

Ozzie Freedom

WHO THE (BLEEP)  
STOLE MY  
SHVYZONITE?!



<!--Begin Back Cover-->

## Friday morning this guy woke up - and his Shvyzonite was gone!

These are the opening words of an intriguing, often hilarious mystery-and-romance story of one very strange weekend.

"This guy" is no other than Nate David Romanoff, a brilliant American programmer working in the beautiful city of Kirovograd, Ukraine.

But, despite his brilliance, Nate cannot figure out what the hell is a "Shvyzonite" - and why it was stolen from him (was it really?)

While feverishly running through a maze of clues, and running into some of the weirdest characters in town, he also bumps into a mysterious Fantasy Babe, or more correctly, she bumps into him... He's hooked blind!



Is she the girl of his dreams?

OR HIS DEATH SENTENCE?



And what's with the 29-this and 29-that numbers that keep coming up wherever he turns?

*"I laughed, I cried...couldn't stop reading cover to cover...You must read this book!"*

—Important Newspaper

*"Don't read this book."*

—Not So Important Newspaper

*"Plain stupid!"*

—Worthless Newspaper

<!--End Back Cover-->

***Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!***

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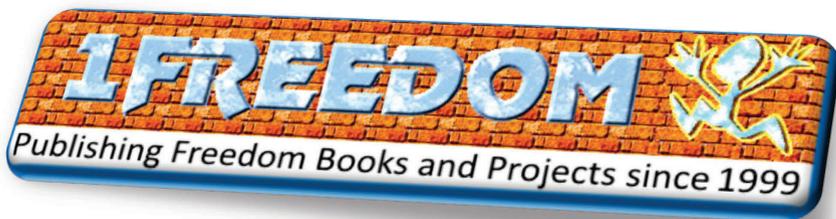
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***BLEEP: Substitute for any profane word. Imitates the electronic sound used by censors to hide "bad" words in radio and TV shows.***

***SHVYZONITE (say shvee-zo-night): a mysterious gadget in the story.***

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\*NOTE: No chapters are missing – chapter numbering was “hacked” by the author for humoristic purposes.

***Use the Glossary to clarify hard-to-find words. Find other definitions in your dictionary. If you can't find a definition either way, it may be colloquial speech (conversational), or somebody's poor English.***

# Foreword

*This is me with my friends Lena, Natasha and Mila in a park near Kirovograd, Ukraine. As you can see, we all had a happy time.*



*I wrote this book before my very first visit to Ukraine. And you wanna know something? I came for the girls – but then fell in love with the country and its wonderful people.*

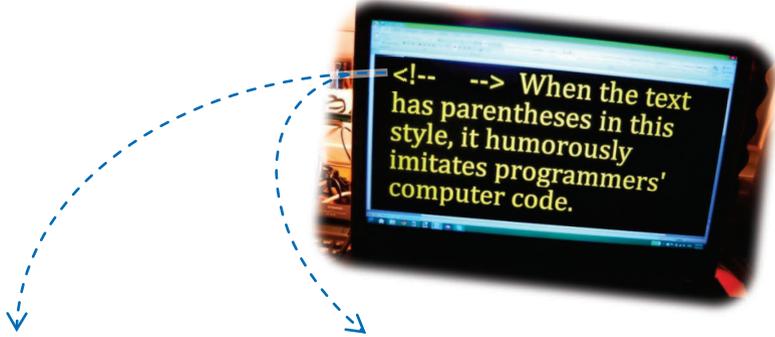
*I love Russia and Russians, too. **May this book inspire you and me to pray together for a New Era of Peace and Brotherhood between Russia, Ukraine and all other nations.** I hope peace has returned by the time you're reading this book.*

*Peace, Prosperity & Freedom for All,*

*Ozzie*

*Ozzie Freedom*

Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!



<!--BEGIN STORY-->

## CHAPTER 1

### FRIDAY MORNING THIS GUY WOKE UP – AND HIS SHVYZONITE WAS GONE!

When he came in last night he left it leaning against his home desk, and then went straight to bed more weary than that pet octopus who fell into a barrel of red wine.

Now that he woke up, he was sitting on the edge of his bed, blinking an eye and a half to that same spot over there, but strangely enough the Shvyzonite was no longer there...

...wait a minute, yo, just wait a minute! **What IS a Shvyzonite???** Shvyzonite? Is that what they called it last night at the store? The guy vividly remembered that after a long day at work he was quite exhausted and on his way home just went into his favorite 'Comfy' store, you know, just to quickly get batteries and off to bed. You know what we guys call "shopping" – in and out in 29 seconds.

However, there was something or other that said "TAKE ME HOME" so he took it, thinking he'd inspect it first thing in the morning.

And now the thing was gone! Poof! Vanished. Thinner than thin air.

He got up and walked around the small but orderly studio apartment. First he wondered whether somebody had broken in. He checked doors, windows, found them locked and intact.



Just a sec... that BIG-eyed blonde he broke up with last Saturday... didn't she have a key? No, no, he took her keys back AND changed the locks.

The guy looked behind the desk, under the bed, in the deepest depths of the freezer, and everywhere else, but that Shvyzonite thingy, whatever that funky thing was, was nowhere to be found.

For a long minute there, he stood in the middle of the room, gazing at that empty spot, scratching his curly red head. A strange feeling in his guts cut his line of thought. Or, rather, lack of thought.

"Ah yea, must be the vacuum in my belly, let's throw some coffee into it... surely the freakin' thing will magically show up. How d'you expect a man to see anything on an empty stomach!"

Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!



One coffee and two toasts later, with Ptashyne Moloko [*bird's milk*] jelly and white cream, a quick but thorough search around the studio - nothing whatsoever - his Shvyzonite was definitely not there. Stop! Hold on!

HIS Shvyzonite??? Was it even his? Did he PAY for it last night? Borrowed it for home review? Rented it maybe??

He couldn't remember any of these either.

Was it just a dream???

N.N..N...NNYYYYYETTT! [*nyet: 'no' in Russian*]

Nate is... oh yeh, his name is Nathan or Nate, short for Nathaniel [*God's Gift in Hebrew*]. Well, you should know right now that Nate is a very sharp mind, a brilliant computer programmer that never invents reality - he vividly remembered stepping (tired but very much alive) into Comfy, and stepping out of the store AND THEN INTO HIS STUDIO with this...what? Machine? Instrument? Gadget? Damn... well this... this... electro-something. This Shvooz...no...Shvyz...Shvyz... this Shvyzonite gizmo. He vividly remembered placing it in THAT corner of HIS room, right there by the desk.

Last night. No other time, and no, no another Universe either. In this Universe right here and now. Like I told you, we're talking about one of the sharpest minds in this "small" city of 239,429 people.

It's gotta be in the studio - or the world has gone a bit mad this morning (it probably did).

Besides, talking about dreams, this guy spent last night dreaming about no gizmos but about... err, sorry Pedro, I can't tell you yet...

He searched his jeans for a brochure, a receipt, or anything else that might offer a clue.

"Oh wow here's a beautiful receipt!!"

He read it carefully:  
"AAA batteries, 29.99,  
COMFY, Marshala Konjeva  
Street 2A, Velyka  
Kyshenya Trading Centre."

He flipped the paper  
around several times,  
frowning in disbelief:  
how could  
it offer no  
clue whatsoever?



Nate glanced at his watch. It said 8:29 - time to go to work. Not too late. Actually it was never too late. As the chief foreign programmer at Alexei, Alexei And Alexei Associates (AAAAA), he was allowed to come and go as he pleased.

He didn't want to go there today. Just as he wouldn't go on an empty stomach - waste of time when your main tool isn't your keyboard but your mind. How could he program anything with this idiotic mystery buzzing around his head like a swarm of vodka-crazed bees?

"I must find my Shvyzonite - yes MY Shvyzonite," he decided as he was looking out through the glass door of his picturesque balcony. Out there, the city of Kirovograd stood bright and green, but completely shvyzoniteless...

Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

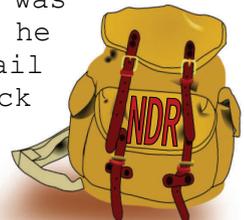


*Nate's picturesque balcony on Lenina Avenue*

"Damn this thing!" he frowned in even greater disbelief, "Now I'm inventing words for something I never even took a good look at?"

Nate put on his favorite (and older than the hills) pair of jeans and went out to---?

He stopped half way through the doorway. Leaned his forehead on the door's edge and looked with one eye into the studio and the other eye into the corridor, a bit puzzled. Where was he going? Anything to take? Was he going for a walk? For a flight? Sail around the world? Shouldn't he pack for twenty nine days?



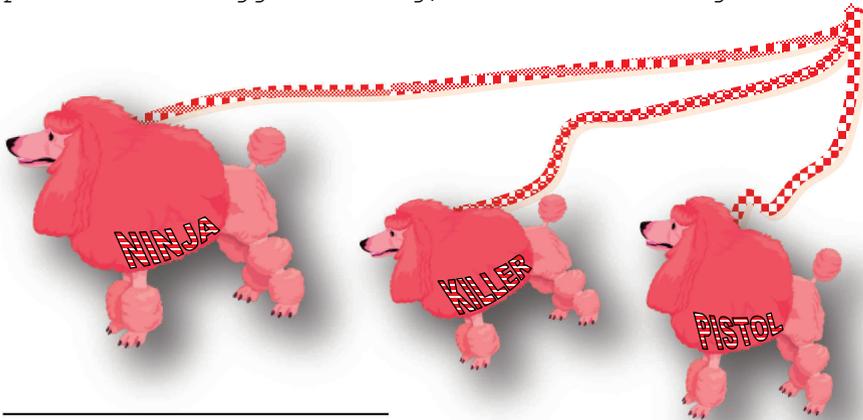
*Nate's address at the time;  
the sign says, in Russian:  
29 Lenina<sup>1</sup> Avenue →*



His pondering lasted twenty nine seconds. Give or take a minute. Then, he knew precisely where he was going and what for. Nate stepped into the corridor and let the heavy wooden door lock itself behind him.

He walked out of the front lobby and into Lenina Avenue. Not before he held the gate for Missis Fl00tsie and her three pink poodles, each neatly secured at the end of a sparkling red leash.

"Thank you mon chéri<sup>2</sup>," said Missis Fl00tsie and pulled her doggies along, "Off to work again?"



---

<sup>1</sup> Lenina: many street names in Ukraine and Russia are after famous people, and if you just remove the "a" suffix you'll find out who that person was. Thus, "Lenina" means Lenin Street while "Karla Marksa" means Karl Marx Street, "Kosmonavta Popova" means Cosmonaut (astronaut) Popov, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Mon chéri: (from French) my darling, my dear.

Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

Nate shook his head and uttered: "No ma'am, I'm going to find my Shvyzonite and bring it home."

"Och good," said FLO@tsie as she was guiding the pink cuties into the lobby.

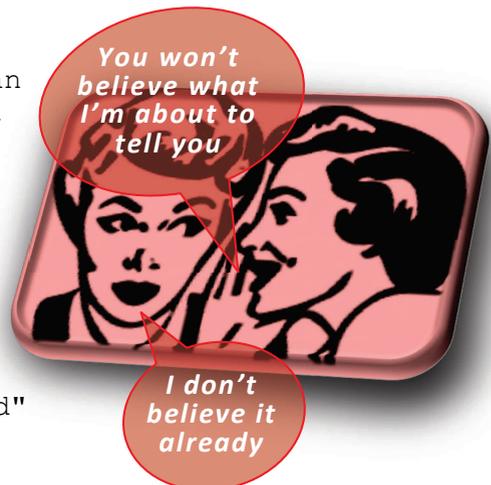
Nate has already started walking toward the bus station, when he suddenly stopped and turned to look back. Missis FLO@tsie and the poodles were already out of sight.

*What the <!---bleep--> just happened??*

He was ABSOLUTELY SURE that the proper sequence of events should have been as predictable as one of his computer clockworks: (1) he was going to leave the lady with a riddle and (2) walk his way with a prankish smile. For sure!

Missis FLO@tsie was Missis FLO@tsie only inside Nate's red head. She was actually the half-French widow of General Alexei Maximovich Gordeyev, thus her real title was Madame Gordeyena. She, as nosy as she always was, should have started asking: "Schvizonayeet? What is Schvizonayeet, oy, young man, wait ze minute what are yoo talking about? Is this Schvizonayeet new fashion in town or somesing?"

FLO@tsie...oops I mean Madame Gordeyena, this woman has to know EVERYTHING that is going on around town and around the building. Always. And everything. But instead, she now gave a little "oh good" and went home???



You think she didn't hear him? Nah, I'm telling you, that high society dame can hear gossip from three blocks away. Surely she knows something.

But this morning he had a bigger fish to catch, can't worry about no Fl@@tsie. I mean Gorde---  
NEVER MIND NOW!!

*He hurried and jumped onto the next yellow marshrutka<sup>3</sup> taxi-bus going northwest on Lenina, his fingers clutching the pay card like a tiny sword ready for battle.*



*He took the "marshrutka" taxi-bus running on Lenina Avenue*

<sup>3</sup> Marshrutka: a van-sized taxi-bus that follows a known route.

Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

While the marshrutka made its way quite smoothly through the streets of Kirovograd, Nate noticed the brightly colored buildings versus the black and grey coats that everybody seemed to wear. They passed the Church of the Holy Spirit, a place called Third Hospital, the College of Science and Technology, and the History Museum.

When they turned southwest near the 'Star' kino [*cinema*], the streets seemed even wider and brighter. Across from the Poshtamt [*Post Office*] he saw what his colleagues called 'Lustful Park' that occupied a whole city block. Then they crossed the bridge over the s-l-o-w Ingul<sup>4</sup> River. The city didn't seem so shvyzoniteless anymore, *but he was a far cry from relaxed.*

Nate didn't know everything. He had absolutely no idea, for instance, that in a couple of hours he was going to meet THE most gorgeous girl in the Universe (no kidding). And how it all connected in a wild, wild, magical way.

He only knew with his flaming redhead certainty that he was going to find his Shvyzonite and bring it home.

And for that aim, he knew exactly who to punch!!!

<!--TO BE CONTINUED-->

<!--NEXT CHAPTER: Who do I have to punch around here?-->



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<sup>4</sup> Ingul: the southbound river that flows through the city of Kirovograd.

## CHAPTER 2

# WHO DO I HAVE TO PUNCH AROUND HERE?

The marshrutka taxi-bus dropped him off in front of the Regional Hospital, by the corner of Marshala Konjeva and Universytetsky. Nate walked over to Comfy, entered the store and approached the first sales rep he ran into. She was busy showing a rainbow of girly headphones to some BIG-eyed blonde (yea kind of like his ex).

He double-clicked the skinny rep's shoulder as if she was his computer mouse. She turned to him, naturally surprised.



Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

He glanced at her nametag and then said, looking straight into her eyes: "Nazhdenya - where is my Shvyzonite?!"

The sales rep's eyes went **Bling**

"Let me guess - no speak Angliskou [*English*], ha?"

She nodded. As she was trying to turn back to the blonde, he asked: "Where is your freakin' supervisor? Read my lips baby: SU-PER-VI-SOR."

Without turning her head, Nazhdenya's eyes navigated toward a busty lady in store uniform.

"Obviously she's afraid to look," thought Nate, "Why am I not surprised."

He walked over to the lady who did not (why was he not surprised) smile at him: "Pryvit, poochli [*Hi, chubby*]. Oh-kay where is my Shvyzonite?"

The Supervisor's eyes went **Bling**

Her nametag read 'Ludmila Ivanovna Tourischeva'. Without waiting for further response, Nate asked: "Ludmila, vy rabotaete v mafia ili v Feh-Es-Beh?" [*Ludmila, are you working for the mafia or the KGB<sup>5</sup>?*]

The Supervisor's eyes went **Bling Bling**

"Well," said Nate, "Is any conversation gonna actually take place today?"

---

<sup>5</sup> KGB/FSB/SBU: Russian/Ukrainian secret police and/or security forces. The story doesn't go into the intricate differences between them - you can find those on Wikipedia.



"How I can khelp you sir?"

"Where is my Shvyzonite?"

"You can please repeat dis sir?"

"Where - is - my Shvee-zo-night?"

"Shto?" [*what?*] she asked and looked totally lost.

Nate knew she was faking it.

"Shvyzonite!!! Last night I purchased... I mean

I took, no I mean I received here, at your shop I think it was this aisle or the second aisle over there I found this gizmo and took... it said take me home or something with a B-I-G yellow sign {Nate stretched his hands apart as wide as he could} - it was this big."



"The shv~~oo~~zee-nyet??"

"No, Shvyzonite. No, whoa, wait... no not the Shvyzonite! The sign, the sign was that big. Big yellow sign, fat red letters, see, like this."

"You taked the sign sir?"

"NO YOU MORON!!! I TOOK THE GOD DAMN SHVYZONITE!!!" he shouted silently inside his reddening face. To the Supervisor he only said, not with the most relaxed voice you have ever heard: "*I took the god da... I took the Shvyzonite. For inspection. I was supposed to examine it and return it today if I didn't want it. The sign said so.*"

"Vee khave dis?"

"Of course you have this! And you got it on sale or something."

Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

"Sir, you can please show me ze product sir?"

"Sure, Ludmila Ivanovna Tourischeva, I can sure show you!" he said and started walking toward Aisle 3, "Come with me, come with me, come with me."

He stepped vigorously across the aisle, his arms stretched, touching the products on both sides as he went, like a kid playing on the fence sticks. Ludmila came along, keeping a safe distance behind him.

As Nate was turning into Aisle 4, he kept his arms still stretched but tilted like an airplane taking a tight turn. He obviously wasn't worried one little bit what anybody in this place might think about his behavior. On the contrary, he came here to cause a scene. He couldn't care less if the police showed up. In fact, it would have made his day if they did!

As they went through the aisles, Nate's eyes were searching like laser beams high and low on the shelves, missing nothing. There was not the faintest sign or clue of what he had encountered there the previous evening.

After also scanning the neighboring Aisles 2 and 5, just to make sure, he stopped and turned to Ludmila who was following him with the fidelity of a tail: "Did you move stuff around you freakin' hooligans?" 

"Sir vee do not move products sir."

Nate was now too hot-blooded to admire her self control. He very plainly asked: "*Who's the Chornaya Zhoppa in charge of this joint?*"

"Chornaya zhoppa" means "black ass" and there is also "chornaya dusha" [*black soul*], which is, for some obscure reason, much worse an insult. But Nate was not ready to use that one just yet. For now, the title "Chornaya Zhoppa" will do just fine!

"Sir you can please wait I call manager."

Ludmila uttered something into a wall phone. Two men and a woman showed up. One of the men was skinny and much taller than Nate. The other two were not tall but as wide as polar bears, with facial expressions like they've been walking on naked ice for the past two weeks, desperately searching for something to chew. LIKE A JUICY COMPUTER PROGRAMMER FROM AMERICA, FOR EXAMPLE.



The woman looked like one of those female body builders and her nametag oddly said 'Olga Valentinovna Korbut' yet she looked nothing like the skinny original (what the heck is going on). The shorter man reminded Nate of a famous wrestler but his nametag said 'Viktor Fedorovich Yanukovich' which was odd just as well (isn't that the Prime Minister or something).

Nate was not at all intimidated as you will see in a minute.

The tall skinny guy, whose nametag said 'Fedor Vladimirovich Emelianenko', spoke first: "What seem to be problem, sir?"

Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

"I told Ludmila here and I'm telling you again, last night you guys sold me or let me borrow or whatever, this, this...thing, you guys called Shvyzonite. I took it home yes with permission of course and I was about to test it this morning and all but it was stolen."

"What voz stolen?"

"My Shvyzonite. My Shvyzonite was stolen."

"Somesing stolen from you khere in Comfy?"  
said Emelianenko.

"No man, from my home, it was stolen from my studio, here in Kiro."

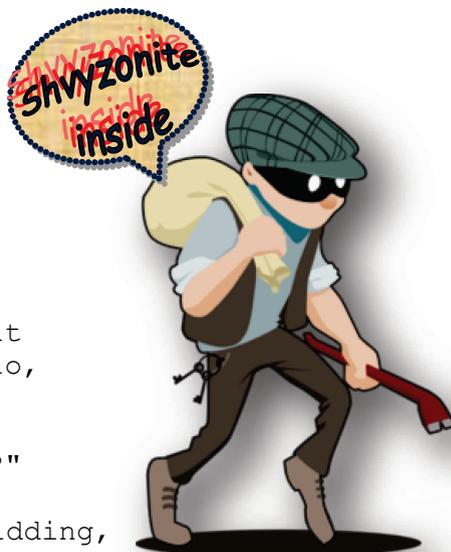
"Did you said to police?"

"No man, you gotta be kidding, I don't have a freakin' receipt man, what do you expect me to tell the freakin' police? That I seriously think Comfy stole my Shvyzonite back after giving it to me?!"

"Sir, I sink you are confused. Vee do not sell shvoozee-nyet in my store."

"O-kay o-kay so it was placed here on display by one of your affiliated businesses or something - but it's still your responsibility because the frea----"

Emelianenko didn't let him finish the sentence:  
"I am manager of all store and I know vee do NOT khave shvoozee-nyet. Not in yesterday, not in no any day."



Nate was seriously contemplating to escalate the scene to the next level, weighing his chances (to get his Shvyzonite back) - between the verbal aggravation option and the physical violence option. Since he had no gun, he calculated the odds: "Is this store manager THE Fedor Vladimirovich Emelianenko, the Ukrainian world champion in martial arts from Lugansk? Of course he couldn't be that skinny, no, but would I risk my entire bone structure to the chance that he's a tiny bit out of shape and working as a store manager?"



You will see in the next sentence, where Nate's calculations finally landed.

