatives, but often just seeing off on their last journey, needed to be in spacesuits, because after the short last speech of the captain, they had to open the gateway and release the shuttle into space. The burial chamber, in fact, the docking bay, was not even designed properly. Everything at the station was strictly functional.

Space carefully accepted such shuttles. They slowly drifted off into the distance, into the blackness. In this slow movement to infinity, the Universe unbearably clearly showed its greatness, both giving life and taking it away.

Two shuttles of light metallic color were slowly sent on an eternal flight. There were no flowers, no memorabilia. They searched for a small spacesuit for a long time for Andrew, there was no way to persuade him to watch the procession on video.

When the lock closed, the whole procession returned to the station in mournful silence.

Part II. Earth

Chapter 1

Nikolay Nikolaevich was going work. It was a fresh morning, sparkling after a short summer rain. It was sunny and already hot. Moisture still glistened on the leaves of the trees. The day promised to be wonderful. He loved his city just like that – not yet awakened, while the noise of the city bustle had not yet replaced either the rustle of trees or the singing of birds.

Moscow has changed a lot in the end of the XXI century. Incredibly tall houses, with large tiered green terraces, rose majestically into the sky. Architectural styles abounded in curved, extended lines. The buildings were a combination of gleaming white-and-metal structures and greenery that thrives in summer, descending between floors. In winter, these orangeries, located on almost every floor, were carefully removed under warm glazing, the structures of which softly covered this entire green riot, because of which the buildings looked grayish in the overcast sky, even orphaned, and a little pulled up in their forced asceticism. But in summer, the aromas and colors of flowers located along the entire height of the building gave a feeling of lightness and airiness. At night, such illuminated terraces made the city very cozy. It was adorable to walk and look at the streets from above.

Nikolay Nikolayevich left his flyer on the roof, in the covered parking slot, and headed for the elevator, which brought him down to the 23rd floor, to the laboratory.

Nowadays solar stations were installed on many neighboring rooftops. Between the buildings, even higher, where only technical floors remained, flyers scurried back and forth.

People, despite the warnings of eco-activists, and their eternal struggle for clean air, still came up with flyers powered by solar panels and electric motors, and at the same time air traffic rules. Fortunately, it occurred to them that they should not entangle the sky with huge networks of wires and dangling signs of air traffic. All information about the rules in the air came to the on-board computer of an air car or a light flyer, and the passengers did not think about anything. Sometimes, they recalled the ancient times with a smile, when drivers had to know all the rules of the road by heart, follow the road, and even at night! Yes, even to take some medical tests to drive a car! Unthinkable inconvenience! Now the on-board computer is in charge for everything necessary and people turned from drivers into passengers. Rarely, there was a need to take the control. Below, on the ground, electric cars also drove along the roads, very busy, but there were more parks and alleys.

Leaving the elevator, Nikolay Nikolaevich found himself in a brightly lit hall. The exterior facades of buildings with their cheerful, green decoration only slightly influenced the interior. There was a strict, office atmosphere. Brightly lit passages and corridors of predominantly light colors. The walls now and then came to life where the worker touched them with his hand or simply looked at her intently – suddenly a thin screen appeared, reflecting the necessary information from the Brainnet, which colleagues could, for example, argue on the way to the buffet or to a meeting. The Brainnet which widely uses AI technologies and neuronets, became the powerful and omnipresent change to the old Internet.

The doors of the offices were frosted glass, and did not stand out much against the background of the walls. The feeling of airiness and openness did not leave anywhere.

Nikolay Nikolaevich, passing by the indoor orangery, noted that Taya, an assistant, was watering flowers in pots.

– Taya? Why are you watering them again?

«I don't know,» she hesitated.

A minute later, a fussy cleaning robot drove up to her, smiled happily, caught himself quite humanly, muttered something, and began to clean the orangery. Taya called him Ziggy, not «number

4041» as it was written in his passport. Ziggy straightened the branches of the bushes that accidentally shaded the flowers of Middlemist red, checked the complex system of automatic watering and the optimal microclimate. He constantly fussed and minced back and forth in zigzags. That's why she called him Ziggy.

