

JULIA SYANOVA

Game of Tag

FANTASY



Julia Syanova

Game of Tag. Fantasy

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Аннотация

«Game of Tag» – a story for fans of fantasy and twisted plots. The action takes place in the middle of the XXI century in the space of reality and the game. The world of Julia Syanovoy is saturated with images of Grand battles, intertwined with the development of action in a scientific Institute. To get into the game against my will – not so bad, you need to get out of it. Dynamic storytelling keeps the reader's attention throughout the story.

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Game of Tag Fantasy

Julia Syanova

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For the first time in his life, he won a lottery and became one of the first people to participate the game with a full immersion. That mean, money and unique technology. Correspondents are eager to interview with him. He is famous!

The game, bright colors, all feelings are as close to reality as possible.

New technologies are beckoning, but is everything as magnificent as it is written in advertising?

“Dogonyalki’ (“Game of Tag’)

CHAPTER №1

INTERVIEW WITH DISAPPEARED GODS

A country estate in the Crimea is a daydream. Fresh air, beautiful views, far from the highways and fifteen minutes way to the sea, but if you have your own beach, then it is not just a daydream, it is a cosmos.

Maria was riding in a white taxi and could not calm down, the landscapes were marvellous, she felt so comfortable, and the reason was the person, who invited her.

When the call was received by the editorial office, it was answered by the editor-in-chief himself, he flew out of the office like a scooter and ran to the director

As she was explained later, the customer was very important, so important, that for seven years till now he had been offered a million for an interview, and according to rumors, even more. All the news companies of the world were hunting for him, trying to bribe his servants or shop sellers, where, it is also rumored, he made purchases.

But for all the seven years there were no results.

And now his personal secretary called and invited a young and

unknown journalist to stay with him for three days.

All the turmoil began immediately, the chief palmed off a long and horrible list of questions:

“These questions are obligatory. You should ask everything!”

Also, it was obligatory to take photos of everything possible, besides the master of the estate himself. The chief hinted that for the photos containing embarrassing moments, for example, drunken or naked master of the estate, she would receive an advance in office and an increase in the salary. And if she succeeds in capturing a photo of a completely obscene nature, of cussing or blathering person, then she will become his personal deputy with all the respective consequences.

Masha did not like this “jaundice”, she was not comfortable with all this dirt. She, of course, promised to do everything possible for one hundred percent, but she was disgusted.

The car was driving along a straight road, poplars and cherries were growing on the roadside. Quite a strange combination of roadside trees. But then she imagined how splendid it was in the spring: pink cherry blossoms and white fluff of poplars.

When the taxi turned, the three-storeyed building arose in front of her, like a video. The white building, drowning in the greenery of trees and braided with ivy.

There were no high fences. So strange that paparazzi could not take photos of anything. When the taxi arrived and stopped, a man opened the door and helped her to get out. Pretty pleasant appearance, in light breeches and a summer white shirt in fashion

this summer. She supposed him to be the master, but soon it became clear that he was something like a butler named Vladimir Antonovich. He invited her to enter the house. And told that he would cope with her luggage himself.

She climbed the stairs and, passing by the columns, went inside a huge hall, and it seemed that all the walls were glassy.

Light-coloured parquet floor, minimum of furniture. In fact, nothing special, light-coloured walls without pictures, a suspended oval fireplace perhaps, could be considered the only decoration, but it was summer and it was not burning.

Then she heard laughter, joyful voices and went to the sound.

Walking along a rather narrow and long corridor, she had to go down a small staircase, and she got into a place, which could be a veranda or a dining room. It was very light, a lot of greenery in pots, big white sofas and a variety of armchairs and pouffes.

A lot of people were sitting on the sofas and playing something. She was not seen at once. But when she was noticed, she immediately became the center of attention.

Everyone was silent and looked at her.

All of them were very beautiful and young, it was evident that they were rich. And then the idea flashed upon her: she knows them all! Everyone living on the planet knows them! It's really them!

“Well, why are you all, like predators staring at the poor girl?” – said a young girl having light-colored curls, wearing a blue dress.

“Do not be shy, come in.” She got up and walked to meet Maria. “Forgive us our awkwardness and hostility; you are the first guest for a long time.”

They went into the inward space of the room, and she was placed in a very deep armchair. Her bright country dress with a small flower print came to the place, and at least now Masha sighed with relief. Everyone was wearing light and casual, simple outfits of shorts and T-shirts, long skirts and even Hawaiian shirts. All present were millionaires and billionaires.

“Now we shall finish and then ask you, Maria, to join us. How do you think? Do you know how to play ‘Mafia’? – said the ‘person of the most importance’, whom she had to photograph while pooping. She was embarrassed by this thought.

“I can play ‘Mafia’”.

“You are too modest for a journalist,” said the man, with a swarthy skin and curly hair. He drank the coca from the jar and nodded the residue through the straw.

“Serb, do not embarrass the girl.”

“Okay, Gray’, – he smiled and sat down in his place.

The game began. The girl, who met Masha, was the show presenter. All the rest were participants.

Forty minutes later, Masha completely forgot why she was there and that everything happening was to be memorized and recorded. She laughed heartily, and it turned out that the players slightly changed the game. There it was necessary to invent the most ridiculous arguments to confirm the fact that you are not

mafia, and the most absurd ones to evidence that the opponent is in fact mafia.

All participants were very familiar with each other and very light-hearted; this created quite a family atmosphere.

Then they all played, and although Masha did not get a significant role in the game, she laughed heartily.

Then there was a delicious lunch of seafood and a light dessert with wine.

She looked at them and could not believe that all these people have been in the tabloids for more than five years, they make millions of young people envy. They are just people, not gods, as everyone thinks. She relaxed and sincerely smiled.

When everyone drifted away in the house and in the garden, the person of the “most importance” invited her to stroll in the park.

“Tell me, Maria, but honestly, what did your terrible chief butcher concoct?”

She took out a small recorder and turned it on.

They heard a crack in the beginning, and then the male voice began to screech, like a pig.

He listed the questions, swore, and repeated something about great luck.

“M-yeah. Turn it off, please. It’s unbearable. How do you work with him?”

“I have to.”

“None of us had been interviewed for all these years because

all these years we did not stop conducting our ‘own game’. Now, when almost everything is over, we shall tell you our stories. That is why everyone has gathered here. And frankly speaking, I’m very glad about that. For a long time, we did not get together so easily. I suggest we go to the arbor with you, a little later tea and cakes will be brought there.”

“Ok’, – Masha did not stop smiling. The garden was beautiful and very large. It turned out that on the land plot there were three more enormous houses, almost palaces, these were houses for the guests and one orphanage. Literally, the orphanage, there was a private school and a kindergarten where the orphans and children of the landlords lived and studied. Further, there was a stable, and even further, closer to the sea; there was a complex with sauna and swimming pool.

After talking about the estate, they reached the arbor. The one-and-a-half-storey construction looked as if it was sewn from the lace and had a domed shape; the arbor was buried in roses. There was a pond nearby with willows on its shore. Ducks were swimming in the water. The garden was really large.

They entered and settled in the comfortable rocking chairs.

“Tell me, Sergey Nikolayevich, how did it all start?”

“If you take the history of the emergence of our entire empire and online game, it started before my birth. My father will tell you this.” – he smiled.

“But where would you like to start then?”

“I’ll start, perhaps, with an interview, almost the same as ours.

Though it was broadcasted to the whole world, and I did not think then that I would be engaged into all this.”

“Before I turn on the recording, tell me, why did you decide to tell me all about it and why did you choose particularly me?”

“Why? We all intend to be frank with you as much as possible, and, believe me, we still face a deadly danger. The time for a winning stroke has finally come. Now, when we already have children and we need a quiet life, the inhabitants of the Earth should know the truth.”

“Yet you have not answered another question: why me?”

“This question will be answered by another participant of this story. Now I will try to tell you how I remember it. Then everyone who wants will speak, except for those who are not alive anymore. We are giving you our vision of what is happening. You’ll choose the format of the publication. It can be a series of articles or a biographic book. Even if you manage to convey even a third of the story, it will surely be a sensation. I’m sorry, someone is calling me.”

He got up and left the arbor. She noticed that he is using the new model of AQUA FONNI.

He finished the conversation and returned.

“I am sorry, my brother has arrived, his studies in Japan have come completed, and he is going to stay with us.” When there is the time for the full view, you will also talk to him.

So where did I stop? And, yes, I wanted to start telling you from the moment when Alexey Kim gave his famous interview.

“Do you want to start with the man who ruined the life of your parents?”

“I’ll start the story with the one man, who the most of us all deserve the title of hero and anti-hero at the same time.” And honestly, I’m sorry that you are treating him so negatively. But he will explain everything to you later himself.

“Is he really here, too?”

“Yes.”

NEWSPAPER ON INTERCOM PORTAL

Geneva: the last meeting in the framework of negotiations on AOUA FLASH technology.

On Saturday in Geneva, negotiations continued between the heads of states and representatives of Art. soul Holding group.

UN Special Representative Ratan Tata is coordinating the negotiations.

On Saturday, as well as on Friday, there will be only one session of negotiations, as specified by the UN.

This meeting will be the last one in the second round of negotiations in Geneva devoted to the situation in concern with the use of this technology in space, medicine, military development.

TVCENTER, STUDIO

№9, 3:45 P.M, AUGUST 13

Evening talk show on Channel Three:

“Today, we will tell our viewers about the new technologies that blew up the whole world. As you have already guessed, it’s about AOUA FLASH. But we are interested in the question of AOUA Robe.”

Will the real world be changed by the new virtual reality of Quiet running? Now we will review the story about this breakthrough, and then the creator of the future and the main genius of the corporation Art. soul Holding group, Alexey Kim will be present in our studio.

On the screen of the TV, the popular TV show presenter Lana Martin was talking. She was a bright, mobile, miniature blonde with an idealized appearance, golden moving tattoos of a super-model of the middle of 2057.

“The ambitious project of the international company Art. soul Holding group worth sixty billion dollars for the development and implementation of the first technological system of software, information, genetic, energy carrier automation.”

“So, now we meet our guest Alexey Kim!”

The audience began to applaud, whistle. He went up to Lana, took her hand and kissed.

“Alexey, you are so gallant.”

Her thoughts fluttered. “Wow, he is so handsome, I like brunets!” She would like to look closer at this young successful engineer, a hero who has changed the lives of millions of people.

In the studio came a young man of about thirty, of medium height, wearing gray trousers and a white shirt without a tie.

“Lana, you are so adorable. I could not resist (smiles).”