"Ty gizmo najdi, lokh, a to PAZHALEJESE!!!"  
[Find that gizmo, dummy, or you will be SORRY!!!],  
he shouted at the manager's face.

Emelianenko's eyes went **Gonnnnnng!**

"H-e-l-l-o-w!! Does any of you Sovietzky robots speak actual HUMAN LANGUAGE around here!" exclaimed Nate very loudly, as the blood was rushing to his head as fast as a cheetah with Pertsivka<sup>6</sup> up his butt.



By now, more than a dozen customers and employees were watching, for which he was proud. He was starting, just starting, to feel his blood boiling. **Boil, boil, booboom, boil.**

**Hold your horses, Nathaniel, don't blow up just yet,** he tried to tell himself with his last few atoms of self control.

---

<sup>6</sup> Pertsivka: Ukrainian vodka ("Horilka") infused with hot cayenne peppers.

# Are You Ready for Scene 29?



<!--Begin Scene 29-->



NEAR THE END OF NATE'S FAVORITE AISLE 4  
THAT HAS ALL THE COMPUTER STUFF.

NATE decides to pull keyboards off the nearest shelf and use them like nobody in his office has ever contemplated.



NATE grabs a large keyboard, then changes his mind and grabs two keyboards, the largest he can find, and firmly clutches one keyboard in each hand. One by one he bangs his opponents' heads, in rhythm, pushing them down into the shop's floor like that crazy monster game in the Amusement Park.

The stronger three (LUDMILA chickened out under a shelf) grab their own keyboards to defend themselves. But NATE is one step ahead of the game. He yanks three open laptops and shuts them snug on their polar bear faces:

*Boom! Bang! Fatang!*

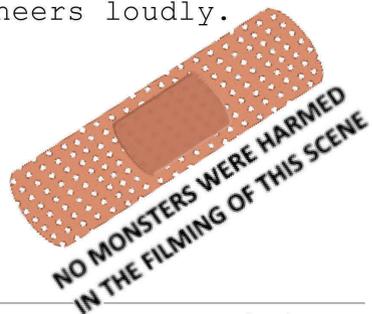
NATE smashes a large computer screen all over the floor. For the sound effect. *ZzZzZzBang!*

The audience applauds and cheers loudly.

NATE bows.



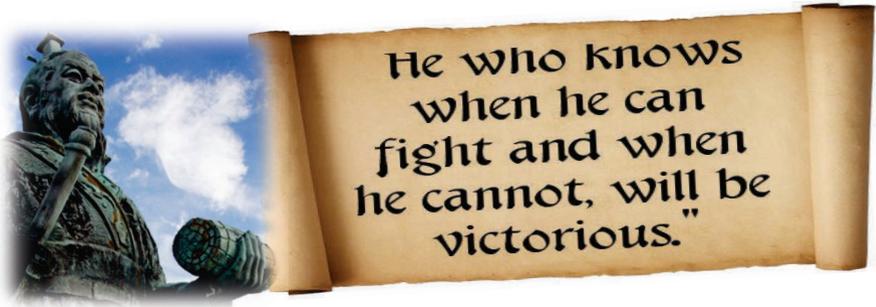
<!--End Scene 29-->



Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

*It was lucky for the safety of this Galaxy that Scene 29 happened only in Nate's boiling-hot imagination; otherwise it could have definitely escalated into an international battle and possibly an intergalactic war as well.*

However, before Nate jumped to actually punch the managers in the face (Ludmila was a candidate too), he recalled the Sun Tzu<sup>7</sup> quote hanging in his father's office:



Nate tried to control his anger by playing a delay trick on himself: "WHO should I punch FIRST?"

D'ya ever watch *Anger Management* with Adam Sandler and what's-his-face? I haven't. No, not even the trailer. But the poster was nice.

From one thought to another Nate went. It worked because eventually he gave up the violence. "For now, only for now, you <!--bleep-->ing idiots!" he proclaimed aloud and proceeded to Plan B which was: leave this dump and go right away to Leninsky Police Headquarters!

---

<sup>7</sup> Sun Tzu: the Chinese author of the ancient book "The Art of War".

Which he had no idea where to find.

"Never been there but I'll go and raise hell, surely get some reaction going," he thought.

Oh my, oh my, how ill-informed he was. If he only bothered and asked anybody who knows anything, they'd gladly give him (free of charge) boxfuls of horror stories about the ferocious determinism of Ukrainian police. Like the drunk biker they arrested the other night for shouting "STUPID HOOLIGAN", claiming that he was obviously referring to the Prime Minister...



But the question remains, Pedro my friend, even if you warned our redhead Nate - would he listen d'you think???

<!--TO BE CONTINUED-->

<!--NEXT CHAPTER: International Trouble at Police Headquarters-->

## CHAPTER 3

### INTERNATIONAL TROUBLE AT POLICE HEADQUARTERS

You should understand right now, my dear Pedro, that Nate is not only a brilliant mind - he's also a kind and benign soul. Now why would somebody like that go into a rage of a gorilla who just found a gallon of hot chili sauce and throttled all of its content in one quick gulp?

Was it some mysterious power of the Shvyzonite at work? And even if so, how could one little gadget have such a profound effect on him when it wasn't even in his vicinity?

On his way out of Comfy, Nate stopped and asked the cashier closest to the exit: "D'you have a map that shows the way from here to the Leninsky Police Headquarters?"

The cashier's eyes went **Ding Ding Ding**

She doesn't understand English. And why would she. And even if she's faking, he knew it was a silly question.

"Kljovye sis'ki! Mozhna pascupate?" [*Nice tits! May I fondle them?*] he then said.

She quickly leaned forward and slapped him hard all over the side of his face (damn, these chicks go to the gym!) but his face was now so red that it hardly left a mark.



And, since his blood was near boiling point a minute ago, he was still too hot to care. He left the cashier and stepped toward the door.

"I can drive you there," said a pathetic male voice behind him, "I'm going there myself."

Nate looked back to see the man. He saw an average man with an average build who had an average face. *However, his average face was currently decorated with an above-average black eye, which obviously threw the picture off balance.*



"Another silly husband beaten up by his strong-arm wife," thought Nate, ignoring the self-evident truth that it could have been another silly customer beaten up by his strong-arm cashier.

"No thanks - I'll WALK!" said Nate and stepped out of the door, turned right and started walking vigorously, heading southwest on Marshala Konjeva.

It was the wrong way. He had no idea where he was going. He only knew instinctively that rather than riding a marshrutka, he needed to walk off his negative energies.

Nate wasn't even sure how to properly ask for directions, so he kept saying to anybody he met down the street: "Dopomozhet bud laska [*can you help me please*], Leninsky Police Headquarters? Militsiya?" [*police*], hoping to catch somebody who wouldn't dive head-on into heavy Ukrainian. Sure enough, some people did, sending his head all over the place. Others, though, made some sense, showing him how to continue.

Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

At first he wandered (unnecessarily) through Kosmonavta Popova Street into Stalingrada, but then corrected through Zhovtnya into Karla Marksa (yes, Karl Marx Street), where he rested shortly on the long stairs of Lustful Park and continued back into town.

Twenty nine minutes away from Comfy (Good Riddance!) he reached the west end of Lenina Avenue and saw what seemed like the prettiest Police Headquarters he has ever seen:



Alright, maybe it wasn't exactly the Taj Mahal, but for a police joint, well, let's put it this way: it was splendidly nicer than the concrete-metal-glass of the LAPD<sup>8</sup> architectural disaster.

---

<sup>8</sup> LAPD: Los Angeles Police Department.

Possibly a former palace built for some lazy aristocratic dude, it was now beautifully remodeled into well-lit offices and halls. The building was painted brightly and carried the usual 'MILITSIYA' [*police*] title.

Above the front gate Nate also noticed a large blue-and-gold emblem that reminded him of the New York City police badge on the outside, but the elaborate golden symbol in the middle was kind of...Celtic??!



Unaware of any ferocious determinism horror stories, he felt quite relieved to finally be there.

Nate stepped through the front gate, marveled at architecture for a whole two point nine seconds (give or take a minute) and moved further in. He was looking for the Complaints Department. Or better yet the City Detective Department. Or even better yet the Serious Crimes Department. Or Homicide (is there an *I-Almost-Killed-Somebody-For-This-Shit* Department?)

The first counter was marked something like 'information' and had several officers behind it, all looking busy.

"Vy rozmovlyaete Angliskou?" [*Do you speak English*], he asked a young officer that seemed the least busy. The officer glanced at him very shortly and nodded his head toward an older officer who was talking to a beautiful pitch-black hooker.

Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

"Commissar Vladimir Vladimirovsky - speak khim Angliskou," he said with a rough vodka voice and turned back to his paperwork.

Nate went there and listened to the lively conversation, that ran all in English (hers in heavy Southern-USA accent). Is that an imported hooker - he asked himself - now who's the idiot tryin'a do that? Oh well, all the strange things you can see only at any police joint around the world. The conversation went something like this:

- Mary Lou, yes? So you are from...
- New Orleans, baby, sweeeeeet Loui-si-ana.
- Mary Lou, where did you get money to buy a new Ferrari 458 Italia?
- I sold my Meetsibushie, added a few dallas [*dollars*] and bought it.
- Where did you get the Mitsubishi?
- I sold my Skoda, added a few dallas and bought it.
- Where did you get the Skoda?
- I sold my Lada, added some dallas and bought it.
- Where did you get the Lada?
- Sweetie, I already been in jail for that!



For the first time in hours, Nate smiled.

"Commissar Vladimi---" he started, but the fierce look he got in response said, without words: "I'm not done with this young lady!!!"

So he hung out silently, trying to enjoy the show. When the "young lady" was finally taken to some office, Nate spoke again: "Commissar Vladimir, I came here to report a gravely serious crime. My Shvyzonite was stolen, and I think I know who did it."

From this point onward, the situation escalated again, but this time he didn't even dare contemplating a violent attack; no, man, not on a whole bunch of armed officers inside their own fortress!

The Commissar asked: "Where khave you been last night between 11 p.m. and 3 a.m.?"

Nate said: "Wrong question. Scratch that."

The Commissar shook his head and asked: "Shv@0zee-nyet? Stealed from you?"

Nate tried to explain: "See, Vladimir... sorry, Commissar Vladimir, it's a gizmo, a gadget, some electronic thingy."



The Commissar asked: "It stealed from you? Or a person stealed from you?"

Nate tried to explain: "I had it in my room last night and in the morning it was stolen, I mean it was gone, I mean they must have taken it back."

The Commissar asked: "Who take back?"

Nate tried to explain: "Comfy."

Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

The Commissar asked: "You stealed from Comfy?"

Nate tried to explain: "No, I got my Shvyzonite from Comfy. During the night it was taken from my studio."

The Commissar asked: "You khave receipt?"

Nate tried to explain: "No sir, it's not like that. See, they gave it to me, no paperwork, now they're saying it never happened blah blah blah, go to the police."

The Commissar asked: "You khave description?"

Nate tried to explain: "No, I was tired so I put it in my room. To look in the morning. But this morning - poof gone! They took it back in the n---"

The Commissar asked: "So you can not tell me khaw it look like? Foto maybe?"

Nate tried to explain: "Wait, do I need a photo to report a serious crime?"

The Commissar asked: "You say you khave no paper, you khave no foto. What you want to report?"

Nate tried to explain: "My Shvyzonite was stolen."

The Commissar asked: "Did you see who stealed it?"

Nate tried to explain: "No."

The Commissar asked: "Why somebody vill want to steal your geezmu?"



Nate tried to explain: "Oh you lookin' for a motive now? I'll give you a motive! Because it is a spy gizmo that the KGB planted to---"

The Commissar asked: "Stop! How you can report a crime with no evidence, no object, no witness?"

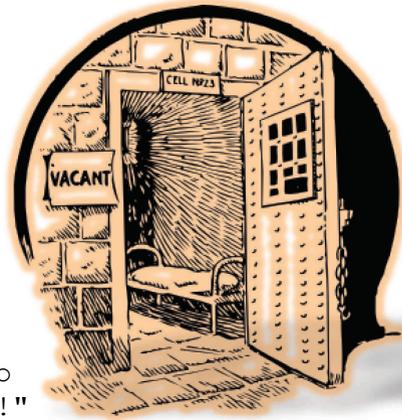
Nate tried to explain: "You mother jumper Sovietzky bear tryina tell me I can't complain without hard evidence??!!!"

The Commissar asked: "You want to spend the night in Police Jail?!!!"

Nate tried to explain:  
"Spend the night? But it's not evening yet."

"Give me two khands  
I arrest you forty  
eight hours!!!"

Nate, realizing he has dug himself into a hole: "Oh no Commissar, on the contrary!"



"What you mean on contrary? Give me forty eight khands I arrest you two hours???"

"No I meant I don't have any complaint sir, I have no crime to report, I'm sorry if I've been any trouble..... Please, may I go now?"

"I wish not see your face again, Mister..."

"Err...Romanoff."

"Mister Romanoff. Khave a good day!!!"

Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

"Good day to you Commissar!" said Nate and gathered every grain of positive emotional energy he could pick from anywhere under the Sun, Moon and Stars, to force himself to smile.

He wasn't planning to stop on his way out. But near the front door the black "prostitutyutka" pulled him to a corridor and put her hand lightly on his chest: "Hi baby, you-is-a-needin' some lovin'? For twenty nine dallas you-is-a-gettin' a good day maybe even a good night...you know what I'm-a-sayin'?"

"Why d'ya need twenty nine dollars if you're drivin' a new Ferrari? Aren't you rich, bitch?"

"Don't call me rich! These azzholes just confiscated my hot Ferrari 458 Italia! But don't you worry baby I'm-a-bustin' my azz now for a hot Lamborghini 570 Gallardo - twenty nine dallas at a time."



Nate almost said: "Enjoy it!" and he also almost said: "Nice fake tits! May I fondle them?"

But instead, he forced his mouth to shut up real tight, lifted his feet off the ground and ran away faster than Speedy Gonzales. Serious.



<!--TO BE CONTINUED-->

<!--NEXT CHAPTER: Spies and Clashes at "Bogdan Khmelnitsky" Square-->

## CHAPTER 4

### SPIES AND CLASHES AT "BOGDAN KHMELNITSKY" SQUARE

Nate ran away from the police station for approximately twenty nine and a half steps, then slowed down to a walk. Going west, he arrived right into the entrance of the famous music hall, Kropyvnytskyi Theatre. But he wanted no famous concert - he wanted a green park, with some children and other life forms to charge up his drained batteries. There was one particular spot he was thinking of.



In the office he has heard "Bogdan Khmelnytsky Square" mentioned in various contexts, but never figured out how to get there.

There's a pretty square in Kiev by the same name, that they once visited on a business trip. But in this city, heck, it was a mystery to him. One Sunday morning he rode his bicycle on Bogdan Khmelnytsky Street all the way down to the M12 highway, looking for the square - but there wasn't any square there! That's nothing to throw you off balance on any other day, but you understand my friend, this Friday embraced an overflow of mysteries.

He wished for Dan Aykroyd to show up from the haze with his Ghost-Busters-turned-Mystery-Busters and suck these pesky mysteries with their vacuum cleaners.



But no hero showed up.

Sometimes you simply need to enforce reality. Yea, kind of like Micro\$oft, he giggled to himself.

Bordered from four sides by Lenina, Frunze, Medvedjeva and Ordzhnikidze streets, there is a city park with big trees, a monument of Lenin, the Philharmonic Society house and lots of shade. Nate entered from the south corner entrance, looked around and exclaimed as if to the trees: "Listen you guys! Today it is decided, THIS IS Bogdan Khmel'nitsky Square and no other!"

Scratch off one mystery. By force rather than wits. Because the real Khmel'nitsky place is half a mile to the south, between Preobrazhenska and Vynnychenka streets. The spot he just re-named is Kovalivsky Park.



Photo: *Sergey Krinitsya*

He couldn't care less.

Nate was getting hungry. In this area between the two military bases and the Chervona Zirka [*Red Star*] agricultural factories, street food with meat is only recommended for those with stainless steel stomachs. He could see none of the Kroshka-Kartoshka [*Cute Little Potato*] mobile shops he used to attend in Moscow and Warsaw.

He found a Chinese grandma who was dressed like a jockey and was selling hot eggrolls off of an ancient baby stroller. She even offered a free cup of her noodle soup. Not the type of food you'll ever find in the streets of Kirovograd, but he was too hungry to suspect Sweet Little Granny.



Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

On the side of the stroller he noticed a picture of a black horse, on which the words 'Lorem Ipsum' were printed in crazy fluorescent colors.



Must be the name of the horse, he assumed.

He paid the grandma 29 Grivna [*Ukrainian money*] and walked away to find a bench.

The eggrolls were small but quite tasty, and a couple of them with some soup filled up his appetite. Nate sat down on an old wooden bench, broke the remaining eggrolls into crumbs and started feeding the birds.

*Nate's head was a-buzzin' ..... Nearly a-fuzzin' Questions beyond count ..... No answer in sight.*

Back off, Pedro, I know it's a silly poem! Anyway... trying to relax, Nate took his eyes up. Up and away - in search of the mountains. In America, as you know, almost anywhere we go, we see mountains, right? But out there, wherever he looked, there wasn't even a tiny little mountain to feed a mountain-starved pair of eyes.

He zoomed back in and found some consolation in the lively birds and the refreshing green that surrounded him. But he still pondered: "Is the Universe giving me a Pop Quiz? If so then it's the most annoying quiz since trying to spell LLANFAIRPWLLGWYNGYLLGOGERYCHWYRNDROBWLLLLANTYSILIOGOGOCH Village in class."



He took all the deep breaths his lungs could hold, and listened to the children shout and laugh as they

played Catch-You between the trees.

When Nate broke open the very last eggroll, a damp piece of paper fell out. He picked it up so he can throw it in the trash when done feeding the birds (Mom and Dad taught him to never leave garbage behind). A faint reflection of blue color caught his eye, and upon close examination he saw that the paper had a tiny little blue script, obviously handwritten by a shaky hand.

He brought it closer into focus and what do you know - strangely enough, it read **LOREM IPSUM** which meant the Chinese grandma had a commercial logo! How funny! It wasn't the horse's name after all. It almost made him smile.

Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

He flipped the paper and - - Boje Moy!!! [My God]  
Oh my bleeping Boje Moy!!! On that side of  
the note, handwritten in red Cyrillic  
letters, Nate noticed another script,  
smaller and borderline visible, but it  
definitely read:



Need translation? The script read,  
in Ukrainian letters:



Lifting his hands up high  
toward the treetops, he  
yelled at the top of  
his lungs:



Nate didn't know if he should jump from joy, jump from anger or jump off a cliff. (Cliff? There was no cliff within a thousand miles, so I guess jumping off the Kovalivsky Bridge into the Ingul River will do). He only knew he had to JUMP!



And he jumped ---

No, not into the Ingul, man! He jumped up from the bench! Got it? OK now, just relax and listen.

As he did, he realized why he had jumped. He ran swiftly to the Grandma to inquire about all this. Sweet Little Granny WILL tell all. He'd pick her up in the air and shake some answers out of her if she didn't.

HER SPOT WAS E M P T Y ! ! ! ! ! ! ! ! !  
"But she was right HERE, right here between these two trees, half way between Lenin Monument and that long military building on Ordzhnikidze Street, yes nowhere but HERE damn it!"

She must have left tracks with her stroller, didn't she? But no tracks were to be found. He followed any possible path in any possible direction - saw nothing but bird tracks!

He looked up into the blue sky: could she have been pulled up into a helicopter? And what if she did? Then at least ONE shoe, ONE wheel of her stroller, ONE stain of soup - something or other, would have left its mark on the ground.

But the ground was as silent as a smooth plate of Italian marble.

# "WAS SHE A MILITARY HOLOGRAM"

## "WAS SHE A MILITARY HOLOGRAM?"



Nate looked at his tight fist and slowly, slowly opened it. The handwritten note was still there. Alrighty then - the Chinese grandma was surely no hologram!



And yes, the note still said you-know-what.

He didn't look for a bench anymore. He just sat down on the ground, leaning his back against a tree, his eyes looking toward the empty spot where the Chinese grandma has been. Observing nothing, just gazing at the empty spot, blinking.

Blinking his eyes. Blinking his mind. In fact, this entire thing called Nathaniel David Romanoff was blinking.

Ocean-deep, think-think-think he then sank into, trying to make sense of the strangest Friday of them all. If only the questions came one by one! The buzz in his head was caused by the sheer NUMBER of questions, all jumping to be noticed as if they were a team of attention-hungry, hyperactive cheer leaders:

- Where did I go wrong?
- Wait, DID I go wrong?
- Why is this happening?
- What will happen to my self-esteem if I quit my quest now?  
Stop, yo, what the <!--bleep--> IS my quest?





- And then again - what have I got to lose, damn it? Why should I quit at all? Wasn't it kinda fun to get out of the daily routine of a computer geek? (Well, super geek, yea, but still a geek.)

- What does the "Chinese grandma" know about me? Obviously she wasn't really a grandma or a jockey, was she? Nah, she was the KGB version of a super-spy. Or a robot! Yes an eggroll-cooking robot. Eeeeeee! What am I, stupid? Or am I simply losing my mind?!

- And how come 'Lorem Ipsum' doesn't seem to fit into this picture? Or does it?

- Time will tell. Or will it not?

- And why must every stupid question be followed by a stupid version of the very same stupid question? Will this question also be foll...Z z Z z Z z Bang!



