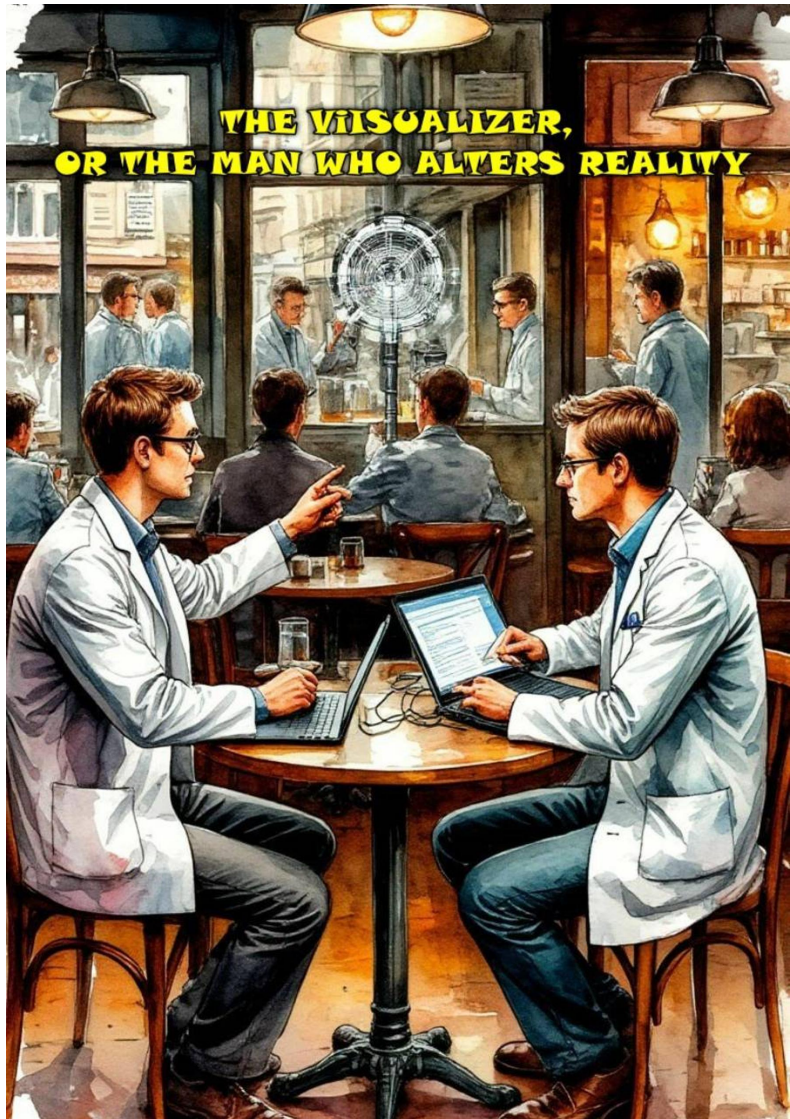


**THE VISUALIZER,
OR THE MAN WHO ALTERS REALITY**



Никита Т

The visualizer, or the man who alters reality

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Аннотация

Novel "The visualizer, or the man who alters reality" is the first in a series of books under the common title Visualizer, which is dedicated to the struggle against the forces of chaos that are trying to destroy our usual world order. The main characters of the novel are patients of a psychiatric clinic, over whom they are going to conduct secret experiments aimed at creating PSY weapons. As a result of these complex experiments, the irradiated people acquire new opportunities, which allows them to break free. They want to destroy those dangerous installations with the help of which inhuman experiments were carried out on people.

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Никита Т

The visualizer, or the man who alters reality

Synopsis for novel "The Visualizer, or the man who alters Reality

*What you die of hardly matters
far more important is why were born*
Omar Khayyam

The novel **The Visualizer, or the man who alters reality** is the first book in a series published under the collective title **The Visualizer**, a series devoted to the struggle against the forces of chaos that are trying to tear apart the world order we know. A professional book trailer for the novel has been published on YouTube, capturing the central idea of this philosophical and psychological work. **Human beings must never be used as guinea pigs.** Those who do so will be made to pay a heavy price: the heroes will find a way to fight back against injustice, and the truth will prevail. It will not be easy, of course — the characters will have to battle for their future and their very lives.