“So, the viewers and we have been waiting for more than six months. Do not torment, tell us, what technology of the future has overtaken us in the present.”

She even leaned forward a little from impatience. The apples of her eyes were dilated, deep breathing could show impatience, and such a rapid heartbeat could indicate that this woman very carefully concealed her real age.

Alexey felt all this in two seconds. He smiled. New opportunities not only gave him a young body but also improved it. Now he is almost perfect. Could he have imagined at the dawn of his career that this cute popular foolish thing would interview him? He could not, but now she even gives the glad eye to him.

“Lana, you’re right, as always!” Rumors about such discoveries have been online for a year and a half already. But, in fact, only this year, in January, representatives of the company Art. soul Holding group have publicly announced the development of an innovative medium AO.

His cold eyes examined the situation, eagerly absorbing the information. Lana noticed this for a second, and the cold sweat appeared on her skin. “What’s going on?” – She thought.

“Alexey, what does this medium give? What does it look like? After all, the amount of sixty billion dollars, as you should agree, is just impressive enough!”

“I’ll just show you, and you’ll understand everything.” Put your phone on the table, please.

She jerked her new crystallized, looking very fragile phone, onto the metal cover of the table.

The phone almost merged with the table, only a flashing green allowed to mark the place where the phone was lying.

“As far as I can see, you did not have time to give your phone a color, did you?”

“Oh please, I just love cleanliness, and in this way, it looks like a piece of ice. Don’t you think so?”

The whole audience and viewers were at the peak of their anticipation, they even forgot to breathe. In the studio, in the homes in front of the TVs, people who watched the broadcast online held their breath.

The director on his PC screen viewed the number of people, who watch the show, increasing in geometric progression every second. MeTeo Company hasn’t seen such a rating for the whole history of television: three and a half billion users simultaneously watched every movement of the only one person. And it was Alexey Kim.

He enjoyed the moment, feeling the weight of his glory with every inch of his skin.

“Lana, you know perfectly well that your phone is the latest

development. The most purchased model. And believe me, this, – pointing to the phone – is a history. But this, – reached for his pocket – will be a new century of the mankind.”

On the table appeared a black, polished hemisphere, round, having the size of a coin.

“What is it?!” – Lana falsettoed unexpectedly, even for herself.

Alexei touched the sphere with his finger. And for all who saw this, it seemed like the sphere was made of water. Then he pulled the sphere to the right. And then it took the shape of an absolutely transparent “puddle”.

“This is the first stage of the setup, the moment when you get acquainted with your personal encoder AOUA FONNI looks this way’ (smiles).

On Lana’s face, a deep disappointment could be seen with the naked eye.

“And what happens next?” – she has already decided that she will be the first to interview a person whose technological innovation will appear a failure of the century.

“And then the user chooses a form convenient for him.”

With the elusive and so habitual movement Alexey pointed his finger at the “puddle,” and it took the shape of a familiar phone. AOUA FONNI lit up, and in front of TV presenter, Lana, appeared her own face, only of earlier years. It was a focused projection or nanoimage. And no matter from what side you looked at this face, it seemed that it was looking at you.

“You must forgive me; I have already chosen my avatar for the phone. And it’s YOU!”

“Hello! Alexey, you have a meeting in one hour and forty-five minutes. Your deputy called; there are several messages from the members of the group. Would you like to listen? I am also glad to tell that at the moment the viewing of this TV show on the Internet reached a record spectators number!”

“No, you do not need to play the records. It will be better if you show what you can do.”

“Yes, I will conduct a training course for the new user of AOUA FONNI; you need to say the codeword for opening information into general access.”

“What does it mean?” – Lana considered herself a professional in her business, she interviewed the heads of the states, but this upstart just left her open-mouthed, watching her image with a full copy of facial expressions and voice saying something.

“This is the avatar of my phone. It completely replaces the functions of any communicative devices. The owner of such a device can choose any avatar of a person, an animal, a thing or a fictitious character, clear only to him. It does not matter.”

All the time, while he was talking, the avatar of Lana blinked, smiled and waited for the code word.

The pale face of the TV presenter was filled with a sincere surprise, and she tried to examine the avatar with her large unbelieving eyes and even to touch it with her finger.

Alexey was at the peak of his nirvana. He is a winner, and this

moment is only the beginning of a great victorious march, and nobody will hinder him. Nobody will be able to.

“After selecting the avatar, the phone is already starting to function at the level,” he pointed at Lana’s phone, – of yours, but only ten percent of what my AOUA FONNI has to offer.” A full review of the training lectures is required. This is a very entertaining moment, since each time the program is already being adjusted to its owner.

“But how can this phone ‘adjust’ to the owner? And where the SIM card and phone number are inserted into it?” – Lana, panting, began to shoot questions, afraid to miss something important.

“And now the most interesting thing: it does not have a phone number or a SIM card in your understanding. If you allow (he began to smile again), I will go back a little to the history of technology. The inventor Don Tallips and his colleague futurist Coutrenin Robert were right about that Gordon Moore’s law was wrong. And we, indeed, with the help of nanotechnology maximized not only the transfer of data but also the growth of transistors. Ahem. Our scientists from Art. soul Holding group, led by your faithful servant, made a breakthrough: we introduced nanorobots into ordinary drinking water. Thus, with the help of some of our secret technologies, we obtained the original crystallized substance.”

There was complete silence in the audience. Lana had no questions. She simply admired and at the same time was enraged

about this arrogant genius.

And he kept talking:

“Water, indeed, is the carrier of information. But in order for me not to go into the jungle of scientific terms that are incomprehensible to everyone, I will describe the process. So, this technology allowed us to realize the following opportunities in mobile technologies. This phone really does not need to be charged, it does not have a battery, because it takes energy for work from completely different sources. It cannot be hacked or stolen. Since the owner with his first touch gives information about his DNA and RNA, this is the password for the entire information.”

“Forgive me for interrupting, Alexey, tell me, do you want to say that this phone does not need to be charged? How is this possible?”

“Yes, it is not necessary at all, it is charged from the sun, from the light of lamps, from the heat of your hand, from any sources of energy. And there are no restrictions in its use. To fix your broken AOUA FONNI, you need to put it in a bowl and pour water from a tap or bottle (laughs), and it will repair itself. This avatar replaces a lot of the most complicated applications: smart home, weather, Internet search engines, currency trading, moreover, at one touch it can indicate sugar in the blood, pressure and even milk tide for nursing mothers. Well, of course, all the settings are individual and absolutely secret, because there is no database in which you ‘put secrets’, all this is stored on this

device. Access to which you define individually to each user, in addition to yourself.”

The memory of one million fifty thousand terabytes allows you to play with the settings (smiles).

“To say that I’m shocked is to say nothing.”

He takes the phone in his hands, the avatar disappears immediately.

“This is both a storage medium and a source of energy; we came to the conclusion that the technology of ‘chipping’ is outdated. There is no chip with information in it, it is a chip itself, there is no battery, because all energy is in all its constituent parts.”

It seemed for the viewers for a while that this TV-show is simply a practical joke.

“Perhaps, I will give a command about the beginning of publishing the information in the media and the beginning of PR-action and sales of this phone from tomorrow. So, the code word’ – the avatar came to, sparkled and smiled with a wide sincere smile, – “IIN number one, you’re free!”

At that moment, hundreds of thousands press releases, video tutorials and annotations to the phone were sent all over the world, to all postal addresses.

Alexey lightly pressed the screen and the avatar disappeared again. On the table were two transparent telephones, one seemed to be a child’s toy, the second was more massive and already obsolete. He touched the phone again, and it “gathered itself” and

again became a black hemisphere.

“How much will this phone cost?”

“Forty-five dollars.” Since our costs for this phone do not require expensive plastic, metal and other alloys.

The applause blew up the studio. Nobody expected such a low cost of a new toy.

“I prepared a surprise for you, Lana, and I’ll give you such a phone.” Only, please, do not make my picture an avatar of your phone, I’m not as beautiful as you! Your AOUA FONNI encoder is already waiting in your office.

Cries of favor and applause reappeared in the audience.

“Oh! I am very grateful to you! It will be very interesting.

Now my director tells me that we are still haven’t talked on the main topic – a game with full immersion and technology AOUA Robe. Would you tell us?” (Laughs.)

The audience burst out again with impatient applause.

“The game is called ‘Quiet running’, or, as I call it, ‘run around quietly’, hehe. With full immersion, thanks to the AOUA Robe costume, our players are put into the future world with fantastic opportunities, adventures, stories, where the main goal of each player will be to find ‘The Eye of God’ and ‘The Hand of God.’ Anyone who finds them, regardless of the level, the chosen class, and is the first to bring them to the right place, will be the first winner and will receive one million dollars and five percent of our company shares.”

The game will start three months later. The first twenty lucky

winners, who are lucky in the lottery, will get a free AOUA Robe and ten thousand dollars, a lot of opportunities in the development of the character, being the first in the passage of all possible assignments.

“Alexey, but isn’t this kind of games already developed in our world? This is not a novelty. What is different about your game?”

“The difference is that being completely in AOUA Robe, your body repeats all your actions in the game. If you learn to swim in the game, then in life you can then become a first-class swimmer. Your muscles are not only subject to atrophy, but, on the contrary, they acquire in the course of time maximum youth and elasticity.”

“So, you are going to say: if I do abs exercise and practice blows in the game, then in real life I will have an ideal figure?”

“Yes.”

“How does this happen?”

VLADIVOSTOK, AUGUST 15, 2057

“Hurry up! Bunch of dead cockroaches! After forty minutes, the ship must already sail! If you won’t be in time, I’ll shove your heads in your a.....! Frozen herrings!”

In the port there was always windy, the difference was only in the level of trauma danger. In winter, it was worst of all: the frosts at night sometimes fell to minus thirty. Then we had to fight not only with the weight of the cargo but also with the risk to freeze ourselves the “quail”.

The principle is simple: came, completed work, got money, left. There are changing rooms, a dining room and a shower on the territory.

“Listen, taciturn, Vasilich is yelling at you! Come on, go ahead, man!” – said Cyril.

It was a mockery, because only Serega dragged boxes, all the other men had another smoke break.

“Haha! Yes, move, because we are tired! Ah-ha!” – local workers neighed.

Sergey did not care. He was used to ridicules of his “colleagues.”

He did not consider as necessary to answer them and go down to their level. He simply kept silent. These jokes were nothing in comparison with what happened three years ago.

Only Uncle Vasily remembers how, after the shift, he found

a young boy, all beaten up, in blood.

Then, having earned five grand for a shift, Serega was happy, but not for long: the next guest workers quickly emptied his pockets, not forgetting to threaten that they would cut him if he were to complain.