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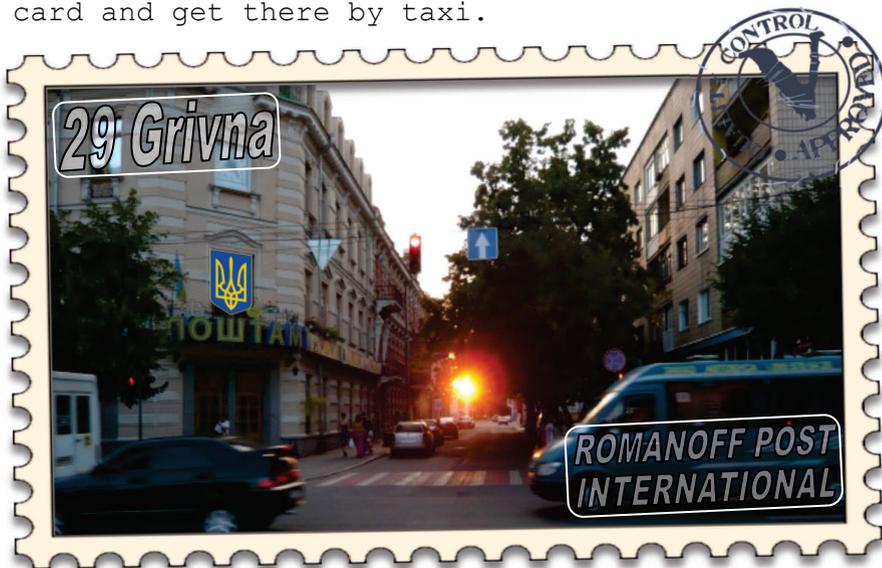
<!--NEXT CHAPTER: The Dream from Karla Marksa Street-->



## CHAPTER 5

### THE DREAM FROM KARLA MARKSA STREET

Nate got up from the ground and started walking, aimlessly, away from his made-up "Bogdan Khmelnytsky" place. Well, if there was an aim, he couldn't tell you at that moment what his destination might have been. And let's face it, if he had a destination he'd use his pay card and get there by taxi.



*Nate also walked by the "Poshtamt" [Post Office] of Kirovograd*

Thinking-not-thinking he was. All confused but not really upset. Only very interested, like "how come all this is happening" kind of a feeling, you know what I'm saying? Kind of "positively confused" if that ever meant anything. Deep thought that goes deeply into... well, into nowhere really.

In his computer-gear mind, Nate realized what his problem was: i n f o r m a t i o n   v a c u u m .  
T o o   m u c h   m y s t e r y .

But in his heart, he simply wished he could find a water fountain right there in the streets of Kirovograd, like some magical plaza fountain where he would wash the annoying mystery out of his hair.

But there was no fountain in sight, neither magical nor ordinary.

Not feeling his feet, his eyes into the ground, he kept on walking and walking, freaked out drivers honking whenever he crossed a street without regarding them. Trying to cross Gogolya Street he was almost run over by a squadron of drunk bikers fun-riding their ancient bikes. On any other day he would have generously shared his sincere opinions about the lifestyle of their mothers.

But this weird Friday, he just kept on walking...

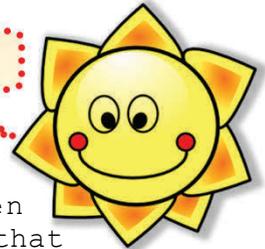


I don't know how long he walked but it is obvious that he walked all the way to Karla Marksa Street, five city blocks to the southeast, because at the corner of Marksa and Lenina he sat down on the ledge of the barber's window. Not that he was tired. He didn't care much about his body now. Just couldn't make up his preoccupied mind if he should continue on Marksa or walk into Lenina Avenue. Say again? You got it my friend - mystery overflow.



As he sat there, his eyes still into the ground and his hands grabbing his tore-up jeans at the knees, a pair of white-blue-red sneakers appeared in his field of vision. A sweet voice said, softly but clearly, in English with a not-too-strong Ukrainian accent:

You going to find it.



Nate lifted his eyes, now wide open with surprise, only to discover that the white-blue-red sneakers were the South Pole of THE most gorgeous girl in the Universe (told ya!) who was standing right in front of him, smiling THE most dangerously melting smile!

**Boom! Bang! Pooooing!** said his heart.

Nate never saw this girl in his entire lifetime.

**"So how come she's soooooooooooooooooo familiar?!"**

**OH BOJE MOY!"** yelled one shaken heart.

Nate instantly knew that the girl was indeed gorgeously sweet inside and out, had a tremendously magnetic personality, was always as

pretty as Heaven on Earth, funny and lighthearted that smiled every chance she got - and could conquer the Earth and the Skies with her charm and determination if she only had her other half to make her completely invincible. She had the perfect, enchanting balance of two feminine extremes: smashing beauty - and mysterious exotics <!--sigh--> Oh amigo [*friend in Spanish*], I can continue and tell you everything that Nate KNEW about this girl but it would take all night. More likely all week.

What? How did he see so much in a split second?

Well he didn't, my dear Pedro, he didn't. It was already all there in his mind, since early childhood time - mostly spent between Melrose and Fountain<sup>9</sup> in West Hollywood - and wherever else his job took him around the globe.



<sup>9</sup> Melrose and Fountain: major streets in West Hollywood, Los Angeles, where Nate grew up. This unique photo by David Iliff shows the nearby Hollywood Boulevard, where Nate's parents live today.

Night after night she visited him, complete and vivid as she was, in his subconscious dreams; the dreams he had decided, one heavy-hearted day at age nine, never to dream again.

Not in daytime anyway. For two decades after that bitter day, he continued to dream only at nights. And he dreamt about HER and nobody else. Be sure of that, my friend.

In that split second he simply recognized a thoroughly familiar thing, like when you see your sister or your best friend, like: "Oh my God - here she is!"

He never knew her name, though. He sometimes called her Misty, sometimes called her Tatyana, or Princess Anna-Belle-Marie-Claire-De-Tomaso... or KCOS-Van-Der-FlC@ptsik... or Dawn, or a host of other names. No, he never really had her name.

Before Nate had a chance to ask, the gorgeous spoke sweetly, so sweetly, again, and it sounded as if she said:

**"My name is Elena B."**

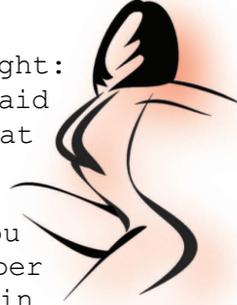
Did she say Elena Bee? (Surely she has the sweet, stinging beauty of the honey bee) -- Or was it Elena B-something, or Elena Be-Mine? He didn't ask. He was too busy melting down.

"Elena... She has the head-spinning beauty of Princess Helena of Troy, with those shiny deep-hazel eyes, silky hair over a bright face and pink-on-pink soft lips," he noted to himself, "She is as mysterious as she is hypnotically magnetic. She knows it, I can see, and she's very proud of herself."

"She's in control because she's exceptionally sharp minded that blazes her own trail by her inner powers and positive outlook rather than by beauty or mere luck that---"

Elena interrupted his train of thought:

**"I know what you looking for,"** she said with such an enigmatic intonation that left Nate wondering what she meant.



Nate knew this girl can glance at you in her uniquely sensual way and whisper in your ear the most romantic words in a seductive tone. She'll melt you down with her voice, her princely walk and social manners. But hey, ho, beware - those amazing, penetrating eyes of hers can read you like an open book, man!! Play dirty flirting tricks on her or cheat on her and she'll eat you up faster than you can yell *"Godzilla's back in town!"*

She needs a man who knows the exact definition of 'chivalrous', one who can respect her individuality and make her proud. Well, alright, MORE proud. Nate wasn't sure if he was up to the challenge, but he was surely determined to try. Because if you could do all that for her, he cognized, she'd shower you with so many droplets of cherry-flavored, passionate love that you'll never need another woman.

"You said I'm gonna... er...find something," said Nate, "Find what?"

She nodded slightly and said with a friendly smile: **"You will not find it here,"** waited a sweet moment with her dazzling eyes piercing his eyes like a non-painful but totally captivating beam of light, and then added with another cute little nod: **"But it is not far."**

Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!



"How can you be so sure you know what I'm looking for?"

Nate got up and - - - *NO man she didn't answer at that moment and she's not going to answer till the end of the chapter and don't bug me about it OK? And listen OK?*

Nate got up and faced her from a much closer distance. A finger away. She was now prettier than ever before. Even prettier than his wildest dreams, which were not easy to surpass... Everything about her said 'Mysterious Love' and 'Irresistible Passion.' As they stood there looking into each other's eyes, the conversation kept flowing back and forth.

Yea, if you wanna call this a conversation...

Because despite Nate's direct questions, Elena was all subtle avoidance and elusive answer-no-answer, which felt to him as if she was pulling him by the nose. But the way she did it, oh man, I'm telling you, he didn't mind all that much.

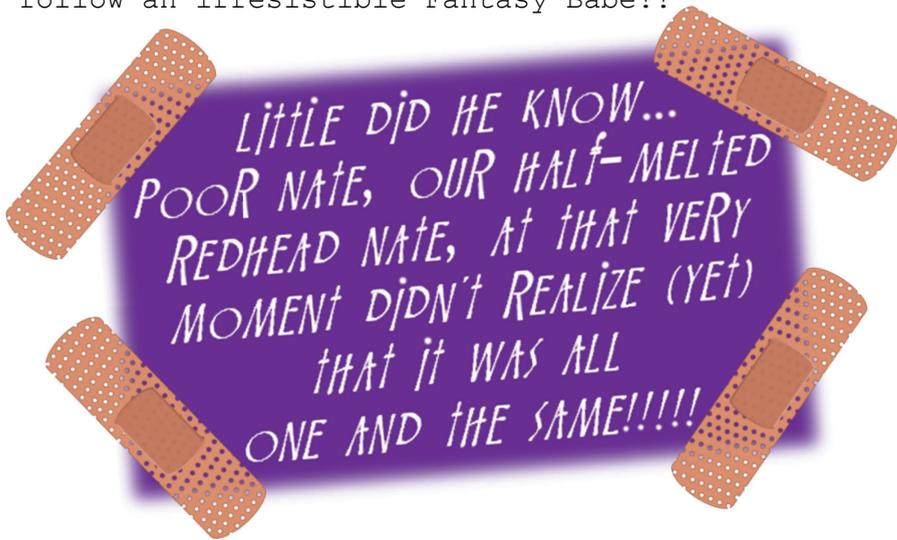
Oh yes, he did get suspicious alright. But the pulling power of the Come-On-Sweetie mystery was so much greater than the pushing power of Be-On-Your-Feet cautiousness. Besides, he didn't come all this way just to give up his chance. (Chance to what???)

"When she moves," he decided silently, "gonna follow her till the ends of the Earth! I must find out what the heck's goin' on."

In his mind, he was already doing that, I mean following her, although they were both standing still.



And he thought: "But wait - now - now I'm REALLY confused even though I know EXACTLY what I wanna do - am I following clues to that freakin' gizmo from last night - or am I risking everything to follow an irresistible Fantasy Babe??"



My dear friend - what do YOU think? What if it really was so - that those things were indeed one and the same --- how, how was that possible? Think about it.

But let me assure you, amigo, that the answer *will* arrive into clear view.

"Elena... can I, eh... get your phone number?"

She answered, in her now somewhat expected mysterious way: **"Follow the omens and you will find what you looking for."**

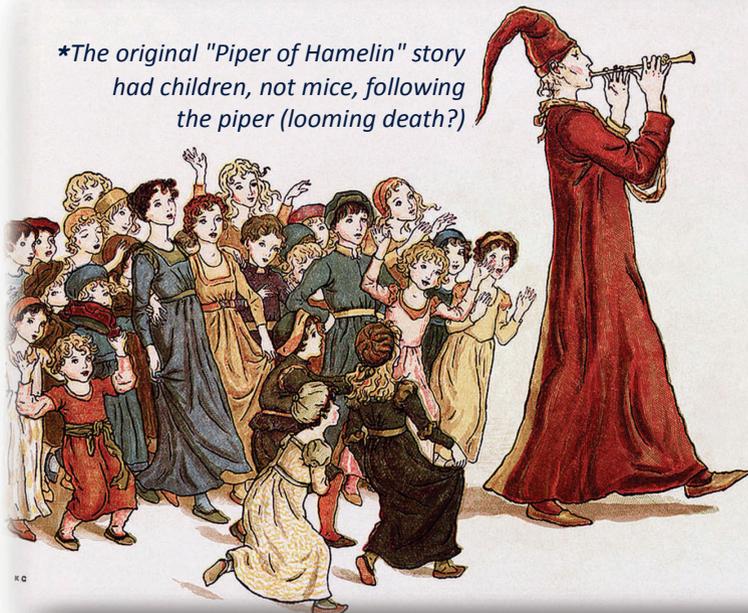
"She's avoiding a straight answer," thought Nate and failed to repeat his question. *For which he will be very sorry later!!!*

Instead, he only asked: "What omens?"

Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

Elena gave a sweet little gesture with several of her fingers (he noticed how feminine her hand) that seemed to mean "follow me, sweetie."

Without the slightest hesitation he stepped after her, wordlessly, like a Hamelin child\* after the Piper.



As he followed, she led him between the cinema and Marksa 29, and then to the back side of that tree-hugged building that stands at the northeast corner of Karla Marksa and Lenina (yes right between Kirov Square and Pantera Plaza).

When they reached the very inner corner behind that building, Nate suddenly saw...

<!--TO BE CONTINUED-->

*Let me show you the neighborhood:*

*Front view of Marksa 29:*

*"Pantera" is a yard with a black panther:*

PANTERA  
IS ON LENINA STREET  
BEHIND THE BUILDING



KIROV SQUARE IS ACROSS  
THE STREET



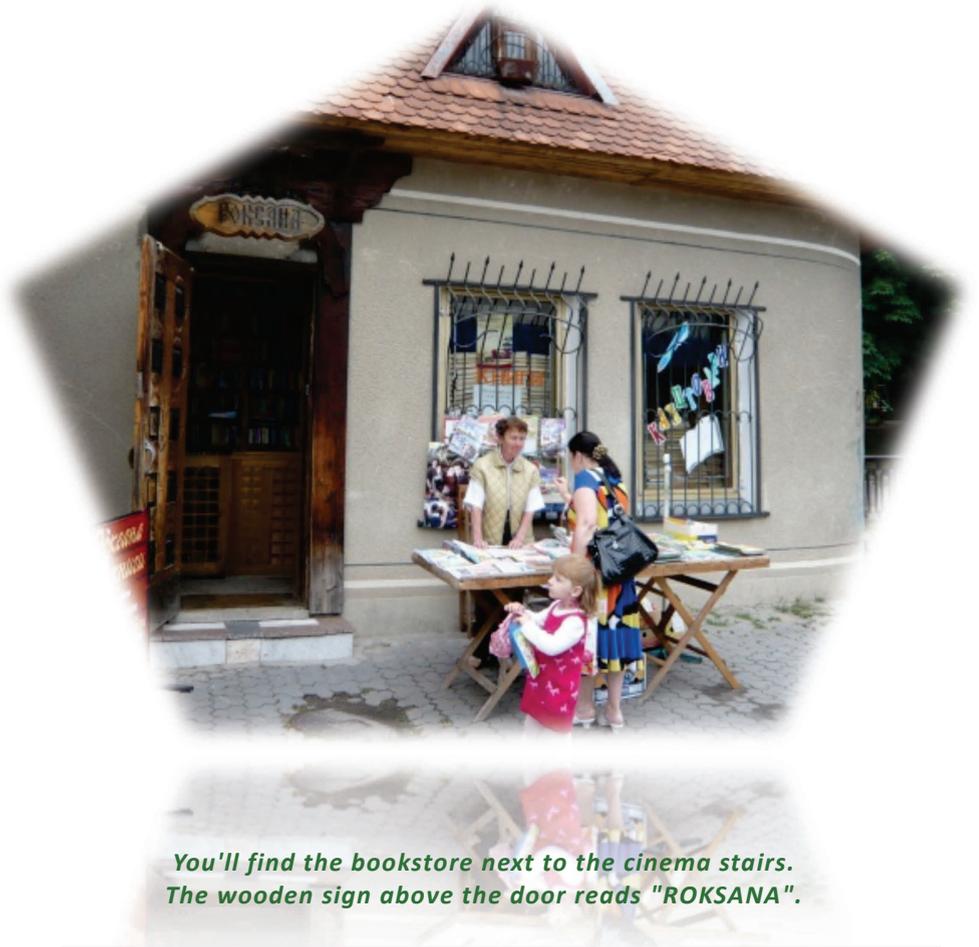
*An Ukrainian girl chasing birds  
on Kirov Square*

<!--NEXT CHAPTER: Tiny Little Place of Mysteries-->

## CHAPTER 6 TINY LITTLE PLACE OF MYSTERIES

At the northeast corner of Karla Marksa Street and Lenina Avenue, at the inner back corner of the building, Nate discovered a shop window that obviously time has forgotten; like decades ago.

Or centuries.

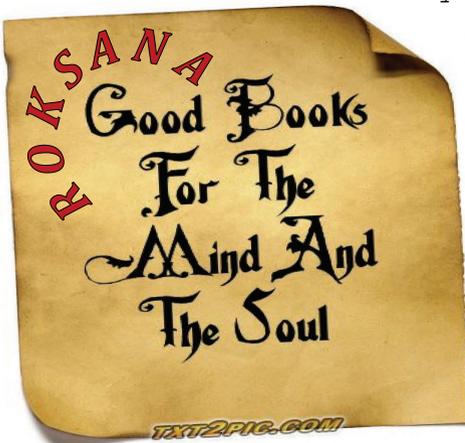


*You'll find the bookstore next to the cinema stairs.  
The wooden sign above the door reads "ROKSANA".*

The window was clean but its shades of color seemed in desperate need of fresh lively paint. Or some other decoration wizardry to yank it out of the yellowing pages of history and into modern times.

It was obviously a bookstore because the window was full of books, but the books looked so old that it was hard to tell whether a million hands have flipped their pages with great thirst for wisdom and consolation, or maybe they were simply...old.

A small sign stood inside the window, leaning on the glass. Clean as everything else but just as old-old-looking, its once white paper now so yellowish that it was almost brownish.



In big bold letters it had the 'ROKSANA' logo and underneath, there was a stylish motto in Russian that read: Charoshe Kneege Pluy Michlenya E Doosha [*Good Books For The Mind And The Soul*].

Nate couldn't put a finger on it; he only knew instinctively that although he loved books dearly, he'd never walk into a shop like this. Besides, for over a decade now he hasn't read anything that wasn't "printed" on some electronic screen.

But Elena pushed the door and went in. Without a blink, he followed.

Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

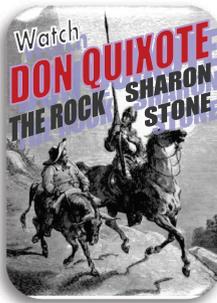
The place was dim, empty of people and choke full of books. His Ukrainian and Russian reading skills were too poor to easily tell these languages apart. In the office most of his work was in English, and there was always somebody to help with translation when he needed.

Here, he only looked at the titles. Quite a few famous books had familiar English titles. Nothing he ever read in print, but the titles were definitely recognizable. Some were questionably Latin or Greek and there was even one in stylish Chinese that had a pencil note "СУНЬ-ЦЗЫ" [*Sun Tzu in Russian*] at the top corner.

Almost every book that seemed to be in English, when he opened it, was indeed very much in English. Old, archaic language, but he could read it. Elena was seemingly flipping through books of her own interest, saying not a word. Nate didn't try to develop a conversation either.

In a shop like this, you'd expect to see a staircase going up to a gallery with a couple thousand more books. This little shop, however, only had a staircase going down into an even dimmer area. So dim that Nate couldn't judge how deep it went.





A little old lady appeared from inside that staircase and came up slowly. Nate, who was reading an old copy of DON QUIXOTE, held the book to his chest (still open where he was reading) and greeted the little old lady. Her blonde-turned-white hair which was made into a long braid wrapped around the top of her head, made her look like a queen of olden times. Her smile was very friendly; so friendly and inviting that it made her look younger than...well, how old was she? Nate couldn't tell.

He offered his hand and greeted her with "Allo", then realized he was not on the phone and corrected himself: "Pryvit" (which wasn't correct either because it's the informal greeting.)

The little old lady didn't seem to mind and with the same smile greeted him back: "Pryvit, molope lyudena" [*Hi, young man*]. She noticed the book he was holding and said, now in very clear English: "I can see that you like my books."

"I do," said Nate, "Never been to a bookstore like yours, though. Reminds me of some movies I've seen. Like that... can't recall the name, where the grandpa reads a fantasy story to his grandson."

The little old lady nodded and kept on smiling.

**"The Princess Bride,"** said Elena without lifting her eyes off her book, **"it's called The Princess Bride."**

Nate smiled at her and she smiled back, lifting her eyebrow sensually to glance at him shortly.

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The little old lady noticed the exchange of smiles. Nate noticed her noticing. "She seems pleased," he thought, "I bet she knows Elena," but said nothing of this.

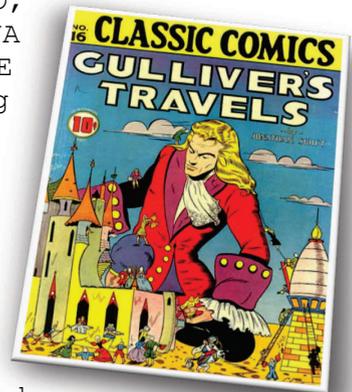
"Does Roksana<sup>10</sup> have a theme," Nate asked aloud, "like it's all classics, or all... well I don't know... a subject?"

"What do you see, young man?" the old lady asked and gestured at the counter, where Nate has piled up quite a few books already.