The authors previous series, featuring CIA secret agent Steven Cheeskane and comprising three novels — Gifts of the Gods, The Heavenly Gates of Ta Keo, and Secrets of the Ocean Depths — became a genuine bestseller and attracted an international readership. Those books are currently sold through the leading Russian and foreign retail platforms: Litres (Russia); Altaspera (Canada); Ridero (Russia); Amazon (USA); Tsifrovaya Vitrina (Russia); AliExpress (China); Wildberries (Russia); Ozon (Russia); Google Play (USA); NTV+ (Russia); Livelib (Russia); Bookmix (Russia); and Lulu (USA). You can see this for yourself by visiting the website of the author of this wonderful novel, where many reviews, quotes and illustrations are also available.

Given the climate of military hysteria that has swept the globe, the novels of the new The Visualizer series carry a frankly anti-war message. The first novel in the series, The Visualizer, or The Man Who Alters Reality, is devoted to the dark phenomena that will accompany humanity in the process of developing and deploying psychotronic weapons. I have tried to portray the dangers our generation will face if such a weapon is ever created.

It should be noted that this is the most terrifying non-lethal weapon that could appear on Earth in the very near future. Some experts argue that the force of its impact would surpass the consequences of nuclear warfare.

In this respect my work has much in common with Alexei Tolstoy's novel The Hyperboloid of Engineer Garin, which

anticipated certain aspects of laser weaponry — technology that emerged almost exactly a hundred years after the books publication. The threats facing the heroes of my novel, however, are far more serious. The plot is more densely packed with events, and the novel moves at a brisker pace.

The action of the novel takes place in our own time. The principal characters of *The Visualizer*, or *The Man Who Alters Reality* are patients at the I. M. Rabinovich Psychiatric Clinic, on whom a series of secret experiments aimed at developing and producing PSY weapons is about to be conducted. No one knows where these dangerous trials on human subjects will lead, and everyone is proceeding in the dark.

As a result of these extremely complex experiments, the people being irradiated acquire new abilities that enable them to break free. They want to destroy the dangerous apparatus through which inhumane tests have been conducted on human beings. In the end they succeed in neutralizing a powerful torsion-and-spin-field generator that has been irradiating both them and the entire territory of all the Eastern European countries. This gives the novel an additional detective-story dimension that lends it a unique flavor.

Because the action takes place in our own time, many of the characters have recognizable real-life prototypes, and the events in the novel intersect with those terrible wars that have not ceased for a single moment on the Eurasian continent. In a certain sense the novel is a tracing over reality. Even so, the reader should not

assume that the plot has been taken from real life.

It should be treated as a wholly invented work of fiction. There is no need to pursue the author, launch journalistic investigations, write letters to the secret services, or pester me with correspondence. The people depicted do not exist, and all resemblances are coincidental. They are the products of the authors imagination.

I hope you will enjoy this novel and that together with me you will fight for peace and prosperity on the land belonging to our long-suffering peoples — and that you will, of course, follow the heroes of my fantastic works.

The cover art is a striking work by Canadian artist Daniel Sundahl, for which I would like to express my particular gratitude to him.

Prologue

*The one whom life has beaten
will go farther,*

*The one whos eaten salt will
sweeter find the honey.*

*The one whos wept will laugh
with truer feeling,*

*The one whos died will know
what it is to live.*

<i>Omar Khayyam</i>

For three months now, Vera Ivanovna Maslova — a certified clinical psychologist — had been unable to find work. Frantically sifting through vacancy listings at employment agencies and HR departments, she was astonished to discover that her specialty had still not become truly marketable.