“Lord, what is going on! Boy, are you alive?”

Vasily tried to stifle a bunch of dirty rags.

Mmm, it hurts ... – and the boy’s head jerked back.

“He seems to be alive. But if he dies, then there will be a lot of problems, the only thing we need is to deal with cops, f..” – thought Vasily Dmitrievich.

“Well, he’s alive! Let’s go, to my place, you’ll drink, you’ll wash yourself, rotten barracudas.”

Uncle Vasya then dragged a lean boy to himself, made him drink vodka, made him wash up and put him to sleep. For the first time after drinking alcohol, Serega quickly passed out.

All this was he remembered again. Sighing heavily, he picked up the bale and headed for the car.

“Sergey, are you dreaming? Come on, come on, tempo-tempo!” – Cyril did not stop.

“Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha!” – everyone croaked again. But when they saw Vasilich coming out again from the booth, they tossed cigarette butts and lined up in a row to carry the load. This old man could leave them without payment.

“Sergey! Come on over here!” – And again disappeared in the belly of the “blue-rusty whale”.

“I’m coming!” – quickly dragging the next bale to the truck, Sergey wiped his hands with a rag and went into the almost blue trailer.

For three years, almost every night, he carried a variety of cargoes, there was no one who could withstand such loads for so long.

But he did not have much choice. His dirty, patched overall he figured as a uniform of superhero. This way it was easier to carry all the shit that was going on in the port.

The door of the trailer creaked and he went inside. Yes, nothing has changed here in three years. The same perfect order, everything in its place: the table near the window and the bench on the side, two chairs and an electric kettle, boiling water.

“I wonder if he ever turns it off?” thought Serega.

“Come in, sit down, I have to talk to you.”

There was one thing Sergei realized: you’d better not play jokes on Uncle Vasya,

and if he has to talk to you, it is always on the matter.

“Listen, you should not appear in the port in the next three months,” – Vasily Dmitrievich raised his tanned wrinkled hand and stopped Serega. – “Stop, stop, I’m aware of your position.”

The jumped guy slowly sat back on the stool.

“But you understand that we will have checks here. The Japanese smuggle contraband, the big dough is paid on top, and we suffer. Do you want some tea? According to a special recipe!”

“No, no, I will not have tea. Heck! What shall I do?” – he

did not expect such a bummer, and especially not now. – “Heck! Heck!”

Sergey inclined his head, already thinking about what kind of work he could find to combine with the university.

“Do not swear in my presence. I have decided to give you an advance for these three months of idle time, but keep in mind, then you will work it all off. Here, there are three hundred and twenty thousand that is less than what you earn, but at least something. Your grandfather, probably, needs to change the wheelchair. Besides, you will have a rest, it is summer after all, and you here all days long.”

That’s what was stunning for Sergey: no one gave him money – that’s right, in advance, or you can say, just like that!

“It’s now past five, so take the money and get out, then the GRU, Alpha-shmalfa and other fun-loving guys, checking guest workers, and just at six am sharp, will begin, f...”

“Vasily Dmitrievich, thank you!” – They shook hands firmly. – “I’ll call you in about three months!”

“Yes, yes, call. If the brains of the old walrus will not be completely withered.”

Vasily looked at the back of a young, healthy guy and was surprised: in three years almost everyday loads made a bulldog of a puppy. Only his eyes remained puppy like. Having spat, the chief went about his business. He began to prepare tea – according to a special recipe of “navy seals”.

Before leaving, he went to the shower, washed himself,

changed his clothes, folded his uniform in a bag and closed it in the locker. The key was dangling on a bunch, as well as a special pass to the dock.

“What’s to be done now? – He thought. – I’m already used to this place, to the smell of the port, to the ships.”

Work in the dock as a loader was regarded as one of the most dangerous. But they paid well and the schedule was free. He had to get up at three-twenty am, prepare breakfast for his little brother and a paralyzed grandfather.

Then go through the Golden Bridge to the port. There, for four hours, he worked his butt off, sometimes tearing himself up or under an icy rain. Then he went to the Far Eastern Federal University. After he managed to win a grant in the school and three years of payment in this university, he entered without hesitation. Our education is our everything! After all, he could not always be a docker in the port.

“It’s decided, I’ll go to the university, especially if I go by sunbus, I’ll have time to get some sleep.”

AUGUST 14, 2057, 20:15, OFFICE OF THE RECTOR OF FEFU

The new office was dim, and only one lamp burned at the rector's desk, the main light was turned off. There was a smell of new furniture, paint, expensive cognac and cigar.

In the huge chair sat a gray-haired man and looked at one spot. In the ashtray, the Cuban cigar was almost completely decayed. He played with a glass of cognac but did not rush to drink it.

“And why did I agree to this fucking grant from these monsters? Now, I practically work for them, sit and wait for orders from Moscow, and not from the Ministry of Education, but from a private company. How angry it makes me! F....ing Art. soul Holding group’.

The sharp sound of the stationary phone made him wince.

“Yes, Marina.”

“Mikhail Vladimirovich, you have a direct conference with Moscow in a minute’, – said a very young secretary.

“All right, put them through.”

“Finally, well, let's go.”

After the conversation, he felt a little relieved, the tension that pulled his nerves into a ball all day, let go. Now he can take a vacation and go for a week with his wife to the country house. There, they with his neighbor Oleg Gennadievich will fish on a boat. There is a blissful silence and peace. Without an overseer

in the face of the world corporation. Which, like a malevolent chain dog, follows his every step, gesture, word.

He called for his car and driver. At such a time in the city, there were no traffic jams, and he came in twenty-five minutes, rejoiced and in the best mood, he embraced and kissed his wife. And he announced his intentions to go away for a week or two to the Baikal country house.

**AUGUST 15, 2057, 10:20,
SUKHANOV STREET, 8,
MAIN BUILDING OF FEFU**

All the students gathered around the building. There was such noise and hubbub that it was audible for a couple of blocks. An outsider, watching what was happening, most likely would immediately be worried and called the police. But this did not happen, all ordinary passers-by were aware of what was going on, and terribly envied the students of this institution.

Sergey went to the building in the hope of receiving a schedule and finding out the scheme of payment for tuition, since this year the grant was to end.

“What the...” – he thought, hearing the screaming and whistling.

Then a familiar car blinked into the lights. From the window of the new white Range Rover, the redheaded Roma Babitsky stared a homely, skinny, intelligent Jewish boy from a respectable, and therefore wealthy, Jewish family.

“Serega, hi! Have you already received your ticket?” Shouted Roma.

“What ticket?”

“Lottery one!!!” – grinned the guy.

“... – the guy opened his mouth in surprise.”

“So you don’t know? Ah, well, yes, you do not get in touch! Get in the car, I will tell you smart things’, – said Roma copying a Caucasian accent.

Serega crossed the road, opened the door of the car and flew into the new cabin of the very expensive car.

“What did you hear about the new super game with full immersion into the Virtual Reality, Quiet Running?”

“I have no idea what you’re talking about now, Roma, stop shilly-shally, tell me already what the ticket is and what is an Quiet Running is?”

“Oh, oh, my ears wilt from your accent!” – he grimaced.

“Rum, do not f... with me!”

“Ok, while you, our proud bird, unload the wagons.”

“Ships.”

“Planes, for all I care. So, while you are doing god knows what, the world moves on. It just jumps, damn it!”

And the red-headed Jewish Roma began to tell:

“Today there has been a message for all students – a gathering for a general meeting. To which you did not come. And there was our Rector, the same one that owes my dad a tone of money.”

“Roma, I had enough of your sh..., what is the ticket for and what is happening?”

“Do not interrupt me, so, our Rector gathered everyone in the hall and said that only our university will be awarded Lottery tickets from the company Art. soul Holding group for free. It just happens so, that they are launching a new on-line game

Quiet Running in three months. But, before the official launch, they are looking for twenty gamers that will be the first to test how it works. Everything that will happen in the game will be broadcasted around the world! Each winner of the lottery will receive ten grand, a per-unit AOUA Robe worth five grand and ninety days for the maximum development of the character.”

“Hot damn!”

“I’m surprised as well, like you said. Oh, I went through an Internet today. In word, they say that it will be possible to use virtual money to pay for services in the real life! It’s like if you order something on the internet, you can pay by the points from the game, and the company then covers everything and is the garrant of the deal.”

“Is this real? Delirium of some sort, it seems like a set-up!”

“No, Serega, when thinking about it, it’s a trifle. Just think, one such ticket is worth a hundred bucks, and milliards of them printed for the whole, so to say, blue ball. Secondly, aquaRob is a purchase, maintenance, repair plus a subscriber’s fee for gaming. Already, they say that more than fifty million orders for them have been received, and in fact, they have not even launched the game. To avoid disturbances, in fact, and to warm up the interest, they invented this yobbo-lottery epic.”

“And what do you have to do with these tickets?”

“These tickets are also not very simple. As I saw, it’s a white plastic with a transparent circle. You need to unwrap the ticket, touch this circle, and he will either be red, and you shame the

corpses, or, green, and you are the king of all the mermaids.”

“Have you taken the ticket already?”

“No, as I was saying, he Rector owes my dad money, so we have a VIP-appointment, in an hour we have to come to him ourselves. Sergey, did you eat breakfast today?”

“No.”

“Then we’ll go to the pizzeria. (Laughs.) At the same time, I will tell you, my port and smelly friend, why do you need to play this game with your grandfather.”

“What?”

“Believe me, my dad has already ordered aquaRobs for himself, my aunt and Sophie.”

“I’m not smelly!”

“You do not worry about that, Serega’, – Roma said, and for some reason stopped joking. And started the car.

AUGUST 15, 2057, 11:50, SUKHANOV STREET, 8 MAIN BUILDING OF FEFU RECTOR'S OFFICE

Today, from the very morning, a ticket machine was brought, older students and faculty staff unloaded it and divided into groups of lottery tickets. Each student got one ticket. Total five hundred and seventy thousand pieces or fifty-seven boxes.

All this time the Rector himself did not show up, he was preparing to speak at the meeting. He drank water and aspirin, but the headache continued to exhaust him with a cold alarm.

“It’s like there are no more problems for me, but running around like a little dog giving out tickets.” He looked at his ticket and sighed heavily. He did not want to participate in these games, win something. He had already visited for four months the group for those “who cannot stop gambling.”

The phone rang again in the office; the secretary seems to be too active today.

“Mikhail Vladimirovich, you have a meeting in the hall in ten minutes’, – she said.