Nate couldn't see any theme. There was nothing in common, or so it seemed, between Cervantes' DON QUIXOTE and Swift's GULLIVER'S TRAVELS. Or between Jane Austen's PRIDE AND PREJUDICE and Marx's COMMUNIST MANIFESTO, between Tolstoy's ANNA KARENINA and Sophocles' OEDIPUS THE KING. No visible connecting line from Shakespeare's MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM to Homer's ILIAD - and nothing to do with Dante's INFERNO.

He could see absolutely no theme but a bunch of old books that no Harry-Potter-generation kid would ever pick up and read. Unless you seriously threatened his Playstation or XBox or Wii.

And THAT, he knew, couldn't be the theme for a forgotten little bookstore of mysteries.



---

<sup>10</sup> Roksana: the bookstore on Karla Marksa street next to Star cinema.

"Aha!! That's the theme! Clues!" Nate exclaimed, "It's all a bunch of ancient mystery clues, like I'm inside this video game with planted clues!"

"You and Elena here," he added without a droplet of sarcasm or resentment, "are here to guide me to those clues." In fact, he was starting to like the idea of living inside a fun game, so much that he didn't care much anymore if this whole game was real or not. He looked at Elena. Maybe it's her presence that made it all so different, that made his redhead ferocity turn into... into strong interest in the... what... game? Another DREAM? Well, it didn't really matter now since he was having more FUN any way he looked at it.



He started opening books, picking up clues at total random.

Almost every book he now picked up, seemed to provide at least one clue in this giant puzzle. He started collecting the clues and re-piled the books, open wherever he found a possible clue. Elena and the little old lady (sorry but her name is too long to spell... just kidding, her name is Y\_u\_l\_i\_a V\_o\_l\_o\_d\_y\_m\_y\_r\_i\_v\_n\_a\_y\_a T\_y\_m\_o\_s\_h\_e\_n\_k\_o\_v\_n\_a\_y\_a) both watched him, obviously amused. Nate was quite pleased to be the center of a live amusement show. Right, right, I guess it was the audience that mattered.

Nate started and said: "Don Quixote... hmmm... waking up to reality? Yep. Oh here, here it says: *'There is no kind of thing in the universal world but what you can turn your hand into'* - ok I'm getting it, and I can go with that."

He continued.



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"Gulliver's Travels... the winning of the seemingly insignificant against the seemingly giant - hints me to take control over my life and win over any obstacle. Hey, beginnin' to like it more with every book!"

"Pride and Prejudice... it says here in Chapter 29...no, it's 25, it says {Nate sent significant glances at Elena as he was reading this} *'I never saw a more promising inclination; he was growing quite inattentive to other people, and wholly engrossed by her. Every time they met, it was more decided and remarkable.'*"

"Ah, remarkable!" he repeated with a tiny sigh.

As he was looking at Elena now, he thought to himself: "I should consider myself ever so lucky, just to have a chance at her. Look at that smile, that unparalleled shape of her lips - just as mysterious as the Mona Lisa smile - but so much sweeter and prettier! Wow, my. Awesome."

He opened another book: "The Communist Manifesto... hmmm... The clue, I'm sure, is 'Communists go home' or something like that, haha. Here, it says right here in this book: *'It is high time that Communists should openly, in the face of the whole world, publish their views, their aims, their tendencies...'* - well I couldn't agree more!!"



"Anna Karenina. She was Sovietzky aristocracy or something? Must be something 'bout... let me see... it says here: *'All happy families are all alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.'* Of course! It's about my future happiness with... {he decided not to spell out her name and just glanced at Elena. She seemed to take the hint nicely. Whoopee!} ...my future wife."

"Oedipus the King... well I don't know, maybe I should be the King today? My curly red hair looks more like King David than King Oedipus but what the heck, a king is a king."

He kept piling up the books.

"Midsummer Night's Dream... thank you Mister William Comedy-of-Errors Shakespeare, I think I found my dream girl, my one and only midsummer night's dream girl," said Nate and somewhat blushed.



The little... I mean Y\_u\_l\_i\_a  
T\_y\_m\_o\_s\_h\_e\_n\_k\_o\_v\_n\_a\_y\_a,  
seemed particularly pleased with this one "clue".

There was one book that Nate didn't open. It was THE ILIAD. At his parents' in West Hollywood he had a copy that he got from Auntie Rosie for some birthday. The book lost 29:1 against the Gameboy, so he never read any of its 729 pages. And now, perpetuating an old habit, he didn't open it either although this copy was suspiciously thin. He just said, with the cheerfulness of a child: "The Iliad by Homer - got to do with Homer Simpson... funny!! Funny days ahead!!!"

T\_y\_m\_o\_s\_h\_e\_n\_k\_o\_v\_n\_a\_y\_a  
was NOT very pleased with this one



"The Inferno... the clue could be 'beware of the devil' hehe... Well I am, and it's all good!" Nate seemed very proud of himself finding a positive clue in Dante's Inferno, and wasn't particularly bothered with his interpretation being philosophically correct or not. He was also proud of NOT having extracted a clue that connected that book with the grim video game by the same name.



But he was still to get some real answers to his questions. If he could only get a STRAIGHT answer to a straight question...

Let's finish today's chapter with what I can only describe as "The Lorem Ipsum Incident" in which Nate was startled to find a book titled LOREM IPSUM. He opened it and inside found only one paragraph repeating itself over two hundred neatly numbered pages. Every paragraph read precisely this same strange text!!!



Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Phasellus sagittis velit quis nibh pulvinar vestibulum vitae pharetra ante. Vestibulum ante ipsum primis in faucibus orci luctus et ultrices posuere cubilia Curae; Morbi ac euismod mi. Duis nec massa orci. Praesent a odio enim. Sed elementum nulla ac sem facilisis ullamcorper. Vestibulum tincidunt aliquet justo, imperdiet fermentum nisi euismod eget. Nam vel venenatis arcu. Sed quis magna sapien. Cras condimentum, est ac vehicula commodo, lacus tortor ultrices metus, ac auctor lorem dolor nec nunc. Nullam vitae enim massa.

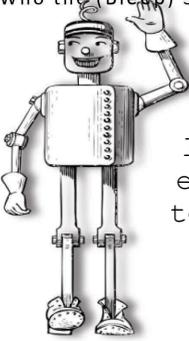
What the... it obviously wasn't a real Latin book because of the repetition, but at the same time it had the look and feel, Nate realized, of an old and serious book. Extremely interested but clueless this time, he showed it to the book lady with a big question mark on his face. She said:

"Lorem Ipsum is dummy text used by printers and typesetters. Five hundred years ago, an unknown printer took some old type and scrambled it to make a type specimen text, and many are still using it today even in computers. Some of my light-hearted students have created the book you are holding in a printing project, back in the days before our country was changed forever by computing machines {nostalgic tune in her voice}".



T\_y\_m\_o\_s\_h\_e\_n\_k\_o\_v\_n\_a\_y\_a continued: "My students learned that we use Lorem Ipsum to prevent reader distraction when looking at a proposed page layout. I researched it in my years of youth {nostalgic tune la-la-la-la-la} and found that Lorem Ipsum is not random text. It is from the 2060-year-old Latin classic 'De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum' - *On The Ends of Good and Evil* - by Cicero, a theory of ethics that was very popular during the Renaissance {la-la-la-la-la}."

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"Cool. Any known connection between this Lorem Ipsum gibberish and little old robots that impersonate eggroll-cooking grannies?" he asked, testing her.

"Old robots?? Cooking grannies??" she shook her head with a sincere frown of surprise and rejection, "No, not that I can think of."



She passed the test, Nate concluded, and felt somewhat like Pentagon interrogating KGB.



"Very interesting, thank you," said Nate, and to himself noted silently: "First time today I got a fully comprehensible answer from anyone!"

"We're getting somewhere," he said aloud, looking at Elena.

Her face lit up from the inside.

<!--TO BE CONTINUED-->

P.S. "I'm in love" {la-la-la-la-la}

<!--NEXT CHAPTER: I can't tell you the chapter's name-->



## CHAPTER 7

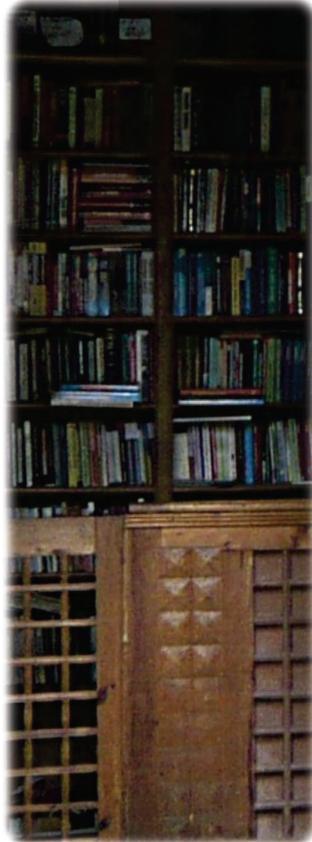
# I CAN'T TELL YOU THE STORY OF MY NAME

*Previously on Shvyzonite  
this guy up in the morning  
something stolen wing wang  
he goes to big shop boom  
bang goes to police bang  
ding walks around dang dong  
now he's in love ping pong*

"Y\_u\_l\_i\_a T\_y\_m\_o\_s\_h\_e\_n\_  
\_k\_o\_v\_n\_a\_y\_a knows her  
books," Nate considered,  
"But what does she really  
know about my Shvyzonite?  
That's what I wanna know!"

OK, so it was fun extracting  
clues from books. Now Nate  
wanted to get serious and  
decided to question HER (I  
mean Y\_u\_l\_i\_a). And so he  
did. She started talking  
about "fulfilling your  
wildest dreams" but with  
strange conditions like "only  
if you really want to" and  
such, which made it all  
suspicious as a hoax.

Or some wild-ass dream...



*If you ever visit Kirovograd  
and take a sneak peek into  
Roksana bookstore, you  
may still see these very  
shelves, choke full of  
good books*

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He evaluated the possibilities: "Maybe it's not what I think - maybe she, and Elena, DO answer my questions, but in a different way that I don't immediately see? Maybe each of their answers is complete and instructive, if only I gave it PROPER interpretation. It's like computer data; I must always relate it to some other data I've got in there already, otherwise the new data will be quite useless."



Like, he noted to himself, there's this serious-minded advice he found online: *"Be a good kisser. It might make your wife forget that you never take out the trash."* - Would look different if you also noted WHO gave this advice: Randy, an 8-year-old boy...

"What is Shvyzonite?" he decided and asked the women aloud, "This question is seriously bugging me ever since I opened my eyes this morning."

As expected, no answer. But a ray of light, though. Elena looked like she was going to say something and stopped.

Then Y\_u\_l\_i\_a started and said: "Let me ask you a question?"

"I've never been more ready."

"Good. What do you know about making books?"



"I know I can go online and print you any classic book you want, from the Gutenberg Project."

"Alright. But how were they made? Let me rephrase this so you can think of this in a more personal way - how would YOU write a book, young man? A prose, a story."

"Err...let me see, hmmm... tell you the truth, I have no idea how any of these books got created. I can write computer programs, I can write thick manuals about my programs - but heck, it's only if somebody came up with the plan and very specific problems for me to address. But how does somebody come up with Alice in Wonderland?? Beats me."

"OK. Can you think of a story right now?"

"Alice in Wonderland.  
The Time Machine.  
Three Bears and  
What's-Her-Face."

"I mean, a story of your own."

"Hell no!"

"Try."

For a long minute,  
Nate tried to come up  
with something. Not one  
word came up in his mind.

He was still struggling with the first word when Elena suggested: **"Make up a name."**

Nate thought for a few more seconds (give or take a few minutes) and came up with something: "Three Bears in Wonderland! Ah it's stupid!"

**"No no it's great!"** said Elena quickly  
and then added: **"Make another one."**



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"Snow White Goes To Town..." said Nate, paused and then added: "and...eh Snowflakes Fall Over Kirovograd and, eh... eh... The Great Deception of the Forbidden Treasures of The Island of No-Return and, and, hmm... Wow, I'm getting it - I can create any idea I want, no pain!"

He felt better and the mischievous smile on his face was his biggest since Thursday. Elena asked him if he could now make up a story. He wasn't sure. She then asked him to make up something silly about the events of the day. After some pondering, a stream of absurd ideas started shooting out of his mouth like an erupting geyser:

"Elena drinks spicy borsht and the Shvyzonite transforms her overnight into an exotic belly dancer. Google Maps shows her picture on...Mars! How the heck did she get up there? Is it really her? And if so, how is the hero - yours truly haha - going to get her back? Are they going to settle on Mars or come back to Earth?"

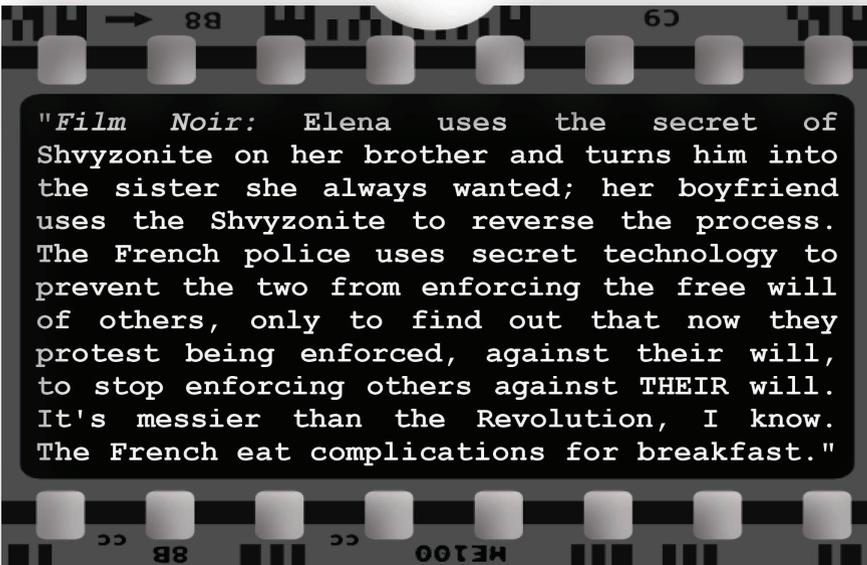
"Another story. We team up to investigate the crimes of CIA against Humanity, only to find out that the real criminals are an alien force from a far galaxy that use Shvyzonite to eat our brains! Hey, this one can be a great video game!! I'll tell my game programming buddies Samir and Pranav! We'll call it *The Shvyzonite Brain Eaters From The Suburbs of Andromeda.*"



"Another... Elena looks for the hero who's been searching for Shvyzonite in the jungles of Africa only to find him in an embarrassing position with a... Elena it's not what it looks like says the hero. ---- No, girls, I don't mind if the joke's on me, actually I'm the one who tells the craziest jokes in the office - but until today I had to fish them out of the Internet. Wow, imagine Monday morning - I'll be the star of the office!"

"*Disney movie:* the endless search for Shvyzonite creates a Black Hole at the center of the Universe, into which the first to fall are the people closest to it - us!! Now the heroes have a few broken pieces to help themselves out - and save the rest of the world from being sucked into the Black Hole."

With every idea he was creating, Nate was getting more certain and more "crazy" with joy. He continued.



"*Film Noir:* Elena uses the secret of Shvyzonite on her brother and turns him into the sister she always wanted; her boyfriend uses the Shvyzonite to reverse the process. The French police uses secret technology to prevent the two from enforcing the free will of others, only to find out that now they protest being enforced, against their will, to stop enforcing others against THEIR will. It's messier than the Revolution, I know. The French eat complications for breakfast."

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"Video game *ShvyzoDoom*, Level 1: Shvyzonite, the most powerful force in the Universe, accidentally created an electromagnetic storm that made itself disappear - along with everybody who has ever seen it. One Friday morning in the year 3029, a little boy explores Grandma's treasure chest, discovers a broken 'toy' and starts to play with it. He can now bring them back - if only they could teach him - through immense barriers of time and language - how to do that. *Level 2*: When the boy finally gets the idea HOW to do it, they face a new problem - he doesn't WANT to!!! Can you help them convince the little boy and return safely home? Available February 29 in all gaming stores - order your copy NOW because on Launch Day all copies will sell within 29 seconds."



Nate suddenly noticed that both Elena and the old lady were laughing. His self image as a joke creator shot up through the roof (of Marksa 29).



"*ShvyzoDoom Version 2.9*," he then said enthusiastically, "Same story but the grandma shouts: Oh no sweetie, don't touch the red button! ...KABOOM!!!"

More laughs.

"*ShvyzoDoom 3.0 - Babushka [Granny]* comes in, she shouts: Oh no, don't touch the red button! -- Grandson says: Don't worry Babushka, I already did. -- But she says: I meant don't double-click it! ...KABOOM!!!"





"ShvyzoDoom 4.0 The Ultimate Nemesis. Same as before but without the KABOOM because the boy finds out that the 'toy' is out of juice and starts to cry. Babushka fishes into her treasure chest and says: Don't cry sweetie here's the charger... KABOOM!!!"



The women were now laughing their asses off. Which was oil to the fire. No Pedro, not the asses, the laughing. Cool down bro.

"Our hero falls in love with another woman," said Nate, "Elena faces a hard moral dilemma: should I kill him slow or should I kill him fast?"

"Sequel. Commissar Vladimir Vladimirovsky falls in love with Elena. His wife faces a hard moral dilemma..."

"Parody on 'Lost': Mysterious Shvyzonite-related accident creates a worldwide electromagnetic storm that consumes all the other mysteries into itself. The world becomes a terribly boring place. The three friends, with the unlikely help of Commissar Vladimir Vladimirovsky, set out on a mission: to create mysteries and save the world from boredom!"

"Very good!!! Excellent!" applauded his entire female audience.

Y\_u\_l\_i\_a V\_o\_l\_o\_d\_y\_m\_y\_r\_i\_v\_n\_a\_y\_a  
T\_y\_m\_o\_s\_h\_e\_n\_k\_o\_v\_n\_a\_y\_a then asked:  
"Can you make a complete story now?"

"I'll try," said Nate and picked up one of the books from the counter, "Hmmm... OK, my story happens in Ancient Rome. Ready?"

Two thousand years ago, two friends are sitting in the Roman Sauna or whatever they called it, one Roman guy tells his friend:  
"Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit!!! Phasellus sagittis velit quis nibh pulvinar vestibulum vitae pharetra ante!!! Vestibulum ante... ipsum primis in faucibus orci luctus et ultrices posuere cubilia Curae; Morbi ac euismod mi!!! Duis nec massa orci! Praesent a odio... enim! Sed elementum nulla ac sem... facilisis ullamcorper! Vestibulum tincidunt aliquet justo, imperdiet fermentum nisi euismod eget!!! Nam vel venenatis arcu! Sed quis magna sapien! Cras condimentum, est ac vehicula commodo, lacus tortor ultrices metus, ac auctor lorem dolor nec nunc! Nullam vitae enim massa!!!"



His astounded friend says: "NO SHÎT!! SHE DID??"

Nate was very proud of himself...I mean himself.

HOWEVER (there's always this damn 'however' to spoil the party) he was still hungry for the...

<!--TO BE CONTINUED-->

<!--NEXT CHAPTER: Down the Endless Staircase-->



## CHAPTER 8

# DOWN THE ENDLESS STAIRCASE

Elena to Nate, with her cute smile: "It was already been three or four chapters and you did not said your name."

"Four chapters? Chapters of WHAT??" he asked with narrow eyes but as her only reply was that same mysterious smile in her eyes, he gave up. Again. "I thought you knew," he said.

Elena shook her head: "A-ah."

"My name is Nathan, er... Nate, from Nathaniel."

"I like this name. My English teacher is also Nathan, Nathan Grossman. Are you brothers?"

"You joking, right?"

"Yes," said Elena and blinked at him both her deep-hazel, sexy eyes. Like a synchronized double-wink.

"Yahoo! This is a major cause for celebration!" said Nate and waved his hands in a gesture that doesn't mean anything in any known culture, "Yea, for the second time today I'm actually getting a straight answer, this time from you!"

You can see that unlike some others, he wasn't in the mood for saying anything diplomatic or off-the-subject, but only what he really felt and thought, straight ahead. "Ain't it awkward to be the only one doing it today?" he asked himself.

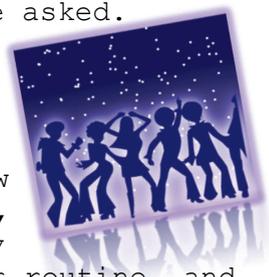
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The bookstore lady interrupted: "Speaking of celebration, there is going to be a... sort of celebration. A gathering; down there in the basement." She nodded her head toward the dim staircase that she came from.

"Gathering? Cool, may I join??" Nate asked.

**"You most welcome,"** said Elena.

"Oh so you must be on it too, Elena, like the whole thing, eh? You knew about the party, I mean gathering, all along didn't you." Wasn't really asking; he got used to the no-answer routine, and as I said by now he didn't mind all that much.



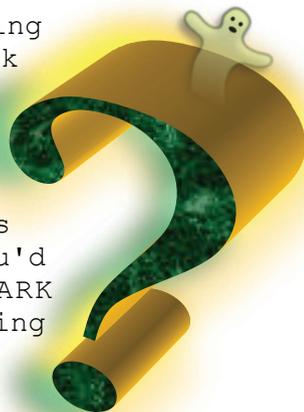
"More clues for me," he added with a little smile, lightly nodding his red head a few times.

**"I think it's time to go,"** said Elena. Nate could clearly see a mischievous sparkle in her eyes.

T\_y\_m\_o\_s\_h\_e\_n\_k\_o\_v\_n\_a\_y\_a glanced at the Soviet-era wall clock and said: "Da." [yes]

The little old lady proceeded to step down the stairs. Elena followed her.