Nikolay Nikolaevich noticed long ago that people need to take care of their neighbors, even if they are flowers. This is how they keep their humanity in that digital world.

In the laboratory everything has been seething since morning, but somehow hectic and nervous. The results of research on nanobots kept themselves waiting. The floating screen, at the level of assistant's height, reflected the numbers of the night tests. No dynamics. Nanobots successfully reached the goal, moving through the body fluids of the body of a laboratory pig-clone, but nothing more. The desired injection of the drug into the cell infected with the virus did not occur. Ann, deputy of Nikolay Nikolaevich, has been already informed just before his arrival. He was the head of that laboratory for a long time, which sometimes chaotically but rather Nikolay Nikolaevich effective was holding scientific researches in the field of nanovirology. This time he faced a very insidious virus. Nikolay Nikolaevich began to suspect that the virus he was studying was a chameleon virus that could pretend to be a normal cell and hide when the nanobot approached it. Hide and seek game.

Nikolay Nikolaevich has entered the laboratory. His deputy rushed past, disheveled, her glasses on one side. Here is another human feature – wearing glasses. After all, you can cure vision and even improve it by inserting an improved bio-eye, although expensive, but very convenient. But no. Some preferred to wear glasses, choosing frames of the most incredible shape, inventing fashion for them, and making it clear that they belong to a respected stratum of society – scientists. Sometimes Nikolay Nikolaevich thought that she was cunning, and her eyesight was normal, just in glasses with simple glasses, she looked more solid. Catching her on the move, Nikolay Nikolaevich asked:

– Well, Ann?

– There is no dynamics, – she said doomily, – we should try the third variant of protein chains....

Ann was always very worried when experiments went awry. She was tall, slender, dark-haired, usually slightly pale, and wearing inconspicuous clothes, her whole life was subordinated to the laboratory. A simple bob haircut made her face look a bit long. She was very young, not very experienced, but very promising. Her brown eyes darted excitedly from one indicator to the next. Her cheeks were covered with separate red spots – she was worried.

By lunchtime, Nikolay Nikolayevich had already completely immersed himself in the discussion of the scientific problems of recognizing infections by nanobots, talking with his colleague on Mars. He felt he needed to talk to someone sensible, calm, and maybe he would find a solution by applying his favorite practice of brainstorming. This often helped.

There was a large colony on Mars, also scientific with huge scientific prospects and good technological supply. Bright minds from all over the solar system have been flowing there.

– How is the weather? – Nikolay Nikolaevich asked his classmate, who has flown to Mars long ago.

– The storm ended yesterday and we saw the Sun in the morning, – he answered cheerfully, – we are fighting with a sugar plantation on the northwestern slope of Mount Olympus.

Scientists hoped that the glacier, or rather its lower, regularly melting spurs, would provide water access to plantings, and thereby help their rapid growth. But a problem arose. Martian storms, distinguished by their power and ruthlessness, each time covered all the plants with a deep layer of fine dust, just like flour. They had to carefully dig them out and wash them leaf by leaf.

By evening, a little encouraged by the conversation, Nikolay Nikolayevich, was getting ready to go home. Grabbed a charger for his onphone and went to the parking lot.

Onphones were like usual phones but had the better connection everywhere. People could call everywhere on the planet. Besides last makes became very useful. Onphones could be worn on hand wrists and had a one little screen-button. By pushing the button, the floating digital screen appeared

in the air next to the hand. It had everything – icons, buttons for calls and applications and while talking to someone the owner could see his face on that screen. The creator of onphone was an English scientist. His name nobody remembers now. He wanted to simplify phones and give people the opportunity not to hold the phone while conversation. To free hands was a great idea. People call these new phones – onphones exactly because these makes could be held on wrists like wristwatches. Chargers for such gadgets were unconnected – just a plate. People put their onphones on these plates to charge during nights.

It was clearly visible from the roof, there was gathering a thunderstorm. Violet-lead clouds piled up on the spire of the old television tower.

