

Ozzie Freedom

WHO THE (BLEEP)
STOLE MY
SHVYZONITE?!



Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

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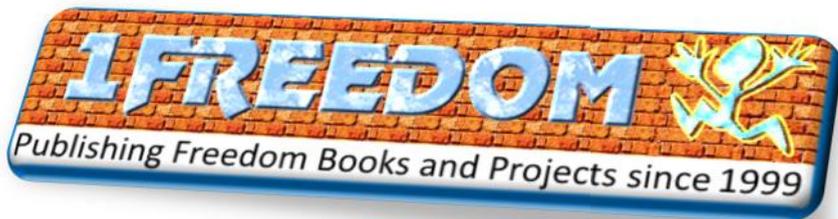
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BLEEP: Substitute for any profane word. Imitates the electronic sound used by censors to hide "bad" words in radio and TV shows.

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

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Contents

| | | |
|------------|---|-----|
| CHAPTER 1 | FRIDAY MORNING THIS GUY WOKE UP – AND HIS SHVYZONITE WAS GONE! | 5 |
| CHAPTER 2 | WHO DO I HAVE TO PUNCH AROUND HERE? | 14 |
| CHAPTER 3 | INTERNATIONAL TROUBLE AT POLICE HEADQUARTERS | 25 |
| CHAPTER 4 | SPIES AND CLASHES AT "BOGDAN KHMELNITSKY" SQUARE | 35 |
| CHAPTER 5 | THE DREAM FROM KARLA MARKSA STREET | 43 |
| CHAPTER 6 | TINY LITTLE PLACE OF MYSTERIES | 53 |
| CHAPTER 7 | I CAN'T TELL YOU THE CHAPTER'S NAME | 64 |
| CHAPTER 8 | DOWN THE ENDLESS STAIRCASE | 72 |
| CHAPTER 9 | UNDERGROUND (OF COURSE!) GATHERING IN THE BASEMENT | 80 |
| CHAPTER 10 | MEET MAX! | 86 |
| CHAPTER 11 | GLATED BY FLIPNETS | 94 |
| CHAPTER 12 | OH ELENA B, WHY WON'T YOU B MINE?! | 104 |
| CHAPTER 13 | HOW THE HARDEST SATURDAY BEGAN | 110 |
| CHAPTER 14 | HOW THE HARDEST SATURDAY ENDED | 122 |
| CHAPTER 15 | SUPERNOVA OF UNSPOKEN WORDS | 131 |
| CHAPTER 29 | MAKE YOURSELF A SHVYZONITE | 141 |
| GLOSSARY | | 151 |

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 sweet 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.

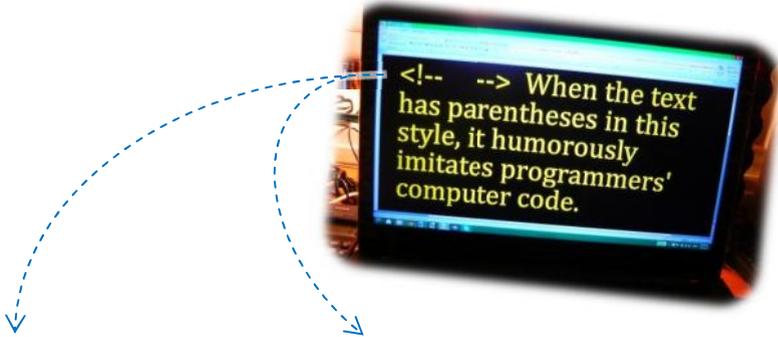
*I love Russia and Russians, too. **Let me dedicate this book to all the people and many nations of these great countries** as I remember them, before they were violently torn apart by forces of greed and domination. And no, it wasn't Putin.*

*But let's put politics aside. **May this book inspire you and me to pray together for a New Era of Peace and Brotherhood between all nations.** I hope that peace has already returned by the time you're reading this book.*

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*]. 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?!