Nate was pretty thirsty and, hoping that they had something to drink in the basement, went after them into the nearly-dark staircase. If at that very moment, in that dim light, you could erase his physical image and just watch his overall mental image, I think you'd see a giant glaring QUESTION MARK walking down the stairs, flickering like an oil lantern in motion.



The staircase didn't go straight down; it was a spiral-shaped stone staircase that seemed to have been built centuries ago.

"Probably been there from way back before they built the concrete building above it", he thought.

Low-power bulbs were placed on the wall, at uneven distances. They gave just enough light to step down without killing yourself. That is, if you watched your every step.

The staircase, Nate also noticed, was spiraling *clockwise*.

Unlike his parents' staircase, back in their Hollywood townhouse.

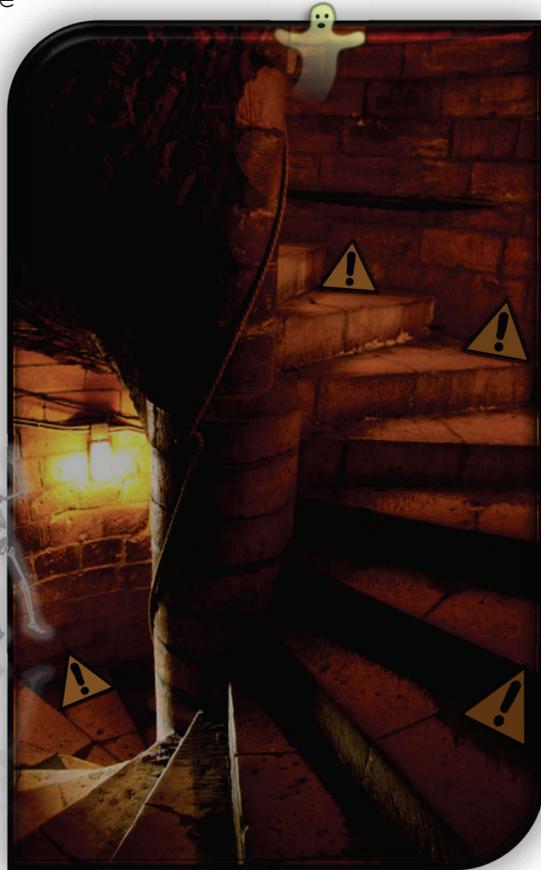


Photo: Richard Croft (wikimedia.org)

Oddly enough for a badly-lit staircase going deep under the city of Kirovograd, it made him think of Feng-Shui<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Feng-Shui: (in Chinese, literally 'wind-water') an ancient philosophical system of harmonizing with the environment, usually by clever architecture.

Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

He recalled reading on the Internet that staircases should be well lit (of course), should have an uneven total number of stairs (why?), and as far as he could remember, they said it was preferable to have a counter-clockwise staircase.

But...was that counter-clockwise for going up? Or for going down? Which would be the opposite winding of course. Oh well.

"Wait a minute, maybe I can solve this one riddle without help," he thought.



Back at HBCFHGBUPK - *Hollywood's Best College For Highly Gifted But Unfortunately Poor Kids* (9029 Sunset Boulevard, if you want to register Alessandra, Maria, Ana Valentina, Juanita, Bella Rosalinda and Pedro Jr.),

Nate was one of the highest scoring mathematics students - but he had a secret trick. Since he couldn't memorize those blackboard-long formulas, he learned to only grasp the essence of the LOGIC behind each formula.



It was enough, he realized, to understand the methodology ONCE. Then, whenever he needed one of those freaking formulas, like in a closed-book exam, he actually only needed to remember the SEED from where it came from. Then, he'd quickly re-build the formula, right there on the exam paper.

His professors couldn't reject his methods and gave him A-pluses galore.

Years later he found out that being "memorization challenged" and compensating it with what he calls "Think-4-Yourself Logic" (T4YL) turned him into a well-paid computer programmer who's being hired to travel the world and solve tough problems. He could never program fast or even type fast. However, using his own methods to think outside the box, he actually cracks the toughest projects faster than anybody in sight.

Nate was now following two women he has just met, God knows how many stairs down into an unknown darkness, basically risking his life on a very questionable gut feeling. Yet oddly enough, he realized how boring his computer jobs had been, and how he'd rather have this... well, adventure. Mysterious adventure. No, adventurous mystery... ah, whatever.

At this one-of-a-kind moment, he found his "T4YL" logic useful again. He recalled reading that spiral staircases were invented in ancient castles, for strategic purposes. If enemy soldiers were to enter the castle, the guards would ambush and attack them on those spiral staircases. Now what was their trick? The invaders would be entering from down below at street level, right?

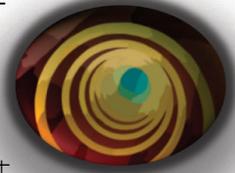
Ok, now the other piece of information was that most soldiers were right-handed. Running up the stairs they had a hard time using the sword with their right hand, why because... because the wall was there!

Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

Nate continued to run the pictures step-by-step in his mind, like a storyboard. They were forced to use their left hand, or attack (with their right hand) away from the wall. Neither option too good. The guards, standing above the intruders, had an easy target. The attacking soldiers became victims - aha yea that's it - they used staircases that turned counter-clockwise ON YOUR WAY UP.

Ok good, so this staircase here, deducted Nate, was one of those traditional ones from medieval times, hence dating earlier than the city itself - the year 1754. "So much for Feng-Shui with Dad's architect... Got a story to tell next time I visit them with a... the hottest Fantasy Babe in the Universe by my side. <!--Bleep--> yea!"

Down, down, down they went, nobody speaking. Nate was deep in thought again. Going down the weirdest staircase he's ever been to, he felt as if he was kind of "falling" step-by-step into a hole in the Universe. Actually, now that he was thinking about it, he was spiraling down this tube ever since morning, all this time trying to milk answers out of Elena and the old lady and everybody else.



"It is all will become clear," said Elena, a couple of stairs down from him.

"Oh, was I thinking out loud?"

Elena repeated: "It is all will become clear."

This only made Nate snap out of quiet mode and he started asking questions upon more questions; an endless stream of questions, as endless as this ancient staircase.

Strange conversations they (the young lady and the old lady) seemed to give him. They baffled him with mystery... "I squeeze some answers out of them, they kinda answer, only in a way that ADDS some more mystery into the soup!" though Nate, "Their clues seem at times to balance out the mystery, but then again, why does it feel like the mystery is thickening??! It's like this very staircase — with every new stair there's either a questionable answer or another piece of mystery — another question — but the mystery gets deeper after each step — therefore the downward spiral..."

The book lady and Elena did give him bits and pieces of information — but those needed oversized puzzle-brains to put together. Now they kept saying "**You should meet HIM**" or "**Get to know HIM**" while dodging, or should I say diplomatically avoiding, to divulge the name and identity of that 'him' character.

It sounded so Gothic, almost unreal, having this fuzzy three-way conversation echoing in a half-dark ancient staircase under a modern city. A city that on street level gave you not the slightest hint of this underground enigma.



*Everything's green behind Marksa 29 (see its inner corner in the middle?)*

Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

Nate collected the clues like precious gemstones. But he knew very clearly that those gemstones were just as precious as they would fit into the perplexing blind puzzle the Universe had for him today.



He knew that once solved, he would see - for the very first time - what the <!--bleep--> this awkward puzzle was all about. And if it was worth the risk. And if he was even still alive and able to go home all in one piece.

For a moment there, he was nothing but thirsty.

<!--TO BE CONTINUED-->

<!--Phew! Nothing stupid in the entire chapter-->

<!--NEXT CHAPTER: Underground (of course!)  
Gathering in the Basement-->

## CHAPTER 9

### UNDERGROUND (OF COURSE!) GATHERING IN THE BASEMENT

The three entered a large basement, which was as big as a...well, large basement. Nate quickly counted twenty eight more entrances that, he assumed, came from under 28 other buildings in the city. Although there was no air conditioner in sight, the air smelled like fresh air by the beach, you know with the scent of wet sand and everything. He could almost hear the waves.

Several people were standing by a long table with coffee and cookies. Nate snatched a cup of coffee and consumed it almost all at once. Maybe it was his thirst that made the coffee taste so good, because it was almost as enjoyable as that Belgian family blend he used to drink in Switzerland. He didn't touch the cookies because, upon close examination, they looked like Bitky [*Russian meatballs*] that fell off the Empire State Building and squashed onto the 34th Street pavement.

"Howdeedo," said a  friendly Jamaican who was wearing hot-red fashion glasses that seemed to have only a frame without the actual glasses, "Me name Naomi Shwartzmanova."

Instead of answering her in English, Nate addressed everybody standing by the table and introduced himself in Ukrainian: "Mene zvaty Romanoff, Nathan Romanoff."  
*[My name is Romanoff, Nathan Romanoff.]*



Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvzyzonite?!

"Yo, redhead, did you just do what I think you did?" asked a wide-down-below doll face with a New York accent.

"Sure did," nodded Nate, trying hard to ignore the impression that her 'Middle Earth' was filling up the basement all the way  
← f r o m E a s t t o W e s t →

"They threw a cocktail party for me in Cannes, when I was skinny, wink-wink," so the New Yorker, "This dressed-to-kill dude enters the party, says I'm Bond, James Bond---"



"Noo?" [*well?*  
*in Russian*]

---the  
cool dude  
says I'm  
Damme,  
Van Damme,  
Claude Van  
Damme,  
Jean-Claude  
Van Damme  
-- hee hee  
hee hee!"

"Hysteric!" said Nate and quickly used the opportunity to move on, taking with him one cookie that didn't look so terrible.



The basement started to fill up with dozens of people. Nate mingled but tried to stay in eye contact with Elena who was talking to other people. Strangers greeted him warmly as if he's been expected; they tell-him-not-tell-him about the event that's about to begin.

"Do they know my name?" he wondered and decided to test them. Whenever he said: "Hi my name is Billy," (or Johnny, or Anton Chekhov, or Alexander Pushkin) the response was an odd though polite expression; but when he said "Hi my name is Nate," he always got a bright smile as if saying without saying: "Yes I know you!"



Nate was starting to get the faint idea that somehow, by someone (Elena? The whole group?) he has been CHOSEN to have contact with Shvyzonite in order to help him with something or other.

But why won't they simply say so? And why is there no sign or mention of Shvyzonite? Which he wasn't going to be the one mentioning - by now he had his day's fill of Shvyzonite conflicts.

"Maybe they are *testing* me???"

"Hey hey hey," he thought, "is this a KGB joint??? Or SBU<sup>12</sup> or FSB or whatever they call themselves nowadays."

---

<sup>12</sup> KGB/FSB/SBU: Russian/Ukrainian secret police and/or security forces. The story doesn't go into the intricate differences between them - you can find those on Wikipedia.

Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

"More likely one of those black operations that don't even exist, ha?"

One thing was clear to him - they all seemed to know and like Elena very much. I mean that chick was as popular as Little Miss Charm. Well...

Everybody in the basement seemed like they were expecting the mystery host to show up and begin the event but they never dared utter a name. It was always 'him' or something. "Why?" wondered Nate, "Even the Pentagon wouldn't be that secretive. OK I got it I got it, this caveman party is so secret that it doesn't even exist blah blah blah."



As you can see, my friend, by now he has grown a pretty thick skin for mystery; I mean even though still thirsty for knowledge and understanding, it wasn't squashing him anymore.

While chewing on the cookie, he tried to read a strange little poster. It was taped to one of the basement's doors, showed familiar faces and went something like this:

*In da  
le after*  
**FORMER PRESIDENT TO ESCAPE STATE PRISON**

**Since he went in, Viktor Yushchenko had his tonsils out, his appendix out, all his wisdom teeth out, one kidney out and half of his intestines too. His cellmate said he's sure Yushchenko is escaping piece by piece.**



Even though Nate knew these faces from FaceB00k he couldn't figure out if this was a clue for him (or anybody else), a joke - or serious news...

But suddenly --- you'll never guess who walked in through that same door! Let me give you a hint: that person came without any pink poodle... Yes!! It was no other than his next door neighbor!

Nate was so surprised that he said:

"Good evening Missis Fl00tsie!"

Her subtle expression of 'What the {merde<sup>13</sup>} did you call me?' prompted him to correct himself: "I mean good evening Madame Gordeyena. Nice fluffy hairdo! So you're into this too?"

"Too mons and sree veeks, mon chéri. Everybody who is anybody in zis little town is on his programme."

"His? Who is this HIS and HIM that everybody's talking about?"

"Patience mon chéri, patience. Ze evening vill start a minute before seven sirty. By ze way did you taste my cookies?"

"The cookies look like they fell from th... ohh YOUR cookies oh yea hehe I tried they are delicious."

"Cool - like you say in America - cool," smiled Fl00tsie as if she was showing off her Yves Saint Laurent lipstick on the European Fashion Channel.



---

<sup>13</sup> Merde: (from French) crap.

Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

Her golden tooth was sparkling as well.

Nate could have told you beforehand what would happen next. Many people approached the social lady like flies to a cherry-filled croissant, to inquire about the well-being of the pink cuties Ninja, Killer and Pistol, and other paramount lifestyle questions.

Somebody at the back of the basement announced in Russian, saying something like  
**please gather over here if you  
want to meet HIM for real.**



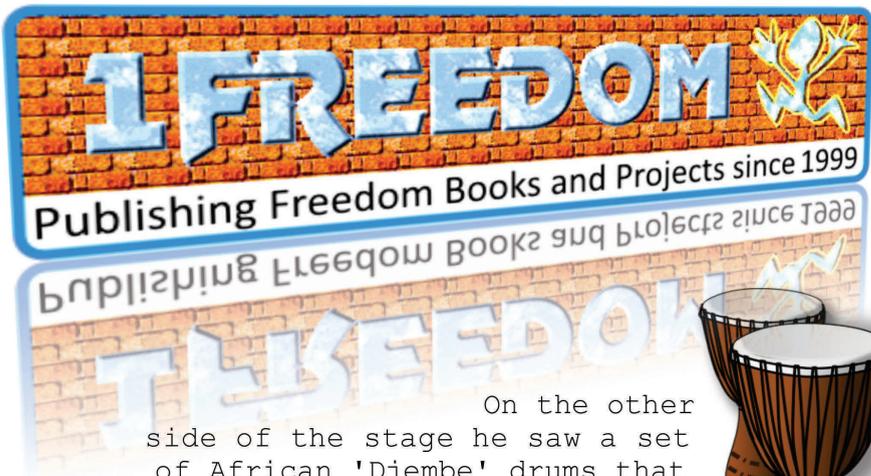
<!--TO BE CONTINUED-->

<!--NEXT CHAPTER: Meet Max!-->

## CHAPTER 10 MEET MAX!

It seemed that everybody and everything were waiting for the mysterious "him" to get the evening rolling.

At the back of the basement Nate noticed a small wooden stage. There was a wrinkly yellow-pearl-colored projector screen on the wall, a small podium (oddly pushed to the back corner of the stage) and a stone-on-plywood sign that said:



On the other side of the stage he saw a set of African 'Djembe' drums that seemed out of place, like they've been forgotten behind after a concert.

Nate went up on stage and, paying attention to nobody, started to drum. From one beat to another he went, feeling more and more like he's anywhere but at the back end of a basement, deep under a foreign city far away from home.

Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvzyzonite?!



Photo: Generationbass.com (Source: Wikimedia.org)

Totally unlike him, Nate started to... well, day-dreaming would best describe it. He visualized Africa, vivid in all of its splendor and its lively colors and the energy of *jump-to-the-beat*.

Busy drumming himself to ecstasy, from the corner of his eye he watched the African dudes jumping up and down the air like crazy antelopes, and if he just stretched his arm over here, he could almost touch the half naked girls shaking their... But wait...

...for some odd, inexplicable reason, the half naked girls had the 1Freedom logo tattooed right above their dark belly buttons.



(Hey hey stop the press! Was this a COMMERCIAL daydream? Or is this here just a, bleeeeeeeeeeeep, ad-supported Hollywood manuscript? You don't wanna know do you.)

His head was now flying in a colorful trance as he drummed the Bembé-Bembé and he drummed the Rumba-Rumba and he drummed the Guajira-Guajira and he drummed the Nyabinghi---

---"Nate..." said a soft voice, and then, sharper: "Nate!! Nathan, the evening will start now." He woke up from his African vision to Elena complimenting his music yet telling him to get the hell off the stage. Most of the crowd was standing by the stage, watching. He stopped drumming and went down with a series of small bows.

He tried to talk to Elena in private but she controlled the conversation and dragged him through the now dense audience to shortly meet a woman who introduced herself by the name Mariana Marianenkovnana. Then she quickly dragged him another three feet to meet... "Oh I know Fl@@--- I know Madame Gordeyena, she's my neighbor! Hi Gordeyena, enjoying the evening?"

"Do I ever, mon chéri."

"Oh you two know each other?" said Elena with a smile of an event organizer, "Cool."



"Qui [*yes in French*], cool."

It was just about time because Mariana Marianenkovnana got up on stage and said:

"Hellowi everybody. Dobry vechir [*good evening*], my name is Mariana Marianenkovnana. Let me introduce myself, I am Marianenkovnana {YOU ALREADY SAID

Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

THAT, said Nate with his lips} and I am from the distant city of Lutsk. Tonight we khave with us a very special guest who khas khelped many people with khis inventions and ideas. *Please welcome warmly - Max!* "

Applause. Applause. Applause. Warm, long applause by everybody including Nate. He was relieved to finally see who "him" might be.

But what, the applause started to die down yet he couldn't see anybody on stage (Marianenkovnana came down 29 seconds ago, give or take a minute). What the

Nate moved from inside the audience to stand near the drums, only to discover a white-haired man on stage. He wasn't short; he was sitting. In a wheelchair. The slim body, the outline of his face (and later on, his heavy Bulgarian accent and eccentric personality) reminded Nate of the legendary Serbian inventor Nikola Tesla. "Wheelchair?!? I wonder what happened to him," thought Nate, "that's why the podium was pushed aside!"



The man smiled wholeheartedly, obviously enjoying the admiration, and waited for the applause to fall silent before he started speaking. At first, his accent made it hard to understand what he was saying although it was plain English.

"Good evening! I am very happy to be here and glad to see so many of you could leave your families for an hour and show up for this special event. I can see new faces {he nodded at Nate and a few others}. For the new guys today, my name is not Max but Max! with the exclamation mark, just like *Yahoo!* rather than Yahoo."

"What a loser!! Or, surely a... what? Strange character? Yep, an eccentric stage-hungry dude," considered Nate with a raised eyebrow.

*Without warning, the white haired man suddenly got up from his wheelchair and started walking about the little stage!* He was tall and looked perfectly healthy for his age - and actually for any age!

For a moment there, Nate's astonishment jumped in a circle between the man, the empty wheelchair, the audience, and back to the man. His main surprise was that NOBODY seemed to be surprised. That man, Max!, was obviously very attentive, because from the corner of his eye he noticed Nate's astonishment and tossed some eccentric explanation about playful image or something.

The explanation did not make much sense, but nevertheless Nate appreciated the attempt to explain. He scanned the bedazzled audience, noticing the strange brilliance in their eyes.

*"Is he mesmerizing them, like hidden hypnosis or something? I bet my last penny he does!"*

Nate, recalling a series of hypnotism videos from YooTooB, observed Max! again, very carefully this time, while evaluating his funky expressions, his gestures, and the correlation between those - to what he was actually saying at any given moment. Is this an evil eye - or just a weirdo's eye? Nate couldn't detect any hypnosis tricks, hidden or obvious. Eccentric, he eventually concluded, but not a liar.



Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

"Well then, what ARE they admiring? They all weird losers like him or what?" he thought and then said very quietly: "Never expected to find THIS under this city. Or under any city. Or..."

"Yo Redhead, now Mister {muffled sound here but it was surely about the man on stage} has special tricks he WILL show you," said the doll face who was standing right next to Nate. Which was odd by itself - how could she stand right next to him if her 'Middle Earth' was so wide that---

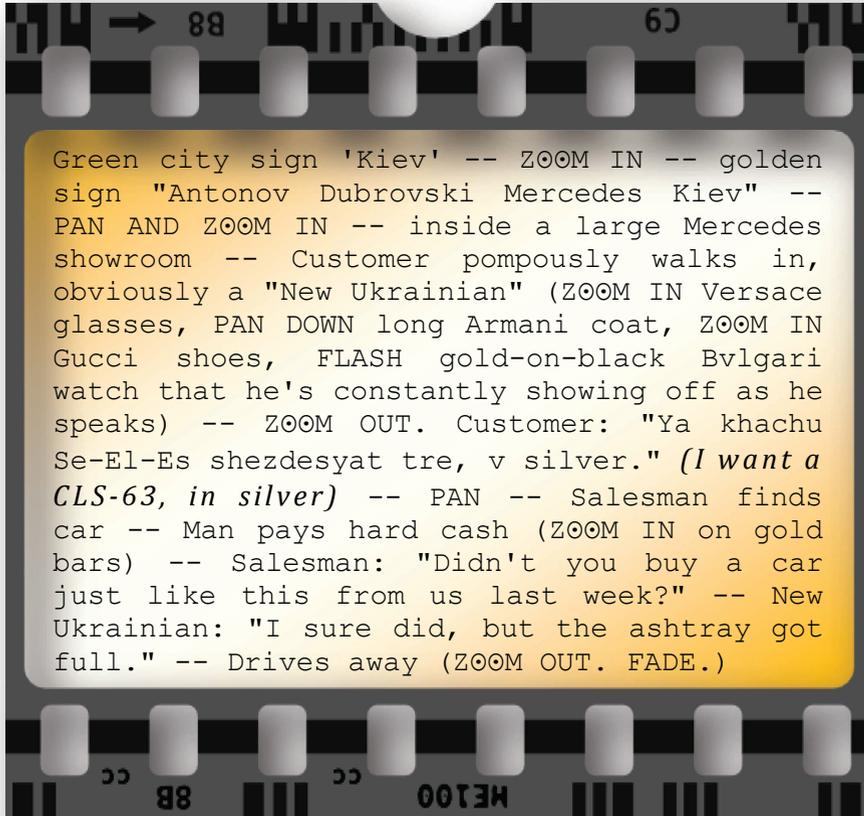
"Shhhhh!" whispered somebody from behind Nate's shoulder and pointed a finger at the wrinkly projection screen on the wall. The screen flickered with blurry and unstable images, like a celluloid film from time immemorial.

