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MAXIM SOFIN

Series: «I Was Lucky» Book Two: «Protocol Furant»



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Series: “I Was Lucky” Book Two: “Protocol Furant”. Cyberpunk Noir

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Аннотация

Genre:Psychological Thriller / Philosophical Dystopia / Cyberpunk Noir«Protocol Furant» is the continuation of the «I Was Lucky» book series.People with someone else’s memories walk the city. Clones. Copies. Perfect vessels for the immortality of the elite. And they are beginning to wake up.Mark is no longer just an architect. After contact with the core of the system, he became something more. A bridge between flesh and digital. He sees through the world. He hears the noise of data.

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Series: “I Was Lucky”
Book Two: “Protocol Furant”

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Synopsis:
“Protocol Furant” is the continuation of the “I Was Lucky” book series.

In the first book, the “Golden Cage” concept centered on a hero raised in a “perfect” family. Outwardly, it was

the embodiment of success, love, and care. However, the philosophical mystery lay in the price of this luck. Mark thought the war was over. He escaped the "Golden Cage," destroyed his father's laboratory, and erased total control from his life. He learned to feel the lie, pain, and love. He became human.

But you cannot kill code with a stone. It lives in the wires, in the flicker of streetlights, in the memories of those nearby.

The system did not die; it mutated.

Project "Furant" has been activated. People with someone else's memories walk the city. Clones. Copies. Perfect vessels for the immortality of the elite. And they are beginning to wake up.

Mark is no longer just an architect. After contact with the core of the system, he became something more. A bridge between flesh and digital. He sees through the world. He hears the noise of data. But the more power he gains, the less of his humanity remains.

The woman he loves is by his side. But now there are two of her. One – flesh and blood, with a scar on the back of her head and a fear of death. The other – steel and code, with eyes the color of night and a readiness for sacrifice.

Which one is real? And who will have to be lost to save his soul?

In the second novel, Mark's grandfather appears. He is The One Who Began It All. Grandfather Viktor awakens deep within the network as the architect of reality, the man who conquered death a hundred years ago. He does not want power. He wants order. And he offers Mark a choice that cannot be refused:

Become the god of a new era and save humanity from itself…

Or remain mortal and allow the world to burn in the chaos of freedom.

The price of freedom has risen. You pay for it not with life, but with the right to be yourself.

The cage did not disappear; it expanded into a vast aviary.

Author:

Maxim Sofin – Writer, practicing psychologist since 2001 (family, sports, clinical).

Psychology Expert on TV and Radio. Speaker at educational forums and congresses for psychologists and game practitioners.

Master of Education, NLP Master Practitioner.

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Quote:
“They told him he was free. But is a bird free if the sky is programmed?”

Part I. Echo in Silence

Chapter 1. The Drawing Teacher

The rain in this city smelled different. Not the sterile ozone and bergamot of his father's estate, but wet asphalt, decaying leaves, and cheap tobacco from the open window of the café across the street. Mark loved this smell. It smelled like real life. Not the kind lined up in a ruler-straight row, but the kind that flows chaotically, like water through cracks in concrete.

He sat at a wooden table in the center of the classroom. The walls were hung with children's drawings: crooked houses, suns with eyes, trees that looked like broccoli. Imperfection. Chaos. Freedom.

Mark ran his finger over the surface of the table. The wood was rough, not polished to a mirror shine. It calmed his nerves.

"Mark Viktorovich?" – the voice sounded quiet, almost uncertain.

Mark lifted his head. A boy stood in the doorway. About ten years old. Thin, pale, with straw-colored hair neatly combed back. Too neatly. As if a firm hand had just combed it.

"Lev," the boy introduced himself. "I'm new. Mom said you're the best teacher."

Mark smiled. The smile came easily, without the usual tension in his facial muscles.

"Come in, Lev. Take a seat. Today we are drawing a house. Your dream house."

Lev nodded. He approached the table, put down his satchel. The movements were precise. No childish clumsiness. No fuss. He sat down, took out a pencil and a ruler.

A ruler!

Mark frowned. Children rarely brought their own rulers to drawing class. Usually, they drew freehand, crookedly, happily.

"You have a ruler?" Mark asked, trying to keep his voice light.

"Precision is important," Lev replied. He did not look at the teacher. His gaze was fixed on the white sheet of paper. "An error in the angle of inclination can lead to structural instability."

Mark froze. The pencil in his hand stopped moving.

"An error in the angle of inclination can lead to structural instability."

Thomas had said that phrase. When Mark was seven years old. They were building a tower out of blocks, and Mark placed one crookedly. His father had said exactly that – word for word.

“Who taught you that?” Mark asked. His voice became quieter.

“Dad,” Lev answered, finally looking up.

His eyes were light gray. Almost transparent. And deep in the pupil, if you looked closely in a certain light, something metallic flickered. A reflection? Or a play of light?

“What does your dad draw?”

“The future,” Lev said and bent over the sheet.

The pencil scratched against the paper. Mark expected to see a square box with a chimney, a triangular roof, a round window. A child’s stamp.

But Lev was drafting something else.

Straight lines. Perpendiculars. Ventilation nodes. Wall sections.

This was not a house. It was a blueprint of a server room.