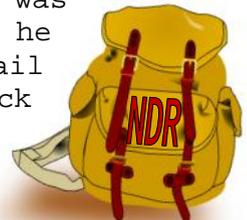


Nate's picturesque balcony on Lenina Avenue

"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?



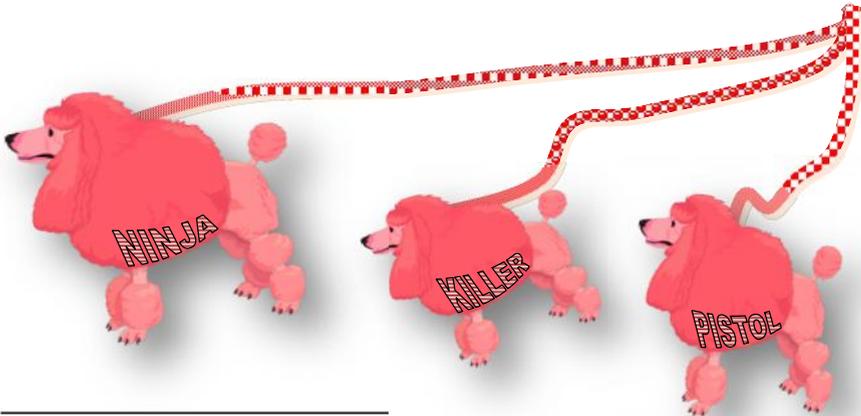
*Nate's address at the time;
the sign says, in Russian:
29 Lenina¹ Avenue →*



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 Fl tsie and her three pink poodles, each neatly secured at the end of a sparkling red leash.

"Thank you mon chéri²," said Missis Fl tsie and pulled her doggies along, "Off to work again?"



¹ 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.

² 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 Fl 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 Fl 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 Fl tsie was Missis Fl 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?"

Fl 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 marshrutka³ 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

³ 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 Ingul⁴ 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?-->



⁴ 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 said: "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 KGB⁵?*]

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

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

⁵ 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 said 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 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 said: *"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 shv zee-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 shv zee-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 Pertsivka⁶ 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.

⁶ Pertsivka: Ukrainian vodka ("Horilka") infused with hot cayenne peppers.

Are You Ready for Scene 29?



<!--Begin Scene 29-->



ACTION!

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! ZzZzZzBang!

NATE smashes two computer screens all over the floor. For the sound effect.

The audience applauds and cheers loudly.

NATE bows.



CUT!

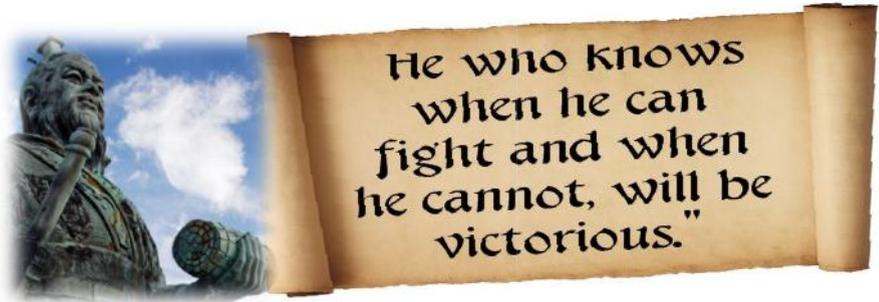
<!--End Scene 29-->



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 Tzu⁷ 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 promised and proceeded to Plan B which was: leave this dump and go right away to Leninsky Police Headquarters!

⁷ 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 LAPD⁸ architectural disaster.

⁸ LAPD: Los Angeles Police Department.

Possibly a former palace built for some lazy aristocratic dude, it was now beautifully re-modeled 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-Sh t* 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 and bought it.
[dollars]
- 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 zee-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 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, Kropivnitsky 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 Khmelnitsky 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 Khmelnitsky 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 LLANFAIRPWLLGWYNGYLLGOGERYCHWYRNDROBWL LANTYSILIOGOGOCH 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.

Who the (Bleep) Stole My Shvyzonite?!

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...ZzZzZzBang!



<!--TO BE CONTINUED-->

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



<!--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-->

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