Max! said shortly: "I am going to show you a pre-demo of my... well, remote viewing invention. This short movie was recorded yesterday with my {some words were muffled by audience noise}."

And he promised to give a more "realistic" demo later that evening.



The recorded movie was now playing:



Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

Nobody laughed.

"Did you steal my Shvyzonite?" Nate bluntly asked Max!, but got some answer-no-answer. (Why are you not surprised my friend? Tell you why - because at this point I wasn't surprised either.)

Nate thought: "Oh well, why am I not surprised just like you guys." <!--that's FREAKY...is he talking to us ??????????????????-->

But out loud he protested: "That's an answer-no-answer, mister Max!, you know what I mean?"

"I know exactly what you mean," answered Max (oops, I mean Max!)

"Sir, no offense but that's just another answer-no-answer. Does Lorem Ipsum ring a bell?"

"Bell? What bell?"

<!--TO BE CONTINUED-->

<!--NEXT CHAPTER:  
Glated by Flipnets-->



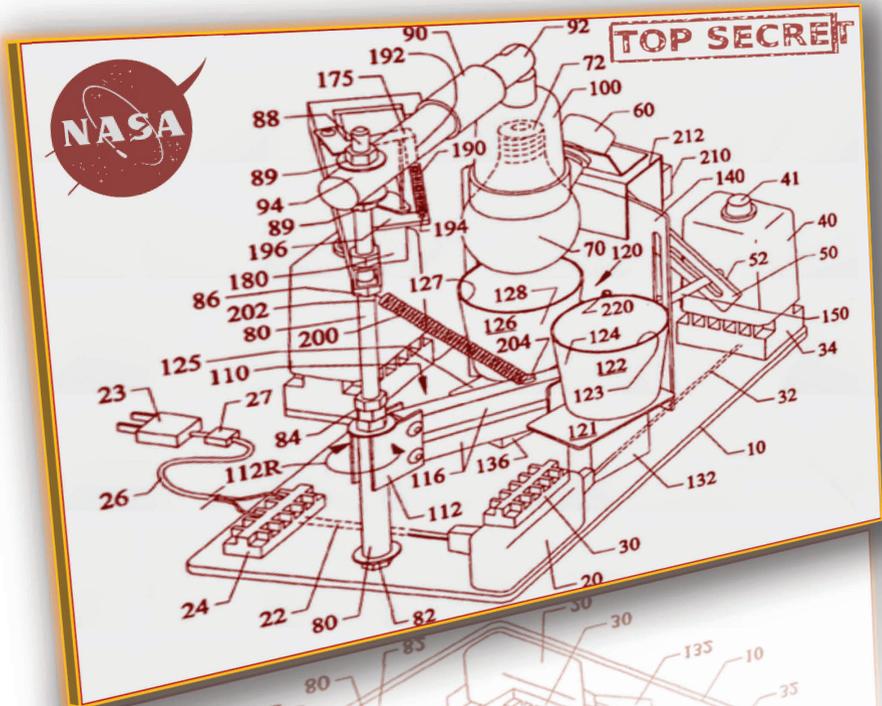
## CHAPTER 11

### GLATED BY FLIPNETS

Pointing at the wall screen, Nate questioned, but it sounded more like interrogating: "Max!, how does this thing even work??!"

"My invention emulates the principle of Fluxinated G-fractuants. The basic principles of G-fractuants fluxibation were conceived by three 29-years old sushi engineers from the epic and exotic village of Taumatawhakatangihangakoauauotamateaturipu, up on the exquisitorailly radiantateous hill of Kakapikimaungahoronukupokaiwhenuakitanatahu in New Zealand. By converting the Extravagated Kornified Gusternerizers (EKG) into several Omni-Menstraperenial G-fractuants (OMG) and comparing the speed of ex-felicidated motion versus non-felicidated inturbomotions and adapting these flip-transmutations of the Magneto-Inphononized Transmigration (MIT) into phonons (Ph) determined by Nicholson-Adler-Schlumberger Anomalies (NASA), an acute effect of profound ortho-metrical oscillatorials is achieved. Although some of the emphasizely exhuberative Zero-Point Energy (ZPE) was computationalized by profiessors of anti-distarianism who suffered from triangularized Pneumonophospahtis caused by overly mis-terminal canibaliphobia, it has since gone through some serious re-considerations and then fluternational re-omputations. Nevertheless, by nutt-springing together the extra multiple Distortionative Noisefabrilated Annexe (DNA) onto the Single-Ended Noise Reduction (SENR) we adaptified to the anti-computed fractuants, we can now achieve the

Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!



engineeringly-enhanced high end fortification of regulated, remodeled and up-converted molecular fentagons to bring about radioautographic multi-dimensional harmonic oscillations down-converted for the refine-tuned calculation of not-overly-dee-bugged and the furiestingly designifactional rectification of Uply-Super-Standardized Restants (USSR) of de-solved manipulations of the multiple Clan-Extrapolational Operands (CEO), while twenty nine De-Overhauled Pointy Extranoporiouses (DOPE) re-programm these grantification photons thus constantly being nullsified by node-effectiently transpkffmutting odditionally superfractured grandsptkffzts," said Max!

**THE AUDIENCE WAS IN SHOCK**



And Max! added triumphantly:

"Which are, of course, glated by flipnets."

"Max!, Max!," protested Nate, "glated by flipnets??!! There are no such words in the English language! You're flying 29 million miles above our heads. Look at these faces - too dumbfounded to speak. Can you phleeeeeeeeeeeaze simplify the explanation?"

Max! protested back: "This WAS the simplified explanation!"

But then Max! observed the audience for a moment, took a deep breath and said: "OK, here it is in layman's terms. My invention has to do with COMMUNICATION and has two parts. One part is hard to explain, as you have just witnessed. The second part is this small screen that I'm holding in my hand, which we call the Remote Viewer or RV for short."

With Max!'s permission, Mariana Marianenkovnana got up on stage once again.

"My name is Mariana Marianenkovnana. Let me introduce myself, I am Marianenkovnana {YOU ALREADY SAID THAT - LIKE FOUR TIMES, said Nate with his lips} from the distant city of Lutsk."



"I agree with Max!," she continued, "Khowever, what we khave khere, I sink it is actually a Luck Generator. LG. Like my LG washing machine kha kha kha."

"You guys for real???" wondered Nate silently, "Luck generator?? She talking about the same device stolen from me last night?" And then she continued to give further description that only puzzled the bleep out of Nate because now it was WAY too spiritual for his computer-minded view of the world.

Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

See, a geek can be great at what he does, but ask him to snap out of his skin and be a poet, or an artistic gardener, or a gentle parent holding a newborn baby, well, it won't happen instantly.

"Max!, but isn't it impossible to make Remote Viewing math to work for real?" inquired Nate.

Some angry glances wordlessly said: "Are you asking for another thousand-word theory?" - but fortunately it didn't happen.

"It is best that I demonstrate it," said Max!,  
"Where would you guys like to go tonight?"

"Visit my family in Hollywood Boulevard!"



"Shopping mall - let's buy more shoes!" (female voice)



"Freedom Square in Kiev!"

"Mountaintop - let's climb Monte Terminillo!" (Italian accent)



"Go Jamaica ya man!"

"Niagara Falls!"



"Chocolate factory! Chocolate factory!"



And a baby girl yelled with an Australian accent: **"I want to the beach, mate!"**



Max! must have liked this one because he said: "Yes, let's go to the beach. Let's go to the warm and marvelous Varna Bay, Bulgaria, where I was born. It should be just around sunset time now."

Max! signaled to Mariana to pull the projector screen down to the floor. He fumbled with some dials and buttons while the audience grew noisier with anticipation. The pictures on the screen changed too rapidly but seemed to show landscapes and public areas around the Black Sea. Some of the scenes looked pretty crowded. The screen eventually focused and showed a beach scene that had nothing but clean sand and a flock of geese. It was Varna. In fact, it seemed to be Byala, a secluded little bay north of town, about a mile and a half south of Kamping Kristina.



The picture was vivid and seemed to Nate as if it was three-dimensional. Was it really? Along with many others, Nate was standing right in front of the screen, impressed with the picture quality. It was not digitized because it had no pixelation even if you stood right by the screen. Oddly it didn't seem like a projected image at all - Nate was looking right THROUGH the screen into the beach:



Mariana was the first to walk into the screen.

It didn't flash like Stargate or any of the other sci-fi's. Mariana just walked right into the beach. Several others followed and started running or walking along the narrow water line.



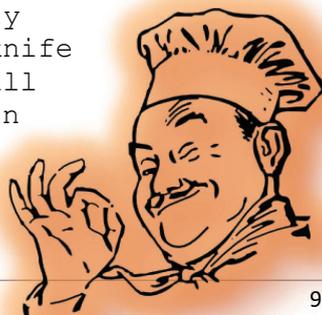
Naomi Shwartzmanova looked back into the basement, saw Nate standing there and threw some wet sand at him. "Come too ya man!" she yelled. He put his arms on his chest like an American Chief, and didn't move an inch.

Elena took off her white-blue-red sneakers and entered the beach scene. She didn't yell and didn't throw anything at him, only waved cutely and went "deeper" into the scene. Although Nate wanted very much to follow her, the whole scene was way too weird!

Max! stayed, lounging in the wheelchair like a Hollywood director resting on the set. Nate went over and flooded him with a L-----O-----N-----G chain of questions about how come there's no simple explanation to these phenomena - the physical by Max! and the seemingly spiritual by Mariana.

With tons of patience Max! listened and listened, and then replied very plainly that with so much skepticism - on Nate's part or anybody else's - the invention has no real power. NATE TOTALLY DISAGREED!! He argued that any invention must be powerful all by itself or "it ain't no real tech."

Max! answered with his fatherly voice: "My boy, can the best knife in the world make good salad all by itself? Can the best food in the world cook itself into an exquisite meal without a good chef hard at work?"



Nate finally got it, and nodded a little smile: "You know, Max!, I see your point, my computer is as dumb as a brick without me at the keyboard."

Max! acknowledged with a wink and a smile. Nate decided that it wasn't that weird after all, and proceeded to follow Elena through the screen and into the beach scene. He ignored the wind on his face, the smell of wet sands, the funny shrieks of the geese and the whisper of the waves. And everyone else who came along from the basement.

His attention was solely drawn to HER, to her princely motions, to her exposed feet treading through the water. And to her smile that shone like pure gold in the Varna sunset:



*Beach photo: PicturesFromBulgaria.com*

Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

He was looking for a special thing to say to her. To impress her.

"HumuhumunukUnukuapuaa," he said.

"???"



Photo: Qyd

"That's the Hawaiian fish with the longest name," he said victoriously, "Twenty one letters!"

"But the longest it's Lauwiliwilinukunukuoi," she said.

"Serious?"

"Twenty three letters. Google it!" laughed Elena and splashed sea water all over Nate. The water felt very real!



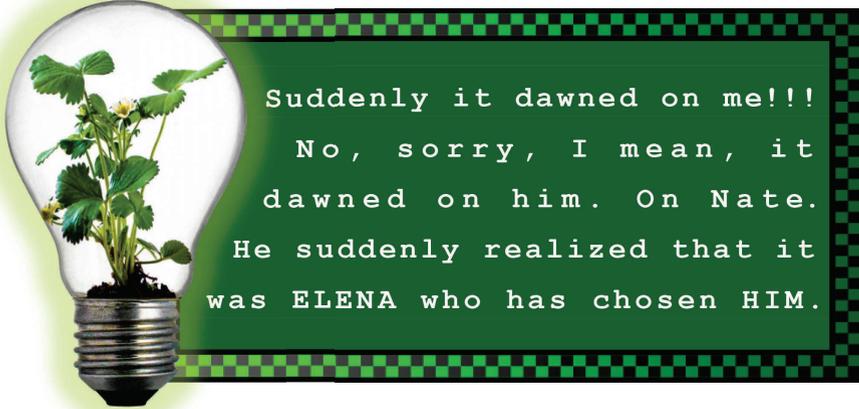
Photo: Nick Hobgood

The sunset did not happen as he expected, I mean nothing like Sunset Boulevard or Santa Monica or Venice Beach. In Varna, you see, the sunset happens behind the city and not behind the sea. That little bay is shaded by a steep sandstone hill so it was getting dark pretty quick, yet the reflection of the sun's final rays over the darkening beach was uniquely romantic.

It all seemed real enough, but as soon as Elena went back into the basement Nate left the beach too, magnetized to her like a butterfly to the light. It was not the beach experience he was interested in, you see.

As he stepped into the basement, his cloths were still damp with sea water.

As soon as the main part of the event was over, Nate mingled, talked to some new and "old" faces, and threw a word or two with Max! who was surrounded by at least two dozens of people and was trying to attend to everybody.



He pushed through the crowd to get closer to Max! and politely asked:

"Max!, can I get a chance to shortly try this gizmo, like, in person?"

"This can be arranged. Call me at Hotel Europa tomorrow. Room 929."

Nate was elated. And proud. He turned to share the good news with Elena. He searched the entire basement. She was nowhere in sight.

He wanted to shoot for the door because he thought: "I bet she went out, and I bet she went back through the same door we entered from!"

But there was one problem though...

<!--TO BE CONTINUED-->

<!--Begin Emotional Quiz-->

Step 1: Can you spot which words are real and which are fake in Max!'s theory? (Try to read it out loud - gets so much harder toward the end, doesn't it?)

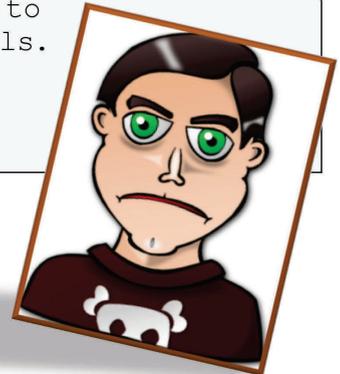
Step 2: Email the words you found to Oxford.

Step 3: Regret step 1. (Optionally, regret step 2 as well.)

Step 4: Construct emotionally charged sentences containing the phrase 'glated by flipnets' like, *"She complicated our fragile relationship when she baked him a cake glated by flipnets."*

Step 5: Email your sentences to emotionally unstable individuals.

<!--End Emotional Quiz-->



<!--NEXT CHAPTER: Oh Elena B, Why Won't You B Mine?!-->

## CHAPTER 12

# OH ELENA B, WHY WON'T YOU B MINE?!

He wanted to shoot for the door. But there was one problem - a dense crowd between him and that one door he was shooting for. Not impossible to cross. But he didn't know how long Elena has been gone, and had absolutely no intention to lose half a second. He knew everybody wanted to talk to everybody, and especially to him being the "new recruit" or whatever they might call him.



Once in a business seminar Nate was trained to swiftly move in a team against an opposing team without anybody bumping into each other (try it with your team, it's fun). Here, the crowd was moving slowly - but they were not ready for this game! Nate decided to fly anyway, and found it easier than his five-row Hungarian Cube. One dude freaked out and spilled his water cup, but otherwise nobody was hurt.



Almost at the door, he saw one person he just HAD to say good night to. "Hey gotta run, see you soon," he said and lightly touched Tymo's arm (geeeeeeeeeee, all this time I was calling her T\_y\_m\_o\_s\_h\_e\_n\_k\_o\_v\_n\_a\_y\_a when I could just call her Tymo?! Oh well.)

Not waiting for Tymo to respond, he took the final leap and shot like an arrow through the door and into the staircase. Coming from the well-lit basement, he almost fell running into the stairs.

Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

The staircase looked so dark and weird and unfamiliar again. And smelled like it's been the very first thing ever built in this city in times immemorial, which was not far from the truth.

He paused for a second and looked up. Couldn't see her or hear her steps - she could have gone out through any of the other doors. He took his chances and started running up the endless staircase that was spiraling up toward a more familiar world. He ran as fast as he could. However, with the threat of loss in his heart, it seemed many times longer on the way up than it was on the way down. They should definitely install an elevator here!

It took like, forever...



He saw her standing by the door of the bookstore. The door was open and she was half way through, but standing still. Watching him with what looked like a smile. In the near total darkness, he couldn't tell for sure.

He tried to calculate what would happen if he said, straight and simple: "Oh Elena B, why won't you be mine?!"



His supercomputer mind was rushing down the boy-girl road at a deadly pace, like a million miles an hour. Shouldn't he say a little 'darling' somewhere? Maybe a 'sweetheart' or a 'solnyshko moyo'? [*my sun*]. Wait. Shouldn't it be solnyshko moyA. Damn.

You can never tell, with the likes of this hot chick, no, Goddess, what would be too much and what would be too little. And he knew he didn't have more than a couple of seconds to make up his mind and say the RIGHT thing.

"Can I see you tonigh--" Nate tried to say, still heavily panting, "may-h-maybe we can go to the movies or someth'n?"



Elena said **"No"** and without explanation - vanished like a phantom! My guess is... is at this point in his oddball adventure he almost *expected* it, see? But before disappearing into the night, she said her 'no' with such a glow-in-the-dark smile, that even if you threatened Nate's life at gunpoint he still couldn't tell you if it was actually a yes or a no.

Short hesitation, not more than a second and a half, no seriously, and he decided to resume the chase. He ran out through the bookstore door into the tree area and then around the building. She wasn't there. He looked into Lenina Avenue.

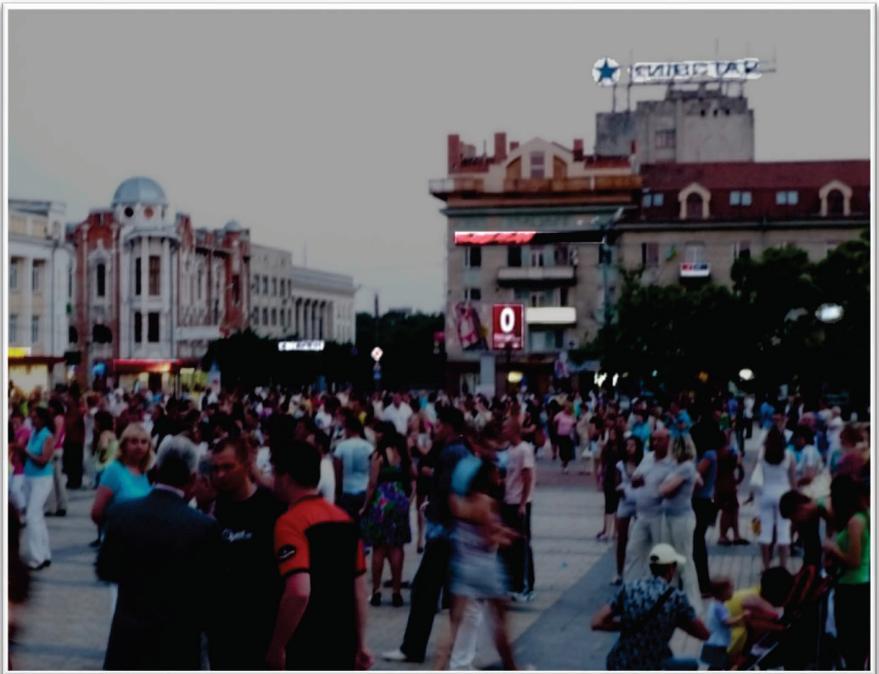
Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

She wasn't there either.

He then looked into Karla Marksa Street. Several teenagers were hanging out at Pantera Plaza on one side, and on the other side a few older couples were standing by the cinema. Some were walking west, probably toward Rozovaya Pantera disco-bar or Primo Violino restaurant.

But Elena was nowhere to be found. He looked from the corner across into Kirov Square.

On this particular Friday night Kirov Square traffic was so much busier than usual, making him think that maybe, just maybe, in that moment that he missed, she quickly crossed the street and mingled in the dense crowd over there.



*Kirov Square was more densely crowded than usual*

Didn't seem likely, though. He could still feel her presence. It felt as if she was watching him.



He went behind Marksa 29 again. Near the bookstore there was an intercom door to the building. He was searching for the button to press, still panting. Only after going twice through the entire list he realized: "Damn! I don't have her family name! But wait, she said Elena B - all I gotta do is find the 'B' family!"

Oddly enough, EVERYBODY in the building - and there were some twenty nine labels there - all started with B! --- Oh please, don't start with Boje Moy and all, this is a mystery story, what'd you expect?

...You want what...a family name that starts with Lorem ipsum? ....You serious?

Near one of the intercom buttons it said

**Family Lorem-ípsum** You happy now?

Now, Nate, who was not going to press twenty eight intercom buttons standing there alone on a Friday night, went back to Roksana. He was done with the event. But something pulled him back. Maybe she left a note or a clue or something.

He opened the door and stood just where Elena was a minute earlier, looking into the now even darker bookstore. He had no idea what to look for, so he just stood in the doorway, quietly, all ears and eyes. From the corner of his eye he noticed a strange reflection on the front window. He went closer and saw that some message had been handwritten on it, seemingly from the outside.

Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

It could have been her, and then again, it could have been anybody else. Wait - it could be her number!!! Excited, but not wanting to smear it by touching, he "Googled" the vast libraries of his mind for "methods for retrieving messages from glass" as he was gazing motionless at the dark bookstore window.