Demand for professionals in the humanities was weak. Everyone wanted accountants and lawyers, and openings for psychologists were rare. The few positions that did exist came laden with inflated requirements, and the salaries on offer were nowhere near enough for a decent living. They were pittances, and they stirred in her only one feeling: irritation.

This weighed on her deeply — not only as a sensitive person but as a credentialed specialist with years of experience. The culture of seeking professional counseling, so long established in

the West, had still not taken root in this country.

There were reasons for that, no doubt. People were afraid of psychologists, and in many ways their fear was justified. In Soviet times, psychiatric hospitals had been instruments of political repression, and people still assumed, by force of habit, that nothing had changed. Russian television bore part of the blame: it kept frightening ordinary viewers with the specter of the psych ward.

But Vera Ivanovna saw things differently. She believed that life never stands still — that people and the world around them are constantly changing, and that the authorities no longer used the methods they had so recently employed against opposition leaders. All of this gave her grounds for hope, and her deep knowledge of psychology helped her believe in her own abilities. And so she kept searching, relentlessly, for steady employment, relying on no one but herself.

Of course, some freelance work remained available. She had long since registered as self-employed on the Gosuslugi portal, and her strong qualifications and professional skills let her take part in paid seminars and symposia as a lecturer or presenter. She did that from time to time. But she had no steady job. The prospect of finding one was dim. Freelance income provided just enough to get by without constantly borrowing from her parents and acquaintances. And the contact with the people who attended her seminars created a sense of being needed.

Some of those who came to her lectures eventually became

her private clients. That, too, gave her confidence, and in time it began to bring in modest earnings. Over several years of this kind of work she had built up a fairly broad clientele, made up mostly of young businesspeople who were struggling to find customers.

They were former schoolchildren with burning ambition who believed they were special and could, in a very short time, conquer the financial capital of the country without the help of their fathers connections. But not many of them succeeded. It was hard to find your footing in Moscow. Life in the Russian capital could break anyone. As a rule, it dealt harshly with young people, and they turned to a psychologist in the hope of finding the root of their problems within themselves.

Now she herself was in an equally difficult situation. And perhaps she too needed the services of a more experienced and accomplished psychologist — someone who could instill in her confidence in her own strengths and hope for future success in her search for that elusive position.

Today, though, felt different, and Vera Ivanovna sensed it right away. She had woken up early and seen brilliant sunshine streaming through her window, filling her with a sense of warmth she had been missing for a long time. Every decent person has moments like that in life, when their guardian angel arrives to sort out whatever has been piling up.

Perhaps Vera Ivanovna had such a guardian angel watching over her. She had, after all, graduated with honors from the Psychology Department of Moscow State University, and then

spent two years working as a clinical psychology resident at the Pavlov First Saint Petersburg State Medical University in St. Petersburg — surely that counted for something.

Vera Ivanovna switched on her computer and began reading her incoming email. Several messages had come from her former employer. There had been a time when she was proud to hold a staff psychologist position at the Russian representative office of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. In those days she earned a decent salary in foreign currency, enough to feel like she was living well. The Foundation operated generously, and Vera Ivanovna had assumed it would go on that way forever.

But times had changed. Eastern winds began to blow. First the Foundations activities were declared harmful, and then the Foundation itself was designated a foreign agent. Mutual sanctions were hitting both sides of the conflict, and ordinary citizens who had nothing to do with politics sometimes found themselves caught in the crossfire.

The government had not forgiven the organization for the inconsistent presentations given by Russian schoolchildren before the German parliament — addresses in which, at the behest of their Western handlers, they had argued for revisiting the outcome of the Second World War. The Russian government took careful notice of those presentations. It was a serious blunder by the Foundations leadership, made through sheer thoughtlessness. But it carried equally serious consequences.

Funding dried up significantly, and the Foundation let go of

a number of its permanent staff members, including some it had long worked with productively. Non-core managers were the first to be cut. Eventually the psychologist was made redundant too.