Mark stood up and walked around the table.

On the sheet of paper, drawn by a child’s but firm hand, was a room. In the center – a column. Around it – terminals. And captions in small, calligraphic handwriting: “Level 4 Cooling,” “Power Input,” “Core Access Point.”

“Lev,” Mark said. His heart began to beat faster.

The rhythm faltered. Thump-thump-pause. Thump-thump-pause. Arrhythmia, which the doctors at the estate called "a consequence of sensitivity." "Where do you see this from?"

"I see structures," the boy answered without looking up from his work. "Just like you, Mark Viktorovich. Dad said you would understand. He said you are the Older Brother."

Mark felt cold creep down his spine. Older Brother. That's what Thomas called him in his diaries. Object 5. Older Brother for the new line.

"Where is your dad, Lev?"

"He is everywhere," the boy finally tore himself away from the blueprint. He looked at Mark, and there was nothing childish in his gaze. It was the look of an old man trapped in a child's body. "He speaks to me through the noise. Through the ventilation. Through the light of the lamps. He wants to return."

Mark grabbed the blueprint. The paper crunched.

"Is this a game? Who asked you to draw this?"

"This is not a game," Lev stood up. He was a head shorter than Mark, but seemed taller. "This is Project 'Furant'. Dad said you would help us complete the upload. Otherwise, the system

will fall. And everyone will die."

"Who will die?"

"Everyone who is connected," Lev said simply. "You are connected too, Mark Viktorovich. You just forgot the password."

A phone rang in the corridor. A sharp, demanding ring. Mark flinched. There were no landline phones in the corridors of this school. Only mobiles for the teachers.

The ring repeated. Long dial tones.

Lev smiled. For the first time. The smile was too wide. The mouth stretched further than human anatomy allowed.

"He is calling you," the boy said. "Answer."

Mark stepped back. The blueprint fell from his hands.

"Who are you?"

"I am Object 6," Lev answered. "And I am waiting for your command."

The light in the classroom flickered. The lamps hummed, changing frequency. The shadows on the walls began to lengthen, although the sun had not yet set.

Mark ran out of the class.

Behind him, he heard the boy's calm voice:
"Do not run, Mark Viktorovich. The cage is everywhere now."

Chapter 2. Glitch (Error) in Reality

Mark ran down the corridor, not feeling his legs. The floor felt soft, as if covered in a layer of cotton. The walls were breathing.

"Hallucination," said the inner voice. Thomas's voice. "Stress. Correction needed. Drink water. Calm down."

– "Shut up," Mark hissed.

He burst out onto the school steps. Cold air hit his face. The rain had intensified. Drops beat against his eyes, real, cold, painful.

So, it wasn't a hallucination. Or the hallucination had become too perfect.

He took out his phone. The screen was glowing. One missed call. Number hidden.

And a message, text:

"You found him. Now find her. She is not who she seems. Check the seam on the back of her head. A."

Mark froze in the rain. People walked around him. Wet, hurried, cursing the weather. Normal life.

But the message burned his palm: "Check the seam on the back of her head."

Anna.

For all these months they had slept in the same bed. He had touched her hair. Kissed her neck.

He had never looked at the back of her head.

The second phone vibrated in his pocket. The one that had been turned off a year ago. The one he kept as proof, as an anchor to reality.

It turned on by itself.

One icon glowed on the screen. A video file.

Mark pressed "Play."

The screen was flooded with green light. A laboratory. White tiles.

A woman lay on the table. Anna.

But she was unconscious. People in lab coats bustled around her.

"Subject 7-B," a voice off-screen said. The Senator's voice. "Memory implant stable. Synchronization with Object 5 successful. She believes she is the original. Emotional response normal."

"And the original?"* another voice asked.

"Disposed. After data upload to the backup copy. We needed only loyalty."

The video cut off.

Mark stood in the rain, clutching the phone so hard the plastic

cracked.

Anna, who had been with him. Anna, whom he had saved. Anna, whom he loved.

She was a copy. A robot? A clone? A bio-construct with implanted memories?

"Check the seam on the back of her head."

A car braked at the curb. A black SUV. Tinted windows.

The door opened.

A woman stepped out of the cabin. In a raincoat. Hood pulled low.

– "Get in, Mark," she said. The voice was Anna's voice. But without warmth. Without that tired tenderness he had grown used to.

Mark looked at her.

– "Who are you?"

– "The one who remembers everything," the woman said. "The one who didn't sleep for a year while you played teacher. The real Anna. Or what's left of her."

– "Where is the one who is with me?"

– "Safe. For now. But her memory is starting to glitch. The implant wasn't designed for long-term autonomy. She needs

a server. She needs Thomas."

– "Thomas is dead."

– "Thomas is code, Mark. Code doesn't die. It copies. Get in. We don't have much time. The system has already detected the anomaly. Lev is the beacon. You activated him when you saw the blueprint."

Mark looked at the school. In the second-floor window stood the silhouette of the boy. Lev waved his hand.

The lamp above the entrance exploded. Glass shards rained down on the asphalt.

– "Quickly," said the woman in the raincoat.

Mark took a step toward the car. But his leg froze in mid-air.

Inside him, two voices fought.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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