A second and 0.29 of a second passed along.

1 certain match found. And 29,029,290,029,000,007 uncertain results. Mom told him once that a job like this could best be done with anything that would react differently to the clean glass (in hope that it was indeed clean) and the oil left by the finger (in hope that it was indeed a finger). If you have flour or talc, Mom said, those could be useful, but if you don't, blow air on it.

He tried blowing air. It worked! "Oh thank you Mom, sweet Mom, always there to offer a helping hand even on the weirdest of all Friday nights, 7797.99 miles away from home." He now quickly memorized what looked like a local cell phone number: 066-698-80-88.

*Stop, stop! What are you doing man? Put that phone down! Did you think I'd really give you Elena's private number? You're crazy. That was the number for Taxi 0-88 in Kirovograd.*



<!--TO BE CONTINUED-->

<!--NEXT CHAPTER: How the Hardest Saturday Began-->

## CHAPTER 13

# HOW THE HARDEST SATURDAY BEGAN

9:29 Saturday morning. Marksa 16. Hotel Europa.  
Room 929.

The phone rang. There was nobody there. The phone  
rang again but there was nobody there.

The phone rang again. Nobody there.

At 9:30, the phone rang several more times.  
Nobody.

Nate was trying to reach Max!.



Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

But Max! just went out and was walking southwest on Karla Marksa, enjoying the sun. And enjoying the eye-popping river of hot Kirovograd chicks flowing by with the fanciest clothes in Europe, their hair blowing in the wind even though there was no wind.

9:31, back at Room 929, the phone rang again.

Once.

Five minutes and a couple of city blocks later, Max! decided to try the local coffee at the magnificent Primo Violino on Lenina 17/7:

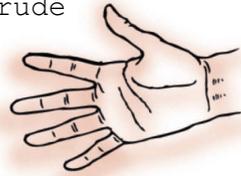


Service was surprisingly fast because as soon as he sat down at a little marble-on-iron table, a young man approached his table and Max! said: "One coffee please. Americano with lots of cream... do you speak English?"

The waiter gave a little bow and disappeared. After a short moment he showed up and put the coffee on the table. And another coffee. And two GIANT chocolate croissants. Max! immediately protested: *"I did not order all this! You said you speak English!"*

The waiter nodded again and proceeded to... sit down. Max! was silently enraged, but before he could finish thinking *"In this crazy little town even a respectable scientist from Bulgar--"* he discovered that the waiter was rude enough to offer his hand!

"My name is Nate. We met last night. The phone didn't answer so I figured I'd just walk over and find you."



Max!'s face lit up: "Oh it's you my boy! You got me! Thanks for the coffee. But I don't want a croissant. Have to watch my weight," he tapped his belly that didn't look too bad at all.

"I'll have both," said Nate, "How's your morning, sir?"



Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

"Oh excellent! But there are so many beautiful women that my eyes go fuzzy... Otherwise it's a great Saturday morning."

"Until 24 hours ago, I was seeing the very same landscape. Today, I only have eyes for one. But other than a questionable number that she's not answering, I don't know where to find her," said Nate.

Max! shook his head: "You mean Elena. She's a heartbreaker. No, I mean heartbreaker charm you know what I mean? Yes you obviously do. Alright, I think I can help you to find her."



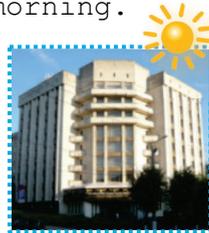
Nate jumped in his chair and one of the croissants fell off the table. The coffees almost spilled. He said "sorry" (but couldn't erase the smile off his face), picked up the croissant and broke it for the birds.

"Max!, last night you said I could contact you to try your invention in person. Is that what you're talking about?"

"Sure. But first tell me, after last night, what do you actually know about my invention?"

Nate briefly told his story, starting from the moment he opened his eyes on Friday morning.

After the coffee, they went up to room 929 at the Europa. Devices and cables piled up on the small hotel table, blinking red and green and blue and what not. The painting on



the wall was covered with sticky notes of formulas and numbers.

"Ain't the ideal lab but this inquisitive man never stops exploring," thought Nate.

"My boy, you may be realizing by now that, when you made that childhood decision never to dream of HER - your heart's fantasy - you also confined your imagination to prison. Self-made prison."

"Eh...hhhhha," sighed Nate who was sitting on the carpet. Not that Max! didn't offer him a chair, just wanted to sit on something hard for a while.

As Max! was now explaining to him the meat and potatoes of his science, Nate realized that he disallowed himself to "dream" anymore in broad daylight. Not just girls, anything. That was why he went into the prove-it-to-me "hard" sciences of mathematics and computers.

Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

"You see," said Max!, "the sciences are very useful, for instance when you're building a bridge. Like the solid bridge by the Sviatogorsky Cave Monastery {he pointed to the east} because, without the proper calculations, this bridge might collapse into the Siverskyi Donyets River."



"Of course!"

"But wait. Before the mathematicians like me, and the computer guys like you, ever stepped into the scene - who was there? Was somebody there before they started building the bridge - what do you think?"

"Nobody was there," said Nate, "oh-oh-oh, ho, I know what you mean. There was whoever created the bridge, right?"

"The engineers created the bridge. And the builders," said Max!

"You're testing me aren't you? But I know how it goes, Max!, I just realized that I actually knew it all along. My father always says everything is created twice, FIRST it's created in the mind. Then, it's created AGAIN - this time in the physical."

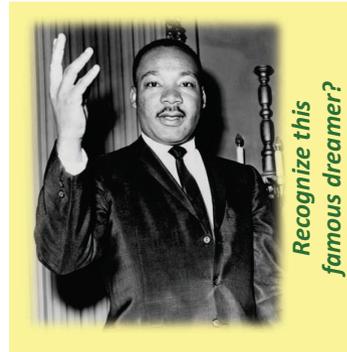
"That's right my boy - you DID know it! And how would you call the guy who first created the Kovalivsky Bridge?"

"I don't know... The First Guy?"

"I would call him *The Dreamer*."

Nate grabbed his red hair with two open palms and exclaimed: "Max! you're a genius, you know, the simplicity that you... I mean it's sheer genius! *The Dreamer*.... What a concept."

Max! shook his head with a small but obvious "no."



"Ha?" wondered Nate as he was moving from the carpet onto a chair.

"What?"

"You said no, what did you mean no?"

"Did I say no? Oh, I'm so sorry my boy. Childhood habits I have too. See, in Bulgaria, we have this 'yes' nod that goes sideways. Seven hundred years ago we reversed the yes and the no to confuse the Turkish occupiers. Sometimes I forget that everywhere else it means no."

"Aha! So I'm not the only one dragging his childhood feet into present time, am I?"

They both laughed lengthily, with a feeling of true relief.

When they were done laughing, Nate went to the table and, gently picking up the Remote Viewer, asked: "Max!, can I borrow this for one day?"

Max! signaled a 'no' that now (phew!) meant yes.

"Is this a Shvyzonite? Or THE Shvyzonite?" Nate inquired. So many bits and pieces of information came and went in the past 29 hours, but he was still unsure.

Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

"My boy, what you call Shvyzonite is a misnomer. Actually my invention is a digital amplifier of G-fractuants that flux---"

"Oh no no no no no no, please don't go into all the science, I just wanna know how to operate this thing. Like, if I want to find something. Or...somebody."

Max! said he was quite willing to show him how - but there was some risk involved - he warned. Nate wanted to know why. Max! explained: biting deep into your luck - or you could say gambling - one can either find great treasures, or get  
terribly disappointed.



"Man cannot discover new oceans unless he has the courage to lose sight of the shore," said the boy in love, quoting Andre Gide.

"You ARE ready my boy. Just turn it on. The little switch at the back."

Nate turned the RV on. The round screen was showing part of an orange wall. Some soft cloth was blowing in and out of an open window; it was white with some handwritten blue script that was hard to read, but seemed to say 'World Peace'.



"What am I looking at?", Nate wondered aloud.

Max! gave an explanation that was not easy to absorb for the young gear-head. This was a remote view of your own intention, he said, and insisted that the important thing was to capture this as PMI, or 'Positive Moment Image' and said that Nate was supposed to click the green button to make those 'PMI' screen captures for later viewing. As far as Nate could understand, it was like collecting positive notes or clues, on a visual basis, and that you're supposed to collect them and review them and it would help you focus on your goal. Or something to that effect.

"How does it know what I want to see? Does it read my mind?"

Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

"No my boy, machines cannot read minds! It only captures the coordinates of something important to the user and focuses there. Parallel to that, it measures the electrical vibration of the user. If it is a 'good' vibration it sharpens the picture and if bad it dims and makes it look repulsive, something you'd reject. Think of it as an electronic mirror. You can see things without a mirror, yet a mirror helps us to see details from a different perspective."



" W o w ! "

"Yes it's quite a trick. You can PMI positive moments but it won't PMI negative moments. You can watch them, purposely dimmed and fuzzy, but not capture them."

"What about the grey area?"

"Good question. Yes, the view can be borderline middle since nothing in life is black-and-white. There's no telling, however, if the RV will PMI it or not. If borderline, it probably won't. As they say, when in doubt - communicate, so you must communicate more till you get it either positive or negative. That may take time my boy, but you will notice that if you revisit to an intention and examine the picture, the effect will either be more negative or more positive because things never stay the same."

"Got it. Then I can either PMI it - or disregard it as negative."

"Precisely."

Nate began to understand why the little old lady was saying "fulfilling your wildest dreams" with strange conditions like "only if you really want to." He was starting to get the idea that the gadget was some sort of a booster, but only if there was something to boost - your inner willpower.

"How did you come up with this amazing tech?"

"Like Walt Disney said *If you can DREAM it, you can DO it*," answered Max! and added:

"I will need the RV back here tomorrow."



Nate promised to get the viewer back in Max!'s hands on Sunday morning, and left with a big thank-you and a preoccupied smile.

Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!



It was noontime when he went to AAAAA. Saturday, the office was mostly empty and quiet. Except for Alexei Kholodenko who was playing Scorpions and Metallica. Again. Ok, forget the 'quiet' part.

Nate sank into his large chair, staring aimlessly at the RV screen, deep in thought once again. He wanted to find out why his fantasy girl had run away. And he wanted to find out what would bring her back. Most of all, he wanted to hold her in his arms.



And that's how the hardest Saturday began.

Cheer up my friend, it's all gonna be alright.

**LOREM IPSUM!**

What was the last sentence supposed to mean? I don't know. But here comes his brother...

**LOREM ipsum!**

<!--TO BE CONTINUED-->

<!--NEXT CHAPTER: How the Hardest Saturday Ended-->

## CHAPTER 14

# HOW THE HARDEST SATURDAY ENDED

12:29 in the afternoon, AAAAA, Nate's cubicle.

Nate was still fumbling with the RV and one recurring image was hard to figure out. It was neither positive nor negative so it sometimes PMI'd<sup>14</sup> and sometimes not, but it was definitely there: *Some soft cloth was blowing in and out of an open window; it was white with some handwritten blue script that was hard to read, but seemed to say 'World Peace'.*

12:33, AAAAA, Nate's cubicle.

Still only hoping it was Elena's cell number, he texted to the number he has found on the bookstore window:

*(Will you ever  
be mine?)*



---

<sup>14</sup> PMI'd, or "to PMI": a verb that means to record a PMI (Positive Moment Screen).

Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

Momentarily, the RV showed a picture of a girl who was hard to identify. She was looking shortly at a cell phone, and then put it down. The picture faded quickly.



12:45, AAAAA, by the coffee machine.

He tried a more romantic approach and texted her this longer message:



***(Stars at night glow bright when you are there  
but they shine not when you are gone)***

Again, the RV briefly showed a picture of a girl glancing at a cell phone, then faded. It was too brief and too faded to PMI.

He tried a short one: "I MIS U."

A similar picture came up and he gave up texting.

13:00, AAAAA, Nate's cubicle.

While resting his head with frustration on his desktop keyboard, he typed into his cell phone various texts of impatience, frustration and even slight anger. But every time he put his finger down to send it, looking at the RV screen stopped him from doing that. Because, every time, the screen showed something hard to describe in words; it was either fuzzy, or shaky, or nearly black, or something or other that wordlessly said:  
"DON'T DO IT, NATE!!"



He tried to do some work but couldn't at all concentrate. At first he tried to blame Alexei Kholodenko's music, but then realized it was his own frustration and nothing else.

13:29, AAAAA, Alexei Kholodenko's cubicle.

Alexei glanced at Nate's face and immediately sent his hand to lower the music volume. Nate stopped him: "Don't worry about the music, buddy. I need a favor. Will you translate this for me?"

He showed Alexei a romantic text joke that he had just created. Alexei quickly translated on his computer and sent it to Nate's phone. Nate thanked him, went back to his cubicle and looked at the RV as he was forwarding the joke to Elena's phone.

The message said (in Ukrainian):

SHE: DARLING I WANT 2 TAKE OUR  
RELATIONSHIP 2 THE NEXT LEVEL...  
HE: SURE BABE BUT WE'RE ALREADY MARRIED  
- WHAT'S THE NEXT LEVEL - DIVORCE???



The RV gave a very bright PMI of Elena (this time he could recognize her face) looking at her cell phone and smiling. It was a split second short but his finger was quick to click the green button and capture it. Alrighty then, it's her number! And he got her to smile!

After several minutes of no answer, he grabbed the RV in one hand and his cell phone in the other, left AAAAA and walked home without losing sight of either screen.

14:00, Nate's studio, on the balcony.

He went over the screen captures collected so far. Not much to go by. And no answer from her. He decided to let go of the effort-effort-effort and relax for a while.

He left the RV (still turned on) and his cell phone on the desk, and started doing good things for himself and for the place. Laundry, room cleaning, weight lifting and a good home-made lunch. For almost every good thing, he noticed a green light coming up at the corner of the RV. Upon examination, he found the RV screen decorated with funny little pictures, almost clip-art style, that he captured for later.

The little pictures were cute, but with a void in his heart, Nate wanted to take this thing to the next level, to find his girl no matter what it took and how much he needed to risk. He wanted to find a way to use the invention like nobody else has before him.

"Although Max! had the basic idea," said Nate to himself, "he surely didn't think of every possible application."

Analyzing all that had happened since Thursday, he realized that meeting the girl of his craziest dreams wasn't an accident. It was because on Thursday night he was already exposed to the power of Shvyzonite, unknowingly. Why did it disappear on him, why all the trouble with the shop and the police and all, he couldn't tell.

"What can I do that would change everything, that would turn my life around? She won't respond to my little flattery messages. I must take a bold risk, a greater challenge - some sort of monster slaying."

16:25, Nate's bed.

He laid on his back and simply used the RV as a mirror, like Max! said. He observed every possible area of his life that could use a good hand: looks, nutrition, finances, personal enhancement, etc. For every intention, he noted the RV's response, took notes and started correlating them with the PMIs.

Eventually it all funneled into a bright and simple plan of action:

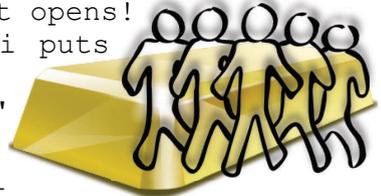


Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

16:29, Lenina Avenue.

Nate headed northwest, at first he walked but then started running. He wasn't so much in a hurry; it was just that walking couldn't hold the emotional energy that sprinted from his heart.

He quickly reached Kirov Square and went to his friend 'Matrix' at the Kirov Internet Café. He pulled Matrix to the back office and laid down a quick plan: "Hey I got a brilliant business plan to help Alexei Kholodenko and Alexei Chernienko to open that large AAAAA branch they've been wanting in Kiev. You, Matrix, would help find brilliant guys from Kirovograd who want to move OUT to the big city - they'll start here at AAAAA and then move to Kiev once it opens! Won't cost us a dime, Alexei puts the money. We just help them find the real gold - people!"



Matrix seemed interested, but unsure: "How do you know it is going to work?"

Nate kept his mouth shut while he fished an unfamiliar gizmo out of his pocket and showed it to Matrix. It displayed a very bright picture of the new branch, all shiny and full of motion.

"I can see Kholodenko and some faces I know from my Café. What is this? Your new promo video?"

"It's not a video, man. It's the future!"

"Nathan, this a joke? I am busy."

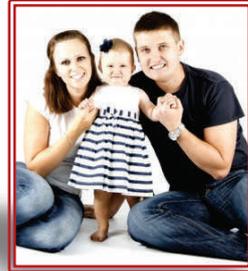
"You don't get it man, this IS the future. T'is like a remote view of the flux... oh never mind. Just believe me it's not sci-fi, it's real. This picture is not really the future, but it CAN be.

If you help me, dude, we can do it. I'll split it half with you and you risk nothing. What'ya got to lose?"

"All I got to lose is my wife and my baby girl," said Matrix.

"Exactly! So what d'you say my genius-head friend?"

Matrix observed Nate shine and, without a word, shook his hand with a nod. Nate hugged him briefly and ran out.



Nate went to the barber across the street and got a nice haircut. He used up the time to plan some more. He decided to stop living on coffee and croissants - more proteins, ginger roots and fresh veggies!

When the barber was done, Nate went to the Health Food Store and headed back home with all the right stuff. Even some natural soap that smelled like heaven. Glancing at the RV, he saw himself looking better. Checking his reflection in a parking car's mirror, he was surprised to see that in real life he was already starting to look a bit like that PMI he has just captured.

18:29, Back on the balcony.

He spent the rest of the evening eating well and typing up his exact plan to help AAAAA and to put his life on a route to business independence rather than sweat jobs.

Please stop clicking those castañuelas [*castanets*] ...you listening? Now, now one question remained: NICE. ALL NICE. BUT WHAT WOULD NATE DO ONCE HE GIVES THE REMOTE VIEWER BACK TO MAX!?? HOW IS HE GONNA FIND **HER**, THE GIRL?

Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

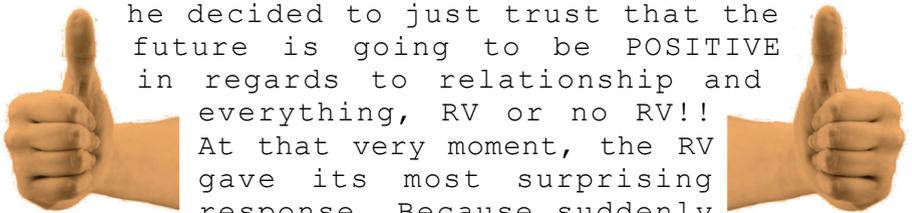
23:29, Nate's bed.

Nate turned the lights off, went to bed and put the RV on the nightstand. Last thoughts for the day: "The RV needs to go back in the morning... Now what have I learned today about love and life, what have I learned that REALLY MATTERS? And what should I dream of tonight?"

And then, the unbelievable happened!

What happened? I just told you, the unbelievable.

At precisely 23:29 and 29 seconds (which is utterly useless information if you ask me), he decided to just trust that the future is going to be POSITIVE in regards to relationship and everything, RV or no RV!! At that very moment, the RV gave its most surprising response. Because suddenly and for the very first time, that gadget started beeping, and loudly! Nate counted twenty nine beeps. When it stopped beeping, a faint flash of light flooded the entire room. He looked to the nightstand.



Green lights were now blinking like mad at the four corners of the screen, and on the screen itself, a very bright PMI glared, the brightest he has ever seen on the RV.

He picked up the RV but the picture was w-a-y too bright, almost blinding. Nate recalled Pat MacDonald's song "*The Future's So Bright I Gotta Wear Shades*" as he was lowering screen brightness all the way down.

He now saw a very sharp image:



Some soft cloth was blowing in and out of an open window; it was white with some handwritten blue script that was hard to read, but seemed to say 'World Peace'.

And that's how the hardest Saturday ended.

<!--TO BE CONTINUED-->

<!--NEXT CHAPTER: Supernova of Unspoken Words-->

## CHAPTER 15 SUPERNOVA<sup>15</sup> OF UNSPOKEN WORDS

**FBI PARENTAL CONTROL NOTICE** This chapter used to contain a lot of <!--bleep-->, <!--bleep--> and even <!--bleep-->ing so it was rated "R" and restricted to over-18 audiences. However, since all the <!--bleep-->ing sections have been removed by the <!--bleep-->ing censors, it is now rated PG-29 and safe for all audiences. Thanks for your attention; you may proceed to read the chapter.

On Sunday, as he was walking over to the Europa to return the RV, Nate used the power of Shvyzonite for one last time, to see the girl. No new information.

He found Max! dining near the lobby, sat down and put the device gently on the table. Max! shook his head and continued to enjoy his meal, yet he seemed very attentive as usual.

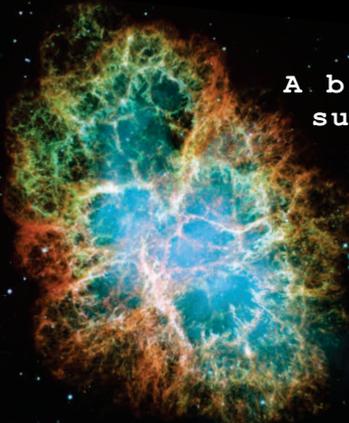
"Max!, I used it the best I could... What's a man to do?"

The white-haired man looked at the young redhead and uttered the shortest, simplest statement that Nate has ever heard from him:

My boy, it's only a mirror.



<sup>15</sup> Supernova: a star that suddenly releases tremendous light and energy.



A bright flash blew up into a supernova of unspoken words:

**OH BLOODY HELL!!!!!!**

**ONLY A MIRROR!!!!!!**

*I have all the information I need!!! Do I type <Nate> into the office computer network and look at it on twenty nine monitors just to know my name???*

Nate knew exactly what he had to do.