Vera Ivanovna had left her well-paid position with regret, but life moved on and she had to think fast. That the Foundation had engaged in activities hostile to the state barely concerned her. She had nothing to do with politics. But that episode was now one of the reasons she could not find new work, despite all her experience and credentials.

Prospective employers who might otherwise have found her professionally and personally suitable looked askance at the glowing references she had received upon leaving her previous job. Nobody wanted to associate with someone who had been tainted by a connection to a foreign organization that the state had officially designated a foreign agent. Most Russian organizations wanted loyal, spotlessly clean employees — people whose biographies were beyond reproach.

She no longer worked for the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, but that fact continued to cast a shadow over her new life, and she regretted having ever decided to take that attractive position at such a well-known foreign firm.

Generally speaking, the only employers who might now offer her work were the major Russian resource-extraction companies. But those companies underwent periodic government inspections, and former foreign agents could become an unwelcome irritant that state officials at various levels might

take an interest in. Officials could start poking around in the company's affairs, leading to serious expenditures and even premature bankruptcy. Unnecessary scrutiny from officials was the last thing anyone wanted. There were already more than enough headaches involved in obtaining permits, licenses, and certificates, all of which cost enormous sums.

So employers kept turning her down, even though they showed genuine interest at first, recognizing they were dealing with a top-tier specialist. Interviews almost invariably ended the same way: she was wished every success, but was never invited back for a final meeting with the head of HR or the company director.

Vera Ivanovna surfaced from her gloomy thoughts. She was still looking at her monitor, and she still had not worked through all the mail in her inbox. Several messages were from former clients with whom she stayed in touch by email.

One letter she read twice. A young man was thanking her for the help she had given him the previous year and writing to tell her that his life had finally turned around. My life has changed completely, he wrote. Your lectures pushed me to switch fields. In my new line of work I have achieved remarkable results. Letters like that were easy and pleasant to read. They strengthened her belief in herself and her hope for success — her conviction that she had chosen the right profession, and that the difficulties she was now facing in her job search were only temporary.

As she was clearing her inbox, Vera Ivanovna noticed a

message from an unfamiliar address. Normally she deleted such things immediately. This time, for some reason, she decided to do otherwise. She opened the message out of habit, expecting another piece of spam that had wandered into her inbox by mistake. She was already about to delete it, but something stopped her. She looked at the sender and read on, puzzling over this unexpected communication that had somehow found its way to her email address. The message contained a job offer — exactly the kind of offer she had given up hoping for.

At first Vera Ivanovna did not take the offer seriously. She was being invited to work at a private psychological clinic — a psych ward, in common parlance. What was more, the employer needed specifically a psychologist with residency experience who had spent at least two years in a private organization and held a medical qualification or had extensive practical experience as a physician.

Vera Ivanovna skimmed the offer and found herself intrigued. She met most of the listed requirements. True, her experience as a physician had been brief, but she could compensate for that gap with her long track record in the field.

She thought it over. Vera Ivanovna was a workaholic who feared no task. She wanted to help people who had found themselves in difficult psychological situations, and she liked being paid well for doing so. She could calm a senior executive under severe psychological pressure just as easily as a manager whose work life had hit a rough patch. She had been known

to guide chronic alcoholics out of drinking binges and help neurotics find their footing. In other words, she had no doubt she could handle the new responsibilities. The pay also seemed to be in order: the salary on offer this time was acceptable, the figure stated in the message was one she could live with. Moreover, the clinic was not looking for an ordinary staff psychologist but for a chief medical officer — a fairly senior medical post that matched her ambitions. Perhaps that is why Vera Ivanovna decided she would go to the interview after all, and take a look at what this private psychiatric hospital on the outskirts of the city was actually like.

She opened her computer to look up the clinic's location. With an address in hand that was easy enough: maps available online could pinpoint any object within minutes. Although the institution was situated practically in the Moscow Region — in the new construction zones of New Moscow — that did not put her off. The Mayor was personally overseeing development there; the district was destined to become a new showcase for the city, with attractive new buildings and new metro stations going up. Getting there would not be difficult.