“Yes, Marina. Thank you.” – Muted the sound: “I appointed it myself.” – Turned on the sound. “I am on my way.”

“How hard it is to go on vacation. I need to figure it out as soon as possible.”

The next two days, he passed on his business at the institute, then two more days he and his wife collected things and only on the fifth day finally left far away from the news and all these new gadgets.

In the pizzeria near the university, there was a special charm. Many freshmen worked there and the pretty girls from the Faculty of Oriental Studies were going to drink chocolate.

The guys placed the order and were waiting for pizza and burgers.

They sat down at a table near the window. It seemed that everyone was thinking his own thoughts. Sergey was in a confused state of mind and had no idea where to search for the new job.

He had no intent to work for Roma's father in a stuffy office or as an errand-boy for the miserable crumbs of "student" wages. So he was sitting, sorting out all the possible options, and still could not take any decision.

"You are in sorrow, my friend, as far as I see!" – Roma said, sipping an eerie green energy drink.

For a moment it seemed like that was the redheaded gnome drinking herbal potion.

"How can you drink this stuff? It's made of oil!"

"If you judge by the price, then you're right. But oil never caused me to be allergic, even when taken intravenously. Hehe."

"So, tell me about 'AKVUA ROBE'."

"Serega, you'll drive me insane with your accent."

“Well, I did not live in London.”

A nice waitress brought drinks and hot sandwiches.

“Pizza will be ready in twelve minutes’, – she said, placing everything on the table.

When she left, the two boys watched her go and everyone came to the idea that the uniform was, of course, too short, but it only added a healthy appetite.

“Listen, Roma, what about the robe?”

“Finish chewing, and then talk!”

“What did you want to tell about the robes?”

“Ah, well, at last, you’ve got to the point. This is a unique system of healing for any organism. I told you, the rumours started from the top. All the presidents, the heads of banks and others, had bought AQUA Robe long ago.”

Roma bit off the sandwich and closed his eyes. “Yes, in Russia food is definitely tastier. Not as tasteless as in England and not as spicy as in India.” Having washed his food down with his energy cocktail, he sighed and continued. All this time he watched his only friend “not because of Daddy’s money’ eating bread greedily, wiping the sauce from the plate.

“This development is closely connected with other works of this company, with genetic modulations, with the medicine development, and, of course, with the novelty – the information carrier AOUA FLASH. In general, all their developments are interconnected with the discovery of the ‘memory of water.’ They produced a programmed liquid crystal substance.”

“Su-u-y-u’, – a loud nasty sound, when you drink from the straw to the last drop. “Roma, I know, of course, that you are a fan of new gadgets, but you start talking almost in Japanese.”

“I do not know Japanese. Come on! I do not want to be like my father, a f.....financier; I always wanted to be an engineer. Hehhh...”

Well, they created “smart water’, and then in the course of the experiment, or, perhaps, accidentally someone left a rotten apple in a flask with such water. And what happened, how do you think?

“An apple turned into a tree?”

“No. The apple remained an apple. But absolutely fresh apple, not rotten.”

“Come on, cut the crap! I don’t believe you! If this was true, everyone would be already running to their office in order to smash it and get a litre for each person.”

“Serega, this water cannot be used for food. It is literally technical. This is all true; my father was present at the demonstration for the exclusive people. He also invested a large amount in this garbage of the future.”

“You mean, if you lie for a while in such a ‘Robe’ – like an apple, you will become pink and fresh, won’t you?”

“I did not say that. But who said that an apple genetically is only a little simpler than human. And, besides, my father is dreaming of rejuvenating and is not playing games, though he was one of the first to order AOUA Robe.”

“Grandfather!” The apples of Sergei’s eyes widened and he realized what was happening.

“Holy Hell! I was thinking it would not happen!”

The waitress smiled, she had already decided to leave her room to that redhead one. After all, she realized that he was the son of one of the richest people in this country.

There was a sound in the reception office; someone was knocking on the door.

“Come in!” Marina said, she just wanted to drink coffee, but, apparently, she had to do it later.

A heavy armoured door opened and two students entered.

“Hmm, I know them. King and beggar! That’s how a Japanese teacher called them.”

“Marina Artemovna, is the rector in?”

“Yes, Romochka, he did not go out after the meeting. Are you on a private matter?” she tried to be as polite as possible because she was aware of the complicated relationship of this redhead person’s father and Misha.

“Then shall we come in?”

“First I shall warn him.” She picked up the phone and started speaking.

The phone started to thrum again. The rector was now ready to kill his secretary because the headache was just started to weaken. And this sound went through his brain like a blunt knife.

“Hello!” he almost shouted.

“Michael... erm, Vladimirovich, students are waiting for you, Roma Babitsky and...” She covered the phone handset with a perfectly manicured hand and whispered: “What is your name?”

“Kravtsov Sergey, the third year student, Department of economics and management.”

“And Kravtsov Sergey, the third year student, shall I let them in?”

“Yes.”

Reactor’s hands were sweaty. It seems like a cold wind blew from all sides.

“What does he want from me?”

He sat down in his chair, straightened his tie and reached for a glass of water, his throat dried out instantly. At that moment the door opened and two students entered. He knew one of the students, and at the same time, he was trying to avoid the second one with every fibre of his being as long as possible.

“Good day, Mikhail Vladimirovich! We wanted to receive our lottery tickets.”

“Hello, Roma! Doesn’t the group leader have your tickets?”

“There is a big queue,” the red-haired, impudent Jew answered.

“Oh, yes, of course.” The rector dialled the number and after waiting a few seconds said: “Bring two tickets to my office now.”

And hung up. He had to crack a smile at the guys and keep being polite.

“Sit down, please. Coffee or tea?”

No. Thanks, we have just had lunch,” Sergey hastened to respond. Knowing Roma, he would definitely drink both coffee and tea, and brandy from the safe.

“Then please settle down, now they will bring you the tickets.”

Sergey was in this office for the first time. It should be noticed, there was quite a spacious apartment with large windows. Many indoor fruit trees. A large “meeting’ table and ten chairs with backrests.

“Sergey, have you decided to finish your studies at the Faculty of Economics?”

“Yes.” “It is strange that he asked that.”

“I remember three years ago during the admission you showed brilliant results in chemistry, engineering, physics and higher mathematics. Any fashionable technical faculty would be ready to admit you.”

“I wanted to study in the Faculty of Economics.” It is not easy giving an explanation to everyone that I am here only thanks to a grant.”

The office door was opened and one of the lecturers entered.

He carried two transparent bags in his hands, inside which two white chips were seen.

“Mikhail Vladimirovich, here it is, as you asked.”

“Thanks, Anatoly, you can go.”

The lecturer hurried to leave the office.

“Here are your tickets.”

“Thank you! Shall we be going?” Roma could not wait to try his fate!

Five minutes later, in a car parked not far from the building; the guys unwrapped the packages and looked at the chips.

“What do you think?” Sergei asked.

“I do not want to think! I want some adventure!” flushed with anticipation Roma pointed at the transparent circle. Chip squealed, then the circle itself coloured in yellow, and then in red.

“Jeez! Now it is your turn, Serega!” Roma’s hands were trembling and his eyes were burning unkindly.

“Come on.” He had touched the circle with his finger very slowly clockwise. Chip squeaked again. The circle became blue and then turned into a bright green colour.

“You. YOU! You are one of the twenty!!!” Roma roared as if it there was a fire!

He grabbed Sergey’s shirt and shook him.

“Calm down!” he pushed Romka away. “What shall we do next? Where to call?”

“No need to call.” he pointed at the ticket, “It has the navigator, so they already know where you are.”

“Do you have an old mobile phone? With GLONASS and GPRS-search?”

“Yes.”

“With my new one, they will find you faster. Although, probably, they will invite you to the city administration, no, take it anyway’ he gave his cell phone to Sergey.

His hands were trembling and his eyes were frantic. For the first time, Sergey saw his friend so excited.

“Roma, calm down.”

“You do not understand! You have no idea! What you can expect is money, fame, popularity. Millions of fans!”

“The military plan will show what awaits me.”

**AUGUST 15, 2057, 12:15, MOSCOW,
DATA CENTER OF COMPANY
ART SOUL HOLDING GROUP
DEPARTMENT OF GAME
DEVELOPMENT WITH FULL
IMMERSION QUIET RUNNING**

Division AOUA FLASH

The operator recorded twenty-one testees. Then he re-checked the data. All the data on the twenty DNA tests were completed, now it only remained to write the report, and the thirty-four-hour shift was over.

But now he has to write a pile of reports and to stay there as much, if not more! Now he certainly will not go to Lenka and cannot relax, though he wanted so much to get a big bonus for the work done. The operator felt like crying. The system persistently gave out the fidelity of the data. It is not an error. This is the twenty-first winner in the lottery, where the system itself declared the necessity only in twenty subjects.

Five more days left before the announcement of the results. So it is necessary to figure out what is to be done next.

He called an operational technical support team. For the next eight hours, they had been looking through the code manually and through the cheater.

No errors were identified.

After writing off several report letters and making shift schedules for his colleagues, he finally finished his shift and went home.

After his departure, in fifteen minutes, his personal PC turned on and someone entered the AO system, someone was deleting the DNA data of the twenty-first participant remotely.

NOVOSIBIRSK, DECEMBER 25, 2036 THE RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF ELECTRONIC INSTRUMENTS, PISAREV STR, 53

It was very cold in the basement of the building. The staff had to warm up, drink hot tea and put on “underpants”. This winter, as forecasted by the meteorological satellites, was the coldest one in a century.

Nechesov Aleksandr had been the Head of the laboratory for five years. And only the last eight months he had been really enjoying the process. He and his six subordinates managed to derive “living water” and reproductive nanorobots in it. The robots were made on the basis of a genetic engineering and the new discovery, known as “celestial metal.” A unique alloy with special properties, the one of which is self-replenishment.

At the beginning of the work, there were ideas about an eternal engine, about self-replenished sources of energy.

But now all these ideas have become secondary. Today, Aleksandr managed to give a steady shape to the material for as much as three minutes and eighteen seconds.

Now he was standing in the corridor, smoking his smelly cigarette, thinking that something was missing, something that would allow nanorobots to act more efficiently and keep the form

for a necessary, infinite time.

“Most likely, I had mistaken at the very beginning. Choosing not a living bacterium, but mechanical robots. But working with a living tissue is dangerous and pointless; we finally do not receive a new kind of contagious diseases, but create technical materials.” Reflecting on that, it seemed to him that he had almost found that eternally elusive truth. He looked at his watch – it was half past two. Today he should not be late. Irishka was waiting for him at their home, the institute allocated one-room apartment, as soon as he brought the old man a certificate of his wife’s pregnancy.