Chapter 2

Nikolay Nikolaevich, fatty, curly-haired, but a bit balding, a man of 45, on the whole, was pleased with his fate. He was doing interesting things – he was a chief of a scientific laboratory working in the field of biotechnologies and genetics. He had a large family – a wife and two little sons. And also, a cat! Incredibly white and fluffy!

The head of the scientific genius has always been filled with ideas, the implementation of which suffered a little in discipline and organization, since God did not give him strictness towards himself, but generously endowed him with talent and openness. He was characterized by some lack of concentration and even absent-mindedness, but he knew his business.

Quite often, Nikolay Nikolayevich, with his features to find cause-and-effect relationships in everything, as well as the inability to turn off these qualities after leaving work, often wondered about the decline of society.

Against the backdrop of a wonderful tandem of nature and technology, it was obvious.

The opponents of social networks have long calmed down, because the further people moved, the more they plunged into the network, and the network plunged into them. In the first half of the century, people still used the Internet. But after a short but very revealing military incident, when the most powerful power net at that time was disabled for several hours, it became obvious that the digital world is very dependent, and technologies that do not work on traditional electricity are needed. The modern Brainnet has become completely different and much more convenient.

No, Nikolay Nikolaevich was not inclined to give gloomy, decadent prospects to modernity. As a man of science, he always looked ahead. Sometimes, he wondered if observation and logic were given to him from birth, or if this was a boon acquired in the profession. Paying attention to society, he saw subtle, slow, but important changes. And they bothered him. He understood that his intellectual, even conservative upbringing could influence his perception. But it became more and more obvious that something was wrong.

He and his family led a quiet, non-public life. Theaters, occasionally cinemas. In art, everything has been captured by augmented reality. As if you become a participant in the process. It was very bewitching. Sometimes, for weak people such an experience did not bode well.

In general, life went on as usual. Vacations on Mars, in their favorite region of Tharsis. Periodic visits to work on the Moon. The little was out of the standard work schedule. The children have not yet gone to school – they were still small.

Perhaps it was the measured lifestyle that exaggerated his reaction to the misfortune of their friends. A week ago, his friend's son died. A young, handsome young man with a good education, from a prosperous family, simply got into a flyer and flew into the spaceport fence at full speed. So stupid...

Evil tongues said that he became a victim of a social group where people did barbaric things to get extreme pleasures. Of course, it's one thing to experience the virtual sensations of augmented

reality and not crap yourself, and it's quite another – to commit a crazy act yourself and survive! And don't screw up! Wow! Real feelings! They considered it almost heroic. The fact that such sensations would almost certainly be the last in their lives did not bother them.

Others said that in recent months he had become too malleable and frivolous. He could be talked into any adventure, including the dubious pleasure of a crazy flight and the illusory possibility of surviving after it. Some people, as always, looked for the roots in glut. After all, dad is rich.

Nikolay Nikolaevich was shocked by this event. He was familiar with him, and he gave the impression of an intelligent guy. And, despite the tragedy of this suicide, which in essence in a modern calm and prosperous society has long become savagery, it could not be called atypical. Here and there, news came about the strange behavior of individual or small groups of people, when, in fact, manipulating them, one could achieve anything. Of course, the media did not present this fact in this way. For them, there was no connection between the high level of accidents and deep changes in social relations, but Nikolay Nikolayevich saw the rotten roots of the decline of consciousness. The reasons were not clear.

People, becoming too frivolous, either fell into the hands of cunning, far-sighted swindlers, or showed habits far from being characteristic of a healthy society, but, on the contrary, destroying the basic concepts of humanity. Some misfortune struck the minds of people. Living well, they increasingly desired to please their ego, gravitated towards permissiveness and demanded absurd pleasures. Separate social movements demanded the legalization of brain stimulants. Heroin and other substances that people injected into their veins a long time ago were no longer popular – too difficult, just stimulate certain areas of the brain for pleasure even to death. Others demanded a ban on the extraction of Arctic herring, which was understandable, at least for vegetarians.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «Литрес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на Литрес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.