She read online that the district had only just been built up. The hospital occupied a recently completed building. The nearest metro station was within walking distance of the clinic — an important detail, since Ms. Maslova disliked commuting by car. She had no husband yet, and she had not yet learned to drive with any confidence. A metro ride held no terrors for her.

Vera Ivanovna decided to respond positively to the offer that had landed in her inbox by chance, and wrote back. She was honest about herself and her qualifications, since she genuinely met nearly all the requirements of the position described in the offer. She wrote that she was ready to attend an interview for the vacant post of chief medical officer at the earliest opportunity, and was prepared to come to the address given in the message at whatever time suited the administration. She could not wait to hear back from the employer so they could discuss the terms of her employment.

The reply came quickly. That evening a letter arrived from the clinics director, proposing a meeting the following Wednesday at eleven o'clock in the morning. The time suited her, even though she was fond of sleeping in. Today was Monday, which left Vera Ivanovna time to think everything through carefully.

Chapter 1

*Beneath this sky life is a
chain of torments,
And
will the sky take pity on us? Never.
O
you unborn! If you could learn our sufferings,
You
would not choose to come down here at all.*
<i>Omar Khayyam</i>

The I. M. Rabinovich Private Psychological Clinic occupied a pleasantly picturesque corner of New Moscow. Not so long ago the area had been dense suburban forest where villagers from nearby settlements went mushroom-picking. But New Moscow was expanding at a furious pace, devouring every patch of open land and filling the newly annexed territories with apartment blocks and roads, with the noise and clamor of youth.

Construction was under way everywhere. Workers were laying paving tiles and planting young saplings along the pathways. The building never stopped, not for a minute. The constant noise and dirt did not sit well with everyone. The local residents had at first tried to fight the infill development, but the big money that arrived paid no attention to their wishes or their needs. What was more, the locals were unhappy that a psych ward of all things

was going up in their district. But they were powerless to stop construction of this large, closed medical facility.

Several times they had written complaint letters to the local borough administration, and once they had even tried to block the road connecting the new neighborhoods to the city center. Construction continued all the same, and before long a sizeable stretch of their suburban district was fenced off behind a solid three-meter wall, behind which three state-of-the-art six-story buildings were rising, designed to the latest architectural standards.

By the time Vera Ivanovna arrived, the buildings were already finished and fitted out with the most modern medical equipment the domestic market had to offer. A new director had been appointed and a qualified medical staff assembled — people capable of meeting the demands ahead. The clinic had long since opened and was accepting new patients.

Vera Ivanovna looked around. The private medical facility stood near a park zone. It was a well-kept, leafy part of the city. She liked the fact that freshly planted greenery lined the pathways, bringing the surrounding landscape to life and making it more inviting.

Rowan trees had been planted along most of the paths, with young maples, larches, and lindens visible here and there. In the distance a few handsome pines could be made out — survivors of the suburban forest that had stood here until recently, only to be felled without mercy by the construction crews.

The air here was considerably cleaner than in the district where she lived. It was a degree or two cooler than in the city center, but far fresher. The spot was lovely and well-tended. Isaac Moiseevich — the director of the private clinic — must have had connections at City Hall, given that he had managed to build a modern facility in such an outstanding location, next to a metro station, despite the resistance of the local population. These were Vera Ivanovnas thoughts as she approached the gate of the institution that was to become her second home.

Above the locked entrance hung a modern color video intercom, and she pressed the call button. A pleasant male voice asked the purpose of her visit. Vera Ivanovna explained that she had been invited for an interview, and the man asked her to wait a few minutes while Isaac Moiseevich Rabinovich — the clinics director — came down personally to meet her.

The young woman was pleased that the director of the private clinic himself was coming to greet her, rather than some junior member of staff. Evidently he had already made inquiries about her, and Mr. Rabinovich was counting on her becoming his clinics chief medical officer — someone with whom he would be spending a great deal of time. What had become of the previous chief medical officer she did not think to wonder just then. It was not something that concerned her.