He threw the cigarette butt into a bucket and headed to the sanctum sanctorum – to the second laboratory. He could not wait to check one of his many guesses.

If in the corridor there was a bitter cold and twilight, then in the laboratory itself, thanks to the warm floors and human breathing, it was warm and, of course, imported lamps that worked better than domestic ones.

“Lenochka, have you wrote a report on the fixation of stasis substance from the test tube no.17?”

“Yes, Aleksandr Nikolaevich, but I must admit that the effect lasts only for zero point three percent longer in mineral water, in contrast to a simple chlorinated one’, the lab assistant was clearly disappointed.

“You cannot be optimistic, Lena, for progress sometimes lies in billionths of the whole. So we need to keep working. Have you

already had tea?”

“No.”

“Then I will start boiling the water. Do we still have your jasmine tea from the Celestial Empire?” saying this, he was already pouring water into the kettle. Put the kettle on, put it in the socket, pressed the button – that is all the work. He wished that everything was so easy.

Lenochka flew into the cubbyhole for the tea.

Aleksandr could not tear his eyes from the bubbles in the kettle. He felt that only a little bit separates him from the touch of something great, a little more is needed, perhaps, something was just preventing this, something was unwilling to open the door for him, behind which his, Aleksandr’s, discovery was hiding.

Lenochka, young and, undoubtedly, the most talented student of the group, brought the tea leaves.

“Ah, here is the tea! I took cookies and sweets.”

The kettle already boiled water, and he began pouring boiling water into the glasses. Because their white uniform was very old and burnt, no one was afraid of making it dirty, his laboratory was known as “piggy-wiggies” among the colleagues.

At one point a glass of boiling water slipped from his hand and fell on a metal table. The chips flew through the laboratory and hurt his forearm. There was a deafening sound of the breaking glass. From the waist down, everything was filled with hot water. It is good that his trousers and uniform saved him from burns.

Lenochka squealed and instinctively covered her face with hands and pulled back, afraid of chips falling into her violet eyes.

“Ah, damn! So burning!” Aleksandr screamed.

“You are bleeding! Need to stop it, is it very painful?”

“No, Lenchka, it is all right, I just did not expect,” clamping the cut, Aleksandr was trying to stop the bloodshed. Blood dripped onto the floor, it was on the table, and blood drops were on test tubes with “dry” nanorobots.

“Lena, we need to clean up here,” he said as calmly as possible. “Bring me a bandage and a sterile cloth for flasks. Hurry up! Do not stand there without any movement! That is what we got for drinking tea’

They debrided and bandaged the wound, washed the table, the floor and all the drops on the flasks.

They spent then another hour to wipe everything over again with a special solution.

But it was too late. Space scales have already shifted from spiritual development to technology. Their movement was incredibly large-scale, thundering lightning in the eternal emptiness of the cold faceless something.

Megatons of gas were scattered throughout space with the size of millions of light years away. And all because in the test tube no.36 9/1 microscopic nanorobots absorbed life-giving moisture – human blood with an unidentified mutation.

**NOVOSIBIRSK, DECEMBER
26, 2036 THE RESEARCH
INSTITUTE OF ELECTRONIC
INSTRUMENTS PISAREV STR, 53**

Aleksandr was in a hurry to get to work earlier: It was necessary to finish his monthly report before lunch and then hand it over to the old man.

The alarm clock went off at 06:03; he stood up, trying to be as quiet as possible, so as not to wake his beloved. She was beautiful in her light sleep. “Wow, I never believed that a woman is becoming more beautiful in a delicate condition, but now I am convinced of it.” He took the things and walked barefoot into the bathroom.

“Do not go barefoot, a-ah, or I will be the wife of a genius having a cold,” Irina said, yawning and pulling the blanket over her.

“Hello!”

“Hey.”

“I thought you were asleep.”

“I will not miss your morning kiss, my love.”

He put the things on the edge of the bathroom and went back to the room. She smiled so tenderly at him that it made his heart hurt.

“I guess I will be late with the report today,” he said, slowly bending over her.

An hour later, having parked in a closed parking lot, he remembered that today they were to deliver a new batch of nanorobots. “If there are no results in the next three months, then this delivery will be the penultimate one. Hmmm, well, then I will be kicked out of science, and I will, at best, teach students-idiots.”

Having closed the front door, he handed over his coat to the dressing room.

The cloakroom attendant, granny, seemed to have seen alive Khrushchev, Galina Ivanovna, only shook her head after him. “He comes at the crack of dawn and leaves after midnight.”

It seems his steps echoed throughout the building. He descended into his abode “Closed Laboratory No. 2. For particularly important research.” It was much colder, but it was created this way. Numerous resistors, cables, even a mini-electrical substation – all this was being cooled.

“So, turn on the light, put the briefcase on the second chair.” He sat on a chair in front of the table and sighed heavily, he hated to write all this bureaucratic mess, called “report.”

But money is an important part of science, he understood it like no one. No wonder he was the youngest boss, the most talented and probably the luckiest one because he did not show promise, he did science here and now. He liked to create. An idea came to his mind – and after a couple of months, an almost

completely written and expertly proven thesis appeared.

Everything was so easy: speaking several foreign languages, knowledge of physics, chemistry; engineering, astronomy, higher mathematics and so on, and so forth.

Being the youngest and most unsociable student, he tried to prove several “Tasks of Centuries”, some kind of mathematical puzzles for crazy professors. Against the background of constant fatigue, he had a hypertensive crisis, and his parents sent him to a boarding house, where his most important discovery happened. He met Irishka and her mother Oksana Pavlovna.

They seemed to be acquainted for ages. They could sit under the linden for hours on the bench and talk about everything in the world. Irina did not pretend she was really interested in everything he was telling about the cosmos or molecules; she absorbed it with wide-open eyes. At the beginning of the acquaintance, her mother was not happy with her new friend, but after learning that he was a talented boy and already at 17, in the 4th year, a laureate of mathematical sciences and a winner of numerous competitions, from the family of professors, she calmed down and let them enjoy summer and each other.

They had their own summer. Then he surprised his parents by the decision to transfer from Moscow to Novosibirsk. And they understood his character, knowing that he was an intelligent boy, and did not limit his choice, for which he was grateful to them all his life. And yet, sitting on that same bench, he realized: to be truly happy it is not enough to search for

the solutions of the universe or mathematics, there must be a person who can support you during the search or share the joy of succeeding. So he practically moved to Oksana Pavlovna and Irishka. His bank account allowed him to pay all the bills of the young student. He first began to spend money received for the first places in scientific competitions.

Now his beloved mother-in-law lives in Israel, receives qualified treatment and calls almost every day, pleasing his daughter by trying to hide her many flings, which appeared out of a clear in her old age.

He turned on PC, chose the "Report" folder and began tedious calculations aimed at reconciling. Numerous columns of numbers and names of reagents.

There was a knock at the door and Lenchka entered.

"Good afternoon, Aleksandr Nikolaevich! I decided not to disturb you, today is the reporting day, but you are being called by Iosif Grigorevich. And come to the laboratory, please, something happened there. I have sealed and closed everything, I do not let anyone in there, and I told everyone your instructions."

"What happened in the laboratory?"

"This worth to be seen!" she was obviously nervous, clenching her fists and constantly adjusting her glasses. "But all the same, first go to Iosif Vissarionovich, he insisted."

Nobody liked the Head of the Department, and behind his back, he was called Stalin. He was a very mercantile old man

back from the days when the phone was with wire and whistles, and the parcel was brought by a postman, not by a drone or a square copter. He achieved this position by subterranean intrigues and screwing over his colleagues, and he did not conceal it, but on the contrary, was proud of the fact that only thanks to him every year the institution received more and more money from the state and interest-free grants from so-called science lovers. And a part of the money settled in his bottomless pockets.

“Well, Lena, I will come to see Iosif Grigorevich, and you wait for me here, then we will go to the “kitchen’ together.

Climbing the wide university stairs, he greeted his co-workers. On the second floor, the clock on the wall has shown 2:00 in the afternoon. “I have not eaten yet,” he thought of his wife. Taking his old phone, he read sms from her: “Do not forget to have lunch. Love you.”

Smiling, he hurried up and almost ran. The rector built his apartments on the sixth floor, well, at least, that was not on the thirteenth. He opened the door and entered the waiting room, greeted a very young secretary, and then went into the office with the golden plate “Kolker Iosif Grigorevich’.

“Called for me, Iosif Grigorevich?”

“Ah, Sasha! Hello, hello! Well, I did not call, but invited, please, come in and take a sit,” the rector was fat, gray; his little fat fingers were clenched on his belly almost all the time.

Aleksandr went and sat on the nearest chair. The rector pursed his lips. “This young upstart thinks he is a rising star. Everyone

must jump in front of him. Well, I bet you will change your tune when the money runs out, and our Indian bankers stop the green flow of money!”

He got up, walked along the long table and sat down next to the Head of the laboratory.

“Sasha, you do not think I am pushing your guys or you. But you understand that there are no results. What you write in the reports is not enough. You have a week – if there is no progress, I will have to shut down the laboratory and give the entire group an unpaid leave. I hope you understand that it’s not my choice to do so. They are pushing me too.”

“And remaining money will disappear in your pocket in three weeks! Huge hog beast! I wish you burst! Stupid, bald ugly mug!” Aleksandr sighed and remembered about the dinner.

“I understand everything. I think this decision is fair. One of these days I will invite you together with the university council for showing the results.”

Aleksandr understood that if the council decides to continue research, one rector will not be able to do anything. Iosif Grigorevich also knew that but hoped that he would be the main winner in this fight. Especially since he had the ace up in his sleeve.

“So good. Then you may go, I still have a lot of work.”

When Aleksandr closed the door, the rector dialled the number and, without greeting, reported:

“There is a strict time-frame. I have to admit that productivity

has been increasing over the past three months. The result will be in a week.”

He put the mobile phone in his pocket and wiped the sweat from his forehead with a white handkerchief.

“Svetochka, bring me lunch from the restaurant, you know what I need.”

“Yes, Iosif Grigorevich, of course, I already called and placed the order in advance.

Thousands of scientists around the world have conducted hundreds of experiments trying to create an artificial intelligence and sympathetic internet web 3, that is, the newest series of data transmission and reception.

For more than fifty years, this life-and-death race has been going on among the countries of the world. And even there are the results of this war appeared, for instance, developed robotic programs in agricultural machinery, nurses and blood nanocleaners and dialysis preparations in medicine. In the household sphere, there are quad-copters, messengers, carrying up to fifty kilos of cargo to the destination place, batteries that allow accumulation of up to one million MACH-energy, synthetic fuel or lenses on space vehicles with five thousand in a cube zoom and so on.