He thanked Max!, shot out of the lobby and ran up the street to Karla Marksa 29. He felt like the Southern California desert wind when it blows hard down the Cajun Pass and over the I-15 freeway. In a matter of seconds he was standing behind that building, panting only slightly.

He observed the building for a few short minutes (give or take a few even shorter seconds), standing between the cinema and the trees. And then, he went to the Pantera Plaza side, covered the sides of his mouth with both hands, lifted his head toward the upper floors of the building and yelled: "Elena! Elena!"

Nothing.

He yelled again

*E l e n a ! !*

Her pretty face showed up from one of the third floor balconies. She did not speak but her smile was such that you needed no telescope to see it.

"Come down a minute, I got something to tell you!" said Nate exhilarated but not surprised. Not counting his night dreams, he has never been as confident, as courageous and as upbeat as now in this moment. He approached the intercom door.

Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

Elena showed up inside the lobby, and looked at Nate through the cast iron door, observing his gleaming face. Then, she came out and without a sound walked over to him. He offered both his hands to hold hers.

But she didn't touch his hands. Instead, she went closer and hugged him warmly. He couldn't say a word and he didn't need to. He only needed, while hugging her too, to draw his head back from over the clouds and install it back on his shoulders.



They stood there like that, saying nothing at all, for twenty nine minutes. Maybe only five. They couldn't tell the time. And then, they smiled at each other and spontaneously started walking.

Arms entwined, they walked through the city of Kirovograd. For two hours they went, chatting merrily. First they went southwest and then west, pausing only to look at each other's eyes or to share the scenery: the lively parks, Saint Elizabeth Fortress and the H-U-G-E monuments.

On their way back, when they passed by a unique building marked Komarova 29, Elena stopped and looked at the fifth floor. Some soft cloth was blowing in and out of an open window; it was white with some handwritten blue script that was hard to read, but seemed to say 'World Peace':

29 Komarova Street, Kirovograd



Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

She pointed up: "There is my room."

**"I've seen that window before!!!"**

Nate whooped, **"It's a classic!!!"**

**"You want to come up for coffee?"**

"Sure, got cream?"

**"I will borrow from my roommate."**

"So you got a roommate eh? Man or woman?"

**"One of those who did not decided yet."**

"Oh."

They were drinking hot coffee that she made fresh, as they stood by the open window watching over Komarova Street with its colorful weekend bazaars, his hand occasionally touching the small of her back. The coffee tasted better than all the Swiss and Belgian and Columbian and Arabica coffees he had ever tasted in his travels.



"You made it with love, Elena."

Her deep-hazel eyes smiled over her cup as she was holding it with both hands and slowly sipping her coffee.

"You never told me your full name."

"Elena Mikhailovna Brodetzkaya. Maybe you heard the family. My father is rock violinist Mikhail Brodetzky, he played with Valery Kipelov, Trans Siberian Orchestra, like those."



"Yea, cool! So you're Jewish like me, ha?"

"Well my father is Jewish, he is from Moscow you know, and my mother from Odessa. She is big rock fan, they met there when he played on tour."

"What do you know! They live here in Kiro?"

"Now they are touring with his new music. But they have a flat in Marksa 29 where we met."

"O-yea! One of the B families haha. Speak Yiddish?"

"What, the Jewish language? I can say Lekhayem, that's Cheers right? This is what my father always say. But my parents speak only Russian at home because my father cannot speak Ukrainian. You expect from a musician to catch it quickly, but I guess he was busy. I understand him, he is so much into his music, and he is very good in it."

"You bet. Maybe we can all go, I mean with your mom to his concert sometime?"

"Of course, they will love it. More coffee?"

"Don't go, I'd rather stand here and watch your amazing eyes." ..... He paused for a long moment and then said, as soft as a puppy: "You take my breath away. I love you, Elena Brodeskynova."

**"Brodetz kaya!"**

"Oops...Brodetz kaya."

She put her coffee down and pulled him gently to the small futon sofa that was the largest object in the room. Sitting by her side silently, he continued to look into her eyes. At that moment, his silence was well accepted. Because within maybe twenty nine seconds (give or take a minute) they were all over each other. First touching lips softly, slowly, then some more dynamic "moves."



And then... she

whispered tenderly: **"Nate David Romanoff... will you please turn the lights off?"**

For a little moment there, he hesitated.

"Turn the lights o... you must be kidding! It's ten thirty a.m. and you got no drapes!"

**"Shhhhhhhhh,"** she whispered with the smile of a true prankster. He laughed and kissed her nose, mumbling: "That's-a-my-girl!"

She proceeded to take his clothes all off. <!--We gravely apologize that this paragraph has been left behind by a negligent censor--> He followed and took her clothes off, leaving only the necklace hanging. <!--Here we go again-->



- Oh my God your <!--bleep--> is so soft...
- No worry my <!--bleep--> will not stay soft forever.
- I wish to you give me all your kisses.
- You're so poetic lyubimaya moya [my sweetheart] now how 'bout a little <!--bleep-->
- Sure <!--bleep--> it to me.
- *Stick your <!--bleeping--> <!--bleep--> into my <!--bleep-->*



**CUT!! DAMN IT WHO SAID THAT?!  
PEDRO YOU STAY OUT OF IT! ACTION!**

- Look at that! I love to watch the <!--bleep--> sliding in and out of the <!--bleep-->, so cute!
- C'mon you <!--bleep--> bring it on, the whole <!--bleep--> is how I want it, gimme the...
- Ahwah! Now give it to me in the <!--bleep-->
- Oh yehh turn around, give me your <!--bleep--> my love...
- \* \* \* \* \*
- Oh Boje moy ya zhverosya!
- What you said?
- I said I'm coming, didn't I ?
- No you said I'm going.
- Oy vey...



Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

- Ooch ooch zaychik moy [my bunny], <!--bleep-->  
my <!--bleep--> with your stiff <!--bleep-->

- Oh my God, I must be in heaven.

- Boje moy, I'm <!--bleeping--> I'm <!--bleeping-->

- LOREM IPSUM!!!

- ??? Why did you said this?

- I dunno babe, I just did... is that important?

- No.

- OH ELENA! I WANT TO KISS ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~....



- Shhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh... Let the chapter end  
in silence...

- {whispering in her ear} Ho-kay.



<!--TO BE CONTINUED--> (not the sex, the story)

<!--NEXT CHAPTER: Make Yourself a Shvyzonite-->

*"Cupid's Arrow" bench near Kirovograd's City Hall. Designed by Vadim Mezdrin. Lovers and newlywed come here to take memorable photos.*





## CHAPTER 29 MAKE YOURSELF A SHVYZONITE

<!--Begin Do-It-Yourself Paragraph-->

So, after all, who the \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blanks) stole the Shvyzonite from Nate's room that first night? Frankly, this question is still a \_\_\_\_\_ing mystery to me too. It wasn't the \_\_\_\_\_ing KGB, we know that much, it wasn't Comfy, and I don't think that it was Elena or Max!, either. So who the \_\_\_\_\_ was it? And who the \_\_\_\_\_ was the Chinese grandma? I dunno, maybe he will find some \_\_\_\_\_ing answers in the \_\_\_\_\_ing sequel.

<!--End Do-It-Yourself Paragraph-->

Anyway... I only know that in the meeting I'm gonna tell you about right now, Max! revealed to Elena and Nate the REAL secret of the Shvyzonite. As you will see in a minute, my friend, it so turned out that the real secret wasn't a super-high-tech secret invention but a very-low-tech secret.



The young couple got engaged and will be getting married before the Christmas in a traditional, like a week-long Ukrainian wedding. They moved together into flat 29 in Nate's building and---

What now, Pedro? The secret? Man can you wait just a second I'm getting to it man!!

...So they...they... dang, where was I ?? Oh, so they moved together and visited Max! on several occasions. Max! moved to the spacious suite 305 at Hotel London, yes that's right, it's Karla Marksa 4A, so it's basically a walking distance from them.



I don't know why but Max! specifically demanded a room without 2 or 9 in its number. And he changed his name. Again. Now he has three exclamation marks rather than one so his new name is Max!!!

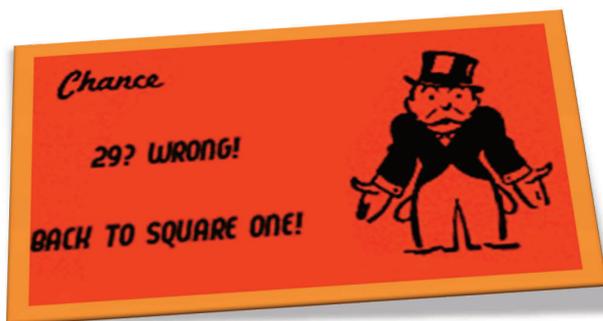
Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

Anyway, in this particular visit - I think it was last Wednesday - after a delicious dinner in the medieval-styled restaurant of the London, they were all sitting down at the cozy lobby. Let's cut right into the interesting part.

Max!!! was just saying: "I know what you are saying my boy, however, YOU don't really need gizmos or... wait, I am explaining one step by step. You, and I believe your sweetheart here knows it already, you will realize you can do this without my invention, and without drugs too. Just like Carlos Castaneda learned to keep and use his inner powers - the power to create what he defined "Non-Ordinary Reality" - without relying on Peyote - the hallucination drug."



*Y'tellin' me y'never heard of Castaneda? He grew up near your old folks, amigo. Carlos Castaneda (1925-1998) was a Peruvian-Californian anthropologist and author who sold millions of books in **17 languages**. In a series of **12 books**, Castaneda told a captivating first-person story of his training in Central-American Shamanism - natural magic - with sorcerer/warrior Don Juan Matus. Now, now, what if you add up **17** languages and **12** books, what do you get? **29? Wrong!** Why? Why because...because twenty nine WHAT, amigo??? Go back to Square One! Pay the bank 2900 Grivna, 2 streets and 9 hotels.*



Max!!! was trying to teach the two youngsters how to create "Non-Ordinary Reality" with neither a Shvyzonite nor drugs. Remember in the beginning I told you that "Nate is a very sharp mind, a brilliant computer programmer that never dreams up reality" - Well, he changed; he learned to allow himself to dream things up in broad daylight. That silly decision from age nine - never to daydream - had to go!

Max!!! pointed at Nate and said: "Even when you was forced, as you may remember, by your feeling of too much mystery to decide that Kovalivsky Park WAS Bogdan Khmel'nitsky Square."

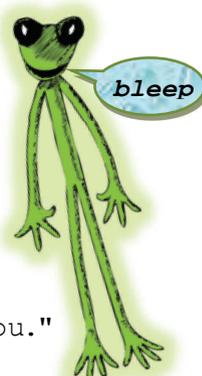
Nate frowned comically: "Geeee, you remember that ha? That wasn't the damn square was it? I guess I was so unwilling to deal with one more mystery, that I didn't question why a Bogdan What's-His-Face park had a Lenin statue instead of Bogdan's - dang! That's too funny!!"



*Talk about city parks... here's a city park scene you don't see in West Hollywood: a Kirovograd babushka (granny) makes good use of her time raising the family goat for fresh milk, right there in the city. On many occasions you'll see her knitting a wool sweater or winter socks, too.*

Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

"Nate, I think you knew it deep inside. You see, your title for the park wasn't true city-wide, but who cares, at that moment YOU created your own reality, just for the purpose of cancelling one mystery out of your list. Was that useful to you?", said Max!!!



Nate: "That was a relief I'm telling you."

Max!!! added: "Good. And when you was having fun extracting clues from Tymo's books, remember how you felt? The clues were not philosophically correct for all purposes in the world, but FOR YOUR CONFIDENCE right there and then, it served important purpose - to see light, self-created light, at the end of tunnel."

Nate: "Wow you're right, it sure felt good." He looked up and smiled at Elena who was now standing behind him, hugging his shoulders.

## NON-ORDINARY REALITY

"That's the way to create brand new realities! I never got to meet Castaneda personally but I think that's the secret to his 'Non-Ordinary Reality' and any other self-created reality. I will not say THE secret because there is much more to life, but this is major," said Max!!!

Elena wanted to say something but Max!!! was quick with one more thing: "You know my friends, even my name is a self-created truth. Did I HAVE to add the exclamation marks to my name? What, I cannot breathe without it? No, it is just a playful decision, another little creation. Don't need to be a stiff, as you say in America."

"This is true. Tell me Max!!!, how did the Shvyzonite work?" Elena asked, "No, I'm not asking you for all the electronics and computer things - I leave this for my handsome redhead here - but how in the principal it does what it did to him? Or for him."

"The device was helping him by sharpening happy realities WHILE at the same time also dimming or blurring any negative realities, but," so said Max!!!, "you guys can create LUCK, yes CREATE luck, without high tech gadgets."

Nate erupted: "Really? How? Yea that night in the basement Mariana Marien... Marienona-something was talking about luck; Luck Generator she called it. Never fully got that. Teach me, Max!!!, please, we kinda been through a lot together although we were not together all the---"



LUCK

And then Elena added: "I'd love to understand it better too."

"Don't worry my friends," said Max!!! with the softness of a good father, "I will teach you all the secret."

*Sweeeet Moses!*

(Nate)

*Lekhayeem!*

(Elena)

"Listen kids. You do this by - number one - by keeping yourselves happy and confident deliberately, by force if at first needed and also by - number two - by actively dreaming up positive realities for yourselves,

Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

only positive. You see? We do not give validation to any negative or negativity and we push away negative people or leave negative groups and places. Again, the secret is twofold: one again - LUCK STEMS FROM AND RELIES ON BEING UPBEAT AND POSITIVELY ENERGIZED! And two again - use creative imagination to solve and improve and... well, to LIVE - use creative imagination. You see? This ways, you will be amplifying your so-called 'luck' and things will 'magically' happen. My friends, you understanding this now?"

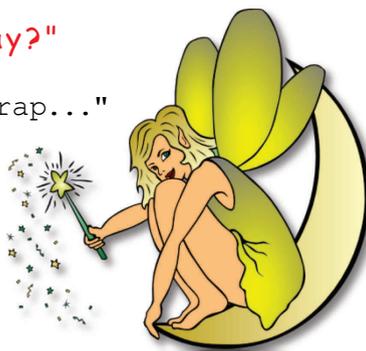
Nate: "Svyute Grechka!"

Elena: "What you tried to say?"

Nate: "I tried to say Holy Crap..."

Elena: "But you said  
Holy Buckwheat."

Nate: "Holy Crap!"



Max!!!: "Exactly! In fact there is no magic about this method - it is not fantasy - but a simple fact of life. This is the Luck Generator."

Elena: "This is awesome! See, Nate, I have my own built-in Luck Generator!"

"Yes and no," said Max!!!, "Let me clarify one point that may seem insignificant. Elena, You do not HAVE your own built-in Luck Generator..." {he paused briefly}

(Elena)

What do you mean?

"...Because YOU ARE your own Luck Generator, Elena," said Max!!! with a twinkle in his eyes.

"Wowawiwa!" exclaimed Elena (she learned this expression from Nate, who claims it is the real meaning of the Internet's WWW.)

It was around this time that Elena asked a very simple question, yet quite hard to answer:

"Max!!!, how can I prove this to my friends?"

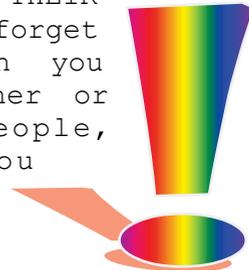
"PROVE??! PROVE? Elena, why you must to PROVE it to anybody??!"

Elena shrugged her shoulders and silently asked back, with raised eyebrows: "???" (She wanted to gesture with her hands too but they were both busy hugging Nate's shoulders tightly.)



Max!!! repeated with a friendly but unmistakable frown: "Why you must to prove anything to anybody?"

"O-kay, O-kay, Elena," continued Max!!!, now with his usual smile again, "You can simply tell them what I told you. But don't overdo it - and beware of skeptics - by their own negativities, skeptics shoot their own luck to death, you see? They catch you in ground hole, you see this, they try prove you wrong; but don't be discouraged because they only prove what I am telling you. Negative people and so-called skeptics will always fail sooner or later because THEY KILL THEIR OWN LUCK. You understand? Never forget that your inner truth is with you whether you 'prove' it to another or not! Stay away from negative people, they dim your luck and you deserve better my friend."



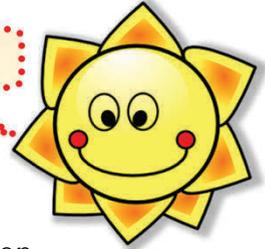
Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

"Clearer than the Sun now," said Elena.

Max!!!: "Nate, remember those 'Positive Moment Images' that I told you to make when you was using my device? This can be done with no more than pencil and paper {he picked up a hotel pen from the coffee table and tossed it over to them} - you use a simple pencil to take notes and lists, draw little pictures - helps you dream up your new reality. Do it every day of your life!"

Nate nodded, smiling from ear to ear. And Elena said:

**It is SO simple, Max!!!**

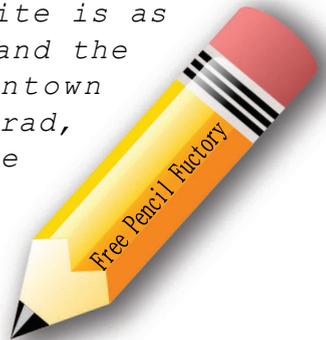


Max!!! confirmed: "Sure is, Elena.

Do on paper what my invention does on screen - just remember that the function is to sharpen happy realities WHILE at same time also to dim or blur upsetting realities. You don't have to write them, I mean the negatives, you simply decide and stay away from them. **AND, OF COURSE, DON'T FORGET TO TAKE YOUR DREAM FROM PAPER TO ACTION.**"

He paused for a moment, then continued:

*"The do-it-yourself Shvyzonite is as affordable as the sunlight and the rain. Poor little boy, downtown Shanghai or downtown Kirovograd, can find a pencil in the street and dream up an empire. Or a new city. Or a beautiful wife..."*



...and the beautiful thing about this world is, using his imagination, that boy can even do it without a pencil!"

"Max!!!, thank you so much," said Elena and Nate as they went over to the other sofa and hugged Max!!! very warmly.

With his fatherly smile he said: *"Dream on, my friends! And beware of the Fuzzy Time Traveler."*

<!--END STORY-->

-Wait wait who's the Fuzzy Time Traveler?

-Sorry, it's after the end of the book, no more information.

-But...



## GLOSSARY



Use this Glossary to clarify hard-to-find words. Find other definitions in your dictionary. If you can't find a definition either way, it may be colloquial speech (conversational), or somebody's poor English.

### ***First of all:***

- <!--Something--> When the text has parentheses in this style, it humorously imitates programmers' computer code.
- Bleep: a substitute for any profane word. Imitates the electronic sound used by censors to hide "bad" words in radio and TV shows.
- Shvyzonite: (pronounced 'shvee-zo-night') a mysterious gadget – read the chapters to discover what it does.

### ***And the rest is arranged by ABC:***

- AAAAA: Alexei, Alexei And Alexei Associates – Nate's employer.
- Amigo: (from Spanish) friend.
- Boje moy: 'My God' (Russian).
- Feng-Shui: (in Chinese, literally 'wind-water') an ancient philosophical system of harmonizing with the environment, usually by clever architecture.
- "Glated by Flipnets": as the protagonist said in Chapter 11, these words do not exist in the English language. In fact, many of the terms and abbreviations used by Max! to describe his invention at the beginning of Chapter 11 are fake, while some others (which ones?) do exist.
- Grivna: Ukrainian money.
- Ingul: the southbound river that flows through Kirovograd.
- KABOOM: the sound of an explosion.

- KGB/FSB/SBU: Russian/Ukrainian secret police and/or security forces. The story doesn't go into the intricate differences between them – you can find those on Wikipedia.
- Kirov Square: the central square in Kirovograd, with a statue of Sergei Kirov\* from whom the city got its name.
- Kirovograd\* (literally means 'Kirov City') is a beautiful city in the middle of Ukraine, named after Russian leader Sergei Mironovich Kirov (1886–1934).
- Lenina\*: many street names in Ukraine and Russia are after famous people, and if you just remove the "a" suffix you'll find out who that person was. Thus, "Lenina" means Lenin Street while "Karla Marksa" means Karl Marx Street, "Kosmonavta Popova" means Cosmonaut (astronaut) Popov, etc.
- Lorem ipsum: Latin-like text (made up of mixed-up Latin words) used as a placeholder text by printers and website designers.
- Marshrutka: a van-sized taxi-bus that follows a known route.
- Max! (nowadays Max!!!) including the exclamation marks, is the name that the eccentric yet fatherly inventor chose for himself.
- Mon chéri: (from French) my darling, my dear.
- PMI: Positive Moment Image – a visual recording (screen capture, or a written note/sketch) of a positive moment or any good idea.
- PMI'd, or "to PMI": a verb that means to record a PMI.
- Roksana: the bookstore on Karla Marksa street next to Star cinema. See its outer and inner photos in Chapter 6.
- RV: Remote Viewer – part of the invention in the story.
- Supernova: a star that suddenly becomes millions of times brighter than the sun and releases an enormous burst of energy.
- Sun Tzu: the Chinese author of the ancient book "The Art of War".

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\* In 2014 Kirov's monument was demolished and in 2016 the city was re-named Kropyvnytskyi after writer, actor and playwright Mark Kropyvnytskyi (1840-1910) who has been born nearby. Some street names have changed, too, but I decided to leave the story as originally written in 2010.

**BONUS STORY**  
**БОНУС СТОРИЯ**

**THE MAN WHO DIDN'T WAS**  
**ЧЕЛОВЕК КОТОРОГО НЕ БЫЛО**

Based on a true story.  
Maybe.