Isaac Moiseevich turned out to be a middle-aged man, somewhat shorter than she was. He looked up at the tall, attractive young woman who had come to his clinic in search

of work, peering at her through enormous horn-rimmed glasses, and smiled with a childlike, playful grin. The smile was warm and disarming. He tried to be witty, clearly wanting to make a good impression. And although his smile was not entirely genuine, the man as a whole made a favorable impression.

— Allow me to invite you into our humble abode, said Isaac Moiseevich, glancing at the attractive young woman and making a welcoming gesture with his small hands. But first you'll need to put on a coat and pull some shoe covers over your footwear — we maintain strict sterile cleanliness throughout.

— I should mention that we are inspected regularly. I have been obliged to hire an entire team of janitors and cleaners who scrub and tidy the hospital grounds from morning to night. We receive foreign visitors from time to time. Our center enjoys serious sponsorship, and we work hard to maintain our standards. The officials who inspect us periodically always speak of the place in glowing terms, though none of them volunteers to become our patients. He paused. We even have a complaints and suggestions book.

— And the complaints in it are far outnumbered by positive reviews.

— Of course, of course, replied Vera Ivanovna, hurrying to pull the coat over her narrow shoulders and reaching for a pair of shoe covers from the pack lying on a small side table beside the door.

— This young lady is with me, Isaac Moiseevich instructed

the stern security guard who was standing near the entrance talking into a two-way radio.

Once Vera Ivanovna had passed into the spacious lobby of the hospital, the guard hurried to pull the heavy wooden street door shut behind them. He watched with curiosity as the attractive young woman was personally greeted by Isaac Moiseevich Rabinovich, the clinics director — a rare occurrence. As a rule the director sat in his grand office in the third building and let junior staff or the regular security guards escort visitors to him. He was a rather reserved man with a narrow circle of acquaintances, and he communicated exclusively with people who had caught his interest for one reason or another. Evidently he had good reasons for receiving this particular visitor so graciously.

Isaac Moiseevich glanced once more at Vera Ivanovna and began describing his clinic:

— Our clinic is quite large — it can be compared to a multi-specialty medical center. There are not many facilities of this scale in the world, which is why serious academic circles take a keen interest in our work. That is probably why our physicians are respected in the West and are invited to attend various medical forums and symposia.

— Let me show you around. We have three six-story buildings, all connected to one another at the second-floor level — meaning there is a through corridor on that floor that allows you to move from one building to the next without going outside.

He pointed toward the elevator and pressed the button for the second floor.

— We also have our own landscaped grounds under permanent guard, he continued. Ill show you those a little later.

— The first building houses the registry, the intake wards for new patients, and the consulting rooms for general practitioners. This is where we issue certificates to the public and carry out initial patient assessments. Our clinic serves as a district facility, so anyone who needs documentation for a drivers license or a firearms permit must come to us. The physicians who see walk-in patients are highly experienced — they can identify an unstable individual from just a few words. If that person requires our medical assistance, they are immediately detained and referred to the staff psychologist. If you come to work with us, you too will learn to recognize those who suffer from various mental disorders, he said, looking attentively at his companion.

— On more than one occasion such referrals have led to individuals becoming our permanent patients. And the police have no doubt found themselves short a few serial killers as a result. That is precisely why the authorities pay such close attention to our clinic. No one wants unpleasant surprises, and everyone would prefer to avoid them.

After riding the elevator to the second floor together, the director and the young woman found themselves at the entrance to a long through corridor where a second guard was on duty. The man in a special protective uniform looked sternly at the director

— he already knew the physicians were coming up by elevator and did not stop them.

Without a word he opened the turnstile for them using his own smart card. As he did so, the reader played a cheerful little melody from some familiar childrens cartoon.

— Every member of our staff has an identical smart card with a limited access radius, Isaac Moiseevich continued.