Perfect artificial intelligence was the goal of many thousands of scientists and programmers. And today this goal has revealed itself to the world.

“Aleksandr Nikolaevich, I cannot explain this, all the data

were documented, I started checking since this morning, nothing changed in the course of our tests, I have no explanation for this.” Lena tried to be calm, but her mouth was traitorously dry and her voice became hoarse.

“Who else is aware?”

“Only you!”

The scientists put on their overalls, as required by the safety instructions, but they did not feel this way. Before them, on the table in flasks with inactive “dry” nanorobots, was a spectacle, which was beyond any description. It was a capture. Nanorobots from one flask took the shape of a gray cube. The cube, which was on the corner and at the same time was rotating very slowly and pulsing. The finest tendrils stretched into the neighboring flasks were attracting other robots. All this action was so unexpected and fascinating that for a while Aleksandr lost any possible plan of action.

“How long has this been going on?”

“I think since yesterday. This is an approximate time, but judging by the speed of rotation and...”

“I got it.”

They left the “kitchen” and sat down at the computers trying to collect their thoughts.

“What could become such a huge catalyst? And what triggered the effect of ‘compliance with the shape of the cube’? We must once again analyze all the data, what and how we did for the last time.”

He was knocked off feet. He jumped up and began to walk in a circle.

Lena understood that this was a rare phenomenon called “the visit of the muse’ and it was better not to disturb him: He was in another dimension and his amazing brain found the solution of the problem.

Then she witnessed how Aleksandr Nikolaevich grabbed the doors of the tool cabinet, snatched out a scalpel, like an inequable one (most likely, he was), and opened a vein on his wrist.

“Aw, hell, Lena, give me a cup.”

She took a metal cup from the next table and held it to the wild scientist.

When there was enough of blood drip, Aleksandr felt a slight dizziness, he asked the assistant to tourniquet and wrap it up.

Then without a protection suit, he went into the “kitchen’, put the cup next to the cube and went out.

Three minutes later the cube stopped, and from behind the door, there was a sound of the beating dishes. Scientists could see the whole action only by the soundless video camera in the laboratory.

Their technician Zhenya has long been connected to it by passing the antediluvian defences of the Security Institute.

On the screen they watched the cube pulling all the tendrils into it and becoming larger, then stretching out, changing its shape to a long tourniquet, slowly bending towards the bowl and completely immersing into it. Then the contents of the cup were

scattering by hundreds of the thinnest tendrils over all the flasks breaking them. The flask with distilled water also fell. At this point, the cube “dissolved” in the water and on the table was only a puddle left.

“What the bloody hell is going on here?”

“I do not know.”

“Now we will go, you hold on to me, ok?”

“I’ve got it.”

They went into the closed part of the laboratory, which because of its small size it was called “kitchen”. The mess, of course, amazed with its ruthlessness. On the table, all vessels were broken.

The transparent substance spread over the table. Aleksandr came closer, looked down at the table and saw his own reflection.

This was no longer a fluid that we used to perceive as water. It was rather a liquid sublimate, if I may say so, liquid crystals.

Aleksandr has already realized that all these eight months they had been only collecting data, but now experiments would really begin.

NOVOSIBIRSK, JANUARY 2037 THE RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF ELECTRONIC INSTRUMENTS PISAREV STR, 53

The new invention received its name from the first DNA donor and its first cubic form – AOUA TER: Aleksandr Ouadrate Unique Alive TER. (This referred to the unit of price in construction. A new formula of the object was to be replenished with consideration of the working time, the mass and size of correction and replenishment.)

Over the next ten days, the group of scientists supervised by the Head of the laboratory had been conducting and describing hundreds of experiments, and revealing lots of new properties.

This was particularly surprising after they found a fresh whole tomato in a dry cup in the morning, although twelve hours ago they put a decayed tomato in a bowl of water and added one hundred millilitres of the substrate.

The tomato reacted positively to all the checks and gave out that it was quite edible and useful. Of course, no one dared to taste it, but everyone was waiting how soon the famous “Adam’s apple’ would rot again. After six days of tiring waiting, the tomato lost its luster and began to spoil. Repeated

“resuscitation” did not yield positive results. It has gone from this world forever.

After then there were tests with mice. At first, the mice were given an injection subcutaneously, but the effect was insignificant. Then someone dipped the mouse, it rolled around and inhaled water. And after this, it calmly sank to the bottom and began to study such a different world, without smells and sounds.

When it was pulled out, the happy animal “spit” the liquid and, having waved its tail, started running as if nothing had happened.

All adapted animals had signs of rejuvenation and cure. Further experiments only increased their scale. It was decided to extend the time spent by the animals in the aquarium. After putting in a medically induced coma the testees were placed in the aquarium for several days. The results exceeded all expectations.

The experiments on rejuvenation and improvement of human tissue, namely, one-third of the liver, were also carried out. After this, it was noticed that some nanorobots changed their “behaviour” and became purposeful only on the DNA of human tissue.

This allowed, with an accuracy of ninety-eight percent, to state that the AT reads the DNA of every individual.

There was a council of all the group members and the rector where they unanimously approve the experiment to be performed on a human.

The Head of the laboratory Aleksandr insisted on his participation in the process.

He had been put in an aquarium for five days.

Engineer and programmer had been also working with the biologist and chemist. They passed the electric discharge to the centrifuge, but the discharge did not disappear, and, moreover, it did not leave the substance, the latter absorbed it and began to “glow” a little.

After that, a bare cable with a flow of energy was laid through it.

After the end of this experiment, the substance began to glow like a light bulb, and, most surprisingly, in this light, scientists saw pictures and even video. Due to the sufficient amount of energy, it connected to the Wi-Fi Internet from the neighbouring building.

They had been working round the clock with three or four hours of sleep in between. The laboratory assistants knew that this discovery would change the outlook of mankind.

The static physical state of AOUA TER, transmission of information to various media and at various frequencies were achieved.

Everyone saw this significant track in history; they were the members of the same group that managed to make an incredible breakthrough!

When positive effects on the human body were confirmed, the experiments with electricity were also successful. Scientists

from Holland and Austria, the most successful laboratories on “cultivation” of artificial organs and cloning were invited. There was a real sensation, because if you manage to combine all the accumulated knowledge, they can create not only synthesized organs but also a complete human DNA. They will make a huge step towards immortality. And then a rational person will be able of controlling not only a deep space but also, perhaps, be able of opening parallel worlds and going on a journey through the time. After all, in fact, they only found a method of “strengthening a spacesuit”, but the “spacecraft” on which they would navigate through the time was only the dream of engineers.

The whole building was buzzing like a hive. Laboratory technicians did not go home. The work was in full swing; it seemed that if you miss a minute, you can miss something important.

On the fifth day, on the 20th of February, six employees of the closed laboratory and the Head of the laboratory Nechesov Aleksandr Nikolaevich suddenly burnt in the fire in the basement.

The laboratory was sealed and all available data were taken to a safe place.

All the delegates arrived at the farewell funeral with closed coffins.

Families and relatives were told that all scientists had been burned in the laboratory when using especially dangerous chemical elements.

A funeral service was held at the institute. Compensation was paid to relatives.

Local media had been dishing up this “terrible catastrophe in the scientific world’ for another month.

There were strangers in black in Sasha’s house.

They approached and said something, perhaps there were kind words of support. But Irina did not hear anything. She felt as if the sound was turned off. She saw the people’s lips moving, and she tried to understand what they were saying. But all attempts were in vain. Previously, she did not understand the expression “the world went dark’, now the world “faded’ for her. She did not understand why she did not cry. After all, everyone around was crying and mourning.

Something inside her head kept repeating that it is not true, that Sasha is alive. This thought was quite strange, and it seemed like something beyond understanding did not allow her falling into hysterics and a deep depression. After all, in fact, even her child would not stop her from a desperate step. Without Sasha, she has nothing to live for. She will not live because he is her life.

The guests tried not to ask her many questions, although many were interested in the developments and experiments that Nechesov had been carrying out at home.

Irina was convinced that she would hear from him, because, after all, they did not show her his body.

CHAPTER 2

VLADIVOSTOK, AUGUST 15, 2057, 20:30 OLEG KOSHEVOI STR, 27, CAFE-BAR “HAMMER AND SICKLE”

In the darkened room there were wooden tables and leather sofas. On the walls were old black-and-white photographs of the 20—50s of the twentieth century. On the shelves were odd-shaped smoking pipes, mouthpieces, hookahs and even one “bong.”

This is the only café for smokers in the city. Here you could order any kinds of hookahs, a large range of cigars and cigarettes. The owner did his best in order to get permission to breach the law on prohibition.

The café was open around the clock; in fact, it was a real smoking den. For regular customers, the barman was always glad to offer something in addition to the main menu, some special product.

On the far wall was a huge monitor, on which music and promotional clips were most often being played. Today customers were interested in news and interactive, entertaining shows for two hours.

The main and only news was the lottery of Art. soul Holding group Corporation for the first Russian game “Ouiet Running”, or “Tikhii beg”.

And now, for two hours, they had been showing various interviews with the winners of different countries. In China there were five lucky ones, from Germany there were only two, the United States – one, Australia – one, India – three, Kazakhstan – one, Israel – two, Serbia – one, the United Arab Emirates – one, Japan – two, Russia – one. And all these people of different ages and religions were giving interviews telling how they got the ticket, how happy they were, and on which things they would spend their money.

Bar visitors, having already taken a certain quantity of their favourite smoking poison, had been watching everything happening on the screen quite sluggishly. They were a little interested in these upstarts and rich people from other countries.

They were rather disappointed that the game was invented in Russia, but only one Russian player, a native of the Caucasus, Mamed Zakuranzhaev, a rather sociable young guy, clean-shaven and in a classic, fashionable suit, was giving interviews. He was cheerfully telling about his parents, who presented a ticket to him for graduation. Then about the fact that he was a sprinter athlete for short and long distances and that he was going to get into the Russian national team. And if he had to run in this game, then he would overtake all.

The screen image changed to an urgent release, and the

newscaster of the evening news in a blue dress began to speak:

“The President’s Press Secretary of the holding Art. soul Holding group Anatoly Lekhtman said that there would be the twenty-one winners in the lottery.”

“And twenty-one players, not twenty, as previously stated, will take part in the opening of the so-expected game Quiet Running or “Tikhii beg”.