It was evident that he had a fondness for digital gadgets: modern color cameras were mounted throughout every floor of the hospital, and the doors were fitted with vandal-proof readers from the NPO Relvest access control and management system.

— If you do not have authorization to enter a particular security zone in any of the three buildings, your personal card will not open the turnstile. Only the chief medical officer and the director have the right to move freely through all three buildings. Other physicians have cards with additional restrictions tied to their professional duties and working hours. If they are not permitted to enter a given building or room, they will not get in, no matter how much they might wish to.

The clinic director then looked carefully at Vera Ivanovna and murmured, just quietly enough that the guards would not hear:

— If you turn out to be a good fit for us, we will make you a card exactly like this one, and you will be able to pass through every turnstile in the building, on whatever floor it may be.

Chapter 2

*The sage who speaks of freedom
while in prison — who
counsels all to lose themselves in
wine — Is truly wise: in chains he
still is free, strong as a cliff,
when his soul stays noble.*
<i>Omar Khayyam</i>

Kirill had ended up in the psych ward several years ago. He had long since understood that he was born a different kind of child — one who did not quite resemble his peers. After a while his parents noticed it too, unable at first to understand why their son had no interest in playing with children his own age, and why those children ran from him as though from someone carrying the plague.

It was probably connected to the fact that Kirill possessed some kind of innate, very powerful energy that affected other people and pushed them away from him. Or perhaps it was a matter of his character. He was an only child, raised according to the strictest family traditions, and that had its effect on ones psyche.

If he wanted someone elses toy, he would simply walk up to the other child and demand it be handed over — even though it did not belong to him. After receiving this command, the other

child would meekly comply and surrender whatever had caught Kirills fancy. As a rule, parents sorted out these scandals as soon as they occurred and returned the pilfered trinket to its owner. But things could not go on that way forever.

As Kirill grew, so did his abilities. It turned out that he possessed a natural gift for hypnosis and could influence even adults. Once, riding a trolleybus, he was approached by an inspector checking tickets. The inspector asked to see his travel pass. Kirill reached into the pocket of his leather jacket. The pass was not there — it had probably been left in another coat, and searching for it was pointless. Kirill thought for a moment and remembered his hidden abilities. He decided to test them in practice.

He did not want to deceive the conductor, but he had no choice. He pulled out the first scrap of paper he could find and tried to convince the conductor that this was the very travel pass he had been asking the schoolboy to produce. It was the kind of thing he did with children in the yard — but up to this point it had only ever been a game. Strangely enough, the conductor saw no difference between the scrap of paper and an ordinary travel pass, and returned it to the young man who had shown it to him. Then he moved on to check the documents of the other passengers.

The boy smiled. His abilities had grown considerably, and they had been proven in practice. He now intended to put them to use in his own interests. At that point he was still considered a normal

person, and he paid no particular attention to his gift.

Perhaps his new abilities might have served as a kind of magic wand in difficult life situations, had it not been for the nervous breakdowns that struck him from time to time — something resembling epileptic fits. The stronger his abilities grew, the more severe and prolonged these episodes became, until they began to resemble a serious psychological or neurological disorder.

The first episode occurred when he was twelve years old. The relentlessly negative news broadcast on the main television channels, the high bar he had set for himself in his schoolwork, and the absence of close friends all combined to bring about a deep psychological exhaustion and a severe nervous breakdown.

He did not know how to relieve it and fell into hysterics. His condition did not improve. Kirill could not shake the headaches and the bad moods that dogged him constantly, preventing him from studying or resting. The boy developed insomnia and could sit up through the night playing on his personal computer without sleeping at all. The psychological stress intensified and led to another episode, another bout of hysteria that would not let up for days. He shouted at his father, cried, and could not calm down. Sometimes he raised his voice at his parents out of resentment — out of the feeling that they did not understand him.

His parents grew worried and took the boy to a psychologist they knew. The psychologist listened carefully to the parents and prescribed breathing exercises and regular physical activity.

For a time this genuinely helped. Kirill began attending a tennis section, and this held the development of his stress and emotional overload at bay for several years. During that period his episodes almost entirely ceased, and his parents relaxed a little.

But then bad luck struck. Moscow was being built up at breakneck speed, and some investor had set his sights on a small sports complex that stood very close to their home. Builders tried to profit at the residents expense under the cover of the renovation program. Many Muscovites found themselves in exactly this situation, and their complaints went unanswered.

The building was demolished, and within a year and a half a large residential complex had risen in its place, covering every available plot. Almost no open space remained in the yard of his building. The green plantings were felled without mercy and replaced by an enormous parking lot that swallowed every square meter of the surrounding grounds. There was no longer anywhere to meet with his peers — there was simply no room.

The parking lot was used by anyone and everyone, from passing taxi drivers to residents of the neighboring buildings. The new tenants who had moved into the high-rise next door were rough and ill-mannered people who had arrived in Moscow by chance, through personal connections and large sums of money. Many of them had come from the post-Soviet republics and Central Asia. Kirill was forced to give up the sport he had loved so much. And that took its toll on his health.

What was more, new students had arrived at their small school

— students who immediately noticed the boy who spent so much time studying and spoke to no one, doing his best to avoid his classmates. They began taunting and bullying the child who differed from them in both his level of knowledge and his upbringing, and this too began to leave its mark on his psyche.

He became highly irritable, and this aggression eventually led to the development of schizophrenia and paranoia. He kept getting into fights with his peers, and sometimes took a heavy beating. The fights did not pass without consequences.

It seemed that someone had struck him hard on the head at some point, for he began to feel as though invisible forces were deliberately sending psychological waves against him, waves that made him feel worse. His accounts of this frightened his parents and acquaintances, and they were obliged to take him to a private psychological clinic for a second evaluation.

This time the doctors prescribed neuroleptics to correct his behavior, and that definitively altered his psyche. Added to the nervous breakdowns that would not cease was a new heaviness, a sluggishness and inattentiveness. He was no longer capable of concentrating even on his regular homework. Where once he had spent no more than an hour and a half on it, it now consumed all of his free time.

Kirills grades declined, and teachers began to take note. The persecution from peers and teachers intensified, while his condition became dependent on the medication. If it was not purchased on time, he would fly into a rage, plunging into a deep

depression that could last for days.

The episodes began to recur at regular intervals, and in the end he was placed in the psych ward, transferred to the open inpatient unit in the hope of a quick recovery. He felt a little better at the clinic. But Kirill had not made his peace with his situation and dreamed of escaping from this private psychological clinic, for he considered himself a perfectly normal person and traced all his misfortunes to his parents desire to be rid of him.

Had the facility been any less secure, he would have made good on that dream long ago. His parents were prepared to pay for his care, and the doctors saw no reason to discharge the young man. His parents were exhausted by his constant erratic behavior and nervous episodes. They also wanted some time to themselves — to reach a decision about their sons treatment in a calmer state of mind.

His parents understood that only the doctors could pull him out of this difficult psychological state, correcting his behavior and his relationship to life, to his peers, and to his parents — whether through medication or through some other means.

Chapter 3

*To cage one soul, I deem more
worthy far than setting free a
thousand slaves from war;
And by one tender act of
love to bind one heart — than
liberate all humankind.*
<i>Omar Khayyam</i>

Walking the length of the corridor that connected the first and second clinic buildings, Vera Ivanovna and Isaac Moiseevich passed through into the second wing of the hospital. This section housed patients in the open inpatient ward.

As the director explained, the closed inpatient ward was located in the third and outermost building — the one with the strictest security of all. The third building also housed the administrative offices: the director's suite and the chief medical officer's office. That office, Vera Ivanovna was told, would soon be hers.

The arrangement was a practical one: only the director and the chief medical officer held the authority to prescribe the powerful psychotropic and narcotic medications that certain patients required. Every such drug was tracked and logged; misuse could — and did — result in heavy administrative fines and criminal liability.

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