“We came to the conclusion that the even number would not bring a drive and strain, and at the very last moment opened access for one more participant. Seventeen seconds later, Sergey Kravtsov, a citizen of Russia, became the twenty-first participant.”

At that moment, there were loud cheers in the bar: “Hurray!”, “This is our countryman!”, “I know him!”, “Our breakthrough!” – and enthusiastic applause.

The barman had a call, after which he announced that he was treating all comers to the light beer absolutely for free! Then all the visitors shouted “Hurray!” three times and kept watching the news, that suddenly became interesting, and discussing whether it was a planned step or just an eventuality.

On the screen of the monitor, the newscaster continued: “We have just got a photo of the winner and try to contact him.” In the studio, as well as in the millions of rooms, the dial tone of waiting was heard.

In the studio background was the picture of a short-cut young boy with an outstanding right ear, a thin neck, thick brows, an

eagle nose and piercing blue eyes.

“Yes.”

“Hello, Sergey Nikolaevich! Anna Kamysh from the ‘Evening News’ is on the line.”

“Hello!” – came a calm male voice. “How can I help?”

“Sergey, as it was announced, you are the twenty-first winner of the lottery. Do you confirm or disprove this information?”

There was a deep sigh, and then a sad response:

“Confirmed.”

“Could you please tell our viewers the story of how it happened?”

“Anna, I am sorry, I have not fully realized what is going on. And unfortunately, I cannot talk; I am busy solving current challenges. I will give an interview to your channel as soon as I make a final decision on participating in the game.

“Sergei, please, wait, you mean you may decline participation?”

“It will depend on many factors, for now, I am not sure of a positive resolution of the situation. You will learn about this first, please, contact me tomorrow morning,” engaged tone went off.

It would not be enough to say that it made a splash. Company’s sites were loaded with comments of users and viewers. Some frankly was calling Sergey a fool and douche, who missed the opportunity of giving an early start where he could earn one million dollars just by playing the game.

Others were looking for the reason for this behaviour and discussing that maybe the guy was scared or disabled, for they did not show a video call, but only a phone call.

The situation was gaining momentum and by 1:00 a.m. spread on an international level. Most of the appeals to the holding were due to the fact that this “winner’ is a front man of the company or that everyone dreams of being in his shoes, but he is still thinking.

There was a chaos in the company’s offices not only in Russia but also in other countries. People demanded to give out more lotteries, so that everyone who had not experienced the fate could do it. They have to break up a demonstration with water from fire trucks, police forces and even with the National Guard.

The game began to bring not only profit but also losses. They could not afford to let this tendency grow.

But the most annoying factor for the residents of the big cities was that no official spokesman made a statement or explanation of the situation. It seemed that the entire gaming world was frozen in anticipation of tomorrow.

While in the main holding office the employees were placing bets between themselves on the decision of “this dark horse’.

**AUGUST 15, 2057 22:30, MOSCOW
CENTRAL OFFICE OF ART. SOUL
HOLDING GROUP COMPANY THE
DEPARTMENT OF THE GAME
WITH FULL IMMERSION “OUIET
RUNNING” DEVELOPMENT**

AOUA FLASH DIVISION

The meeting was personally attended by Aleksey Kim, the company's chief engineer, the Head of the largest and most profitable directorate in the corporation.

He was listlessly following up the conclusions of his subordinates. He was slowly sipping an expensive cognac from the glass, frowned, and kept silence. Without a jacket and tie, he almost slouched in a huge leather armchair. It seemed to everyone that he had almost felt asleep.

An entire team of specialists in various areas had already managed to analyze the available data. And now the team was reporting.

“There is an unsolvable task for us. Because the system does not register the twenty-first player as an anomaly or an error. We have analyzed terabytes of data. The first IIN also perceives its DNA as the part of the subsystem. This player is unique, his DNA and parts of the ‘primary broth’ of our IIN number 0 are identical by ninety-nine point nine percent.”

Aleksey Kim was a big fan of his game. He had studied all the data, starting from the technical information and the power supply cables conductivity to the main super system block up to the scheme and locations, peoples and nationalities in the game itself. He was aware of everything that one of the managers was telling him, as well. He just could not find the reason for this,

like all those present. And if there is no solution, then there is needed to leave everything as it is and move on. The solution will come later.

The Head of the Planning Department made a move and went to the table with drinks.

“Can anyone explain clearly what is happening with the participation of this bastard in my game?” Aleksey was speaking very quietly, but he was heard by all the thirty employees.

Everyone knew that the quieter their boss starts speaking, the darker clouds are piling up.

“What does he want?”

“He says that his disabled grandfather and minor brother need care. It is obligatory to provide everything they need: food, security, medicine and other things in his absence,” said Maria Samsonova, the Head of Advertising and Information Interaction Department. “Only if meeting his conditions on a contractual basis, he agrees to participate.”

It was chilly in the hall because of nanofresheners and climate control systems, but almost everyone had wet hands. Everyone understood that the third person in the holding was not the person to whom any demands could be addressed.

“I think this is feasible. Analysts say that the broadcast ratings will be higher due to this guy’s participation.”

The Russian-speaking segment is really excited, according to the most negative current assessments, the efficiency and sales growth will be increased by thirty-seven percent. Besides,

considering that the launch is planned to be in four days, the profit will be more than one hundred and fifty billion in the first half of the year. I suppose we can allocate two thousand for security and other social expenses.”

“Well, since everything is so radiant and we shall all get big bonuses, then you will pay all the expenses out of your pocket, and as the Head of the Planning Department, you should understand that these are small expenses and they are only for the benefit. Do you agree, Maksim Stanislavovich? And I hope you will not stop searching for a solution in respect of the twenty-first player?”

Silence held in the room. It seems it was heard the cactus growing in a tub.

“Yes, I agree. And the work will be continued.”

“That is excellent. Maria, please contact this player and tell him that we agree. Maksim Stanislavovich will you give the account for writing-off funds. Now, what is new about the launch?”

“Everything is ready, as it was indicated in the order: The room on the fourth floor is completely isolated and all AOUA Robes are also installed. Tomorrow we can start gathering players.”

“Then everyone is free, the meeting is over. All reports should be mailed to me.”

In the high-rise building there was a car parking on the two lower floors, then there was a technical floor where were all

service pipes of the sewerage, heating, ventilation etc. Even lower there were two floors of laboratories and a compartment with generators.

Then there was the minus third floor with living rooms, a sports hall and even a swimming pool.

On the minus the fourth floor was a huge hall; the height of the ceilings was almost seven meters. In the hall centre in two rows were placed twenty-one AOUA Robes. They looked like pentagonal sarcophagi, adjusted to the structure of a human body, of silver colour and with transparent walls. All additional system cables were connected from the bottom, so there were no hanging wires or cable stretched on the floor. There was a soft light from the floor lamps. The robes were flashing with green glows.

Each such sarcophagus-robe had a cost from five thousand to seven hundred thousand dollars, depending on the configuration.

The most expensive ones were not just equipped with healing effects but were also able of restoring the intervertebral fluid, healing the final stages of cancer, blood diseases, and certain genetic diseases.

And all this treatment had to be carried out not in the wards of hospitals or hospices, but while you having a good time with your friends involved into a new online game, comprehending the world of magic and sword.

In addition to health effects, there were additional functions,

and the more expensive the configuration was, the more advantages the player had. For example, without interrupting the game, you could buy something on the Internet from the online store for a virtual gold. The guarantor of such purchase was the holding. More than ten million contracts with online stores around the world had already been concluded. Everyone knew that this was only the first step towards the complete conversion of paper money and bank cards into virtual money.

You could also print game items on the 3D-printer and use them in everyday life. Any liked decoration, weapon or statuette – whatever you desire. The printer was located behind the back of the robes and looked more like a backpack than a printer. Video, photo, online communication in any social network without exiting the game – all this was available in all robes.

The robes of the cheapest price category were mass-produced and sold.

In a couple of years, it was planned to increase the budget only of the game division to 17 trillion per quarter.

And this is only the money that was planned to receive from the start-ups associated with the game.

Also, there were developments in military equipment. Specialists changed II on military attack jets, submarines, air defence, and all equipment with chipping for AOUA FLASH technology.

The defence of the twelve most powerful and wealthy

countries in the world was rapidly changing.

Slowing spoiling of goods and restoring already spoiled goods, being the most popular features of the new technology, led to a large-scale global reduction of hunger. The fifth world countries began to receive “restored” products, which did not differ from the “first produced”.

Transportation of fast-spoiling food products: meat, milk, fruit, etc. was cheaper and it did not require the use of expensive and harmful chemicals.

“Cosmos – the next step!” was a new slogan of NASA and ROSNANO. Since, starting from the delivery of products to the stations, the aqua robs themselves, with their health effects, allowed carrying out long flights without harming the astronauts’ health. At the same time, being in the aqua robe, the pilots could continue training or calculations in the “zero reality” of a highly classified virtual location.

Also, the principle of accumulation and storage of energy had changed. At the near-orbital stations, new batteries were also extensively installed based on this technology. They ensured the solar energy storage, as well as the ultraviolet radiation and even the energy generated by the engines of the stations themselves.

When it was announced that the asteroid approaching Jupiter was successfully defeated by a new beam method, the earthmen felt much safer. Now, from now on, all threats from outer space could be prevented even when approaching the orbits of other planets in the solar system.

Investment had started running into African countries. More than two hundred and fifty projects on extraction and delivery of water for the population had been launched. The food and medical equipment based on “aquafash’ were absolutely free. Local specialists were being trained. Even the leading positions were taken by the local residents.

In Cuba, the Dome of Peace was constructed and installed. The incredible sized solar batteries were equitably installed in the hemisphere. Inside this sphere, all the latest technologies were offered absolutely free. During the first week of the Dome of Peace functioning, almost half a million people took part in medical examinations, and eighty percent received real aid after the examination.

All this was happening so rapidly that not all news companies had time to report.

The world kept changing at a great speed of an arrow, pushed out twenty years ago. This flight just started, and it seemed impossible to stop it.

The intergalactic scales continued to tilt towards the technology development, giving birth to more and more paths. The development of the spiritual principles was more and more decreasing.

The harmony of birth was broken. Children of the sixth generation began to come to the world. They were technical and scientific geniuses. The birth of spiritual leaders and deeply religious people stopped.

The universe impoverished and became richer because of its tilt to the one side of its own creation.

**AUGUST 17, 2057, 11:30,
MOSCOW CENTRAL OFFICE
OF ART. SOUL HOLDING
GROUP CONFERENCE ROOM**

AOUA FLASH DIVISION

The complex of high-rise holding buildings is located in the business part of the metropolis centre. In the closed territory, there are the company's own cars, parking lots, cafes, shops, spas, salons, gyms, hotels. It is a unique city built within the larger city for all employees from senior management to security and skinner groups.

Special corporate apartments from the thirteenth floor and above enjoyed incredible popularity and could not but cause enjoyment, because they were provided for free to all employees and their families.

In the closed zone, a secular commune was flourishing where everyone knew all about the neighbour up to his vacation plans.

All were friends and celebrated holidays together. Basically, the friendship was divided by the company departments: if you held a position in the technical department, then your friends, respectively, were from the same department. But if you moved into senior position, then not only your apartments but also friends, as well as habits, changed.

A tough corporate spirit, friendship between colleagues and their families were implanted from the first minute of hiring.

This was one of the holding working conditions. All employees' accounts were also monitored by the ISA (Internal Security Agencies). If an employee was missing or receiving an

inexplicable amount of money, he was monitored and invited for the “interview” to find out the reason. If it was not found, the employee signed the application for voluntary resignation and was deprived of his job. After this, most often the life of such an employee ended in suicide.

Security cameras were installed along the closed perimeter. All the rooms in offices, entrances, parking lots were being viewed, except for residential ones. The law on private life did not allow the use of information obtained this way.

But “local” residents were already accustomed to such security measures and treated it with humour. And after all, the missing children, pets, cell phones and even keys were found very quickly: it was enough to send the request to a special number, and either you were reported on the location of the object or person, or the thing that interested you, was delivered to your home.

At the end of the contract, depending on the length of service, a commission bonus was presented in the form of a percentage of the total wages amount for the whole period of work. For example, if you had worked at the company for five years and the total amount of earned money had been \$ 360,000, then in case of your resignation, the amount of 110,000 would be transferred to your account.

Under such conditions and numerous bonuses, surely, scientists, trainers, technicians, security officers and other people from around the world were eager to work for this holding.

Passing an interview for any position in Art. soul Holding

group was one of the paragraphs in the resume, and if you passed it successfully, then the resume was not required anymore. Since there was enough only to provide the positive recommendation from your current boss and you were immediately offered an appropriate post in any other company, even of a closed type. The holding had a colossal sphere of influence, a stable reputation and shares that were valued higher than the securities of some countries in the world.

It was one of the hotels exactly of this complex where all the participants of the game were settled in.

The next morning after the flight there was a short excursion, where all got acquainted with each other and were handed out the special brochures with the rules of the game.

They were interviewed by the Usage Service to fill out several questionnaires and for the identification of their needs, preferences in clothes and food, daily routine.

As participants were provided with everything due to their commissions for online broadcasts on television and Internet channels, they set themselves the amount for personal expenses.

Also, a contract was signed with each one in the presence of lawyers, exactly the same as with each subsequent player, on confidentiality of the user's information, about the guarantee of money transfers, on mutual duties and rights.

The only exception in the rules was made only for this one, the twenty-first player. Their continuous ninety-day adventure in the game will be broadcasted. They agree to full access to the

video. Naturally, since the virtual reality is as close to life as possible, during personal hygiene or intimacy, players before the start will have to pronounce the coders – special words to cancel the broadcast on the air, and at the end of the action, the words-encoders should also be pronounced to resume the online broadcast.

The total time for personal needs, the words are negotiated and established with each player individually and are classified information.

After the completion of some formalities, the participants and their representatives were gathered in the conference hall on the fifth floor of the central office.

The hall was intended for the media and held up to five hundred people.

At the long table in front of the audience were seated some representatives of technical personnel, PR specialists, psychologists, representatives of the testing department and secretaries of the general management.

Roma sat on a soft comfortable chair in a white shirt and trousers and looked over a brochure about the rules of the game.

The brochure had the form of a small interactive book with the size of an ordinary notebook. The only difference was that each page was a moving picture.

Each one told the story of races, states, continents, creatures. Separately there were stories about Gods, children of Gods, apostates, schools of light and darkness.

Naturally, each story was shown in the form of a small epic mini-movie with the participation of NPCs. All this was accompanied by the characteristic music of world stars, the effects of the presence and even the effect of smells.

If you saw a hologram about the islands, then the page began to emit the smell of the ocean, a salty breeze with tropical flowers.

The pages were made of the finest liquid crystal material, coated with AQUA FLASH. It was very exciting because the sound was fed to special mini-headphones. These headphones, each in the form of a small silver drop, were attached to the inside of the ear shell.

It was enough to touch the image of a drop on the title page of the brochure, so that the music appeared, and if desired, it could be turned off just as well.

The volume level was pleasant for the perception of information without harm to the membranes. Another novelty and a gift from the holding.

Roma watched, listened and thought about the fact that he envied someone for the first time in his life. That's right, his gut told him.

Yes, he will become one of the first players, certainly, he will be in the first hundred thousand, but Sergey has got the chance to become one of the first and get something unique and inaccessible in the game easy and simple, he will become a discoverer, standard bearer, hero and even God.

Such adventures, world fame, such a pleasure will not be substituted by any extreme and the most expensive trips to any country in the world. He sat, sighed heavily, sniffled and was plagued with envy.

He looked up and saw Sergey, who was approaching him. He walked and smiled from ear to ear. And Roma wanted to knock his teeth out, but even if he had got into a fight, he could not have beaten him, for he was much smaller.

“Where are you walking about?”

“I came out into the corridor, my grandfather called. It is quieter there, and here is a three-ring circus.”

“And how are they?”

“Grandfather says that everything is fine. Tomorrow he already has procedures, and Yurka will have classes with the teachers.

Yes, there to the south, of course, is not what we have in Vladivostok.”

“Have you already reviewed the rules of the game?”

“No, hell with all these rules!”

“Excuse me?”

Roma was indignant! “How can you blow your life every time so finely?”

“This game is virtual, and as close to life as possible, you will stay there for ninety days. You will be beaten, you will freeze, starve, and all the wonders of adventure in the unknown world! Hell with all these rules? Are you serious? Do you mean it?”

“Listen here, Roma, I’m not going to look for mishmash. I’ll sit out ninety days quietly in my palace, as they call it, and I’ll kick off this game quietly, ah-ha-ha-ha-ha.”

“It’s not funny, Sergey, you know that your palace is, most likely, a kind of settlement and it will be safe for you only twenty-four hours, and then all the evil spirits around you will start hunting.”

“Yes, yes, I was at the presentation and heard what this is.”

“Listen, will be dinner soon?”

“You’re a chimp.”

“Roma, I got a ten tone, my grandfather will get some treatment, kiddo will study, and I’ll stay in the game and return to Vladivostok, to the port. So they will give me money for a ninety-day online series with my participation. I also have money for the apartment repairs. Therefore, this virtual glory has not yet risen across my throat.” Sergey sincerely, so childishly smiled. “Let’s go to the restaurant.”

“You will eat later. And now we shall listen to, comprehend and develop the strategy of the game. And if you perform some trick there in the game, you can not come back: I’ll hire a killer for you. Got it?”

“Okay. Give me this nonsense, and you listen to what they are broadcasting at the stage.”

Sergey took the brochure and began to watch the cinema carefully, trying to remember the names of numerous Gods, their pantheons, the history of wars, unions, the names of terrible

monsters and the methods of their maximum bloody murders. He had little idea of what it means to play with a complete immersion. He did not have his “coffin”, as it was called by the old generation of gamers. A couple of times he tried to play with Roma, but he did not like it: somehow, he was unconvincing, as it turned out.

In an hour, all participants were invited to a festive dinner.

This is a small cafe with glass walls, a lovely white-green interior.

Sergey sat down at the table near the flower pillar. So at least you do not feel yourself on the stage and you can eat calmly.

He had no time to meet anyone, except for Maga, also a representative of Russia. Then they have made a small talk, their rooms are nearby in the hotel.

Now he could look at everyone. At the next table, the Chinese settled. Two young girls, two guys and one very fat aged woman. They did not communicate with anyone; except “Good afternoon, Sir”, “Thank you!” it seems that no one heard them.

The same headphones that were distributed to listen to advertisements etc., turned out to be a very good online translator. Someone could speak with you in any language of the world, but the headphones translated everything. They said the same thing would happen in the game, just without headphones, but under the control of the II number one.

There next sit Hindus, two funny chubby Hindus and a very small girl.

“Hi! Can I sit with you?” Without waiting for an answer, a girl sat down at the table.

“Hi. I’m Sergey.”

“Oh, I know your name; you’re the twenty-first participant.”

“Well, yes, exactly.”

“My name is Yana. I represent Australia. However, my father and his family came from the USSR. So I’m Russian too.”

“Nice! But I can not say that you are Russian, does not look like.”

“And? So my mom is Australian, she even has an aboriginal ancestors. Have you chosen a character?”

Roma for last forty minutes did nothing but binding about the fact that he should not tell nothing about the character or the strategy to anyone before the start of the game. Since all these lovely people are rivals to five percent of the shares of the largest and the most expensive company in the world, the mil for which Sergey can study himself, pay for the studies of his brother and live well for fifteen years.

Sergey was not going to win anything like that, but he did not want to lay the cards on the table beforehand. And then a friend advised to become a knight of the brightest and strongest God, as it gave more bonuses and, accordingly, points on the characteristics, but he did not really like the plan. Sergey had his opinion, and he did not share it with anyone.

He does not need to get used to pretend, because even Roma sees him as a yap. The yap, who for the year of study

independently mastered the material of three years' course, and could afford himself not to attend lectures, and immediately pass the tests and exams. At the same time, he managed to work, read new works of scientists, articles. He was able to do housework, prepare for the lessons with his younger brother and to drive grandfather to hospitals. And the fact that people considered him illiterate, silly and dullish, just removed from him the excess burden of responsibility: "a fool's bolt is soon shot".

"Yana, you are nice and cute, hazel-eyed foreigner, but my character – is my character. Meet me in the game, and you'll see."

"It's not likely."

"What is not likely?"

"We are the first in an unknown world. There are no maps even for the developers. We'll be cartographers. We don't know how far we're going to be apart. Some say that we will be separated by a distance equal to that separating by our countries."

"Well, it's just rumors."

"I'm going to be a witch. So if you hear about the coolest witch, know: It's me", – she smiled cutely.

"Well, you're going to be a witch. You're so subfuscous and curly, just like a witch."

"You haven't seen me fly on a broom. Ha ha. It's a nice place to be left alone."

"Not counting another nineteen participants and waiters."

"I say that our representatives are somewhere, but not with us," she sang, copying the melody of the old song. "We have two

hours of rest. Maybe we'll get to know the other guys.”

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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