

Igor Bondar

*Once upon a time
in Heaven*

Return

Fictional story

Eternity cannot be seen by the eye. But with the heart, one can. Why is this so? It is simple. Our eyes, as well as the whole body, is the product of the world we live in. However, our heart, or our soul in other words, is the creation of another world, the creation of Eternity. Therefore, the soul can see its Home. But only when it is pure, high and wants it very much...

Tangalooma

The wind was filling the sails of *Dolce Dive* catamaran and cheerfully drove it further away from any civilization. At its helm stood Josh, an Australian. His friends: Mike from America, Yegor, a diver from Russia and Bob, Josh's nephew who was wearing his old-fashioned tricorn hat, were all sitting not far from him, looking at the blue ocean with joy.

After a year of living on land, they missed the vast ocean a lot. So now, they were literally absorbing the sea air, the sun and the magnificent atmosphere of forthcoming adventures. The catamaran swayed slightly on the waves and the entire crew felt as if they were riding a big swing. Earlier in the morning, they departed from the port of Gold Coast, heading towards Moreton Bay, and planned to reach Moreton Island before dark.

The captain pressed a couple of buttons on the display and then lowered the lever near the helm. After that, he changed his skipper's chair to the seat next to his friends. They were amazed

to see that the helm was rotating by itself to keep the catamaran on the right course.

‘Wow!’ Yegor exclaimed cheerily. ‘I see you haven’t wasted your time, my friend. What’s this technological wonder called?’

‘Autopilot,’ Josh replied, smiling. ‘I’ve also installed the radar on it: if any ship approaches us within the distance of fifteen miles away, we’ll instantly hear a signal.’

‘Very convenient,’ Mike nodded.

‘What else have you added to the ship, uncle?’ the nephew, who loved all kinds of electronics, asked Josh.

‘Unlimited Internet, of course,’ Josh replied glancing joyfully. Seeing the guy’s wide eyes, he laughed loudly. ‘Joking, Bobby. It’s better not to let the civilization into some places yet. So, I only installed the autopilot and the radar. Everything else was already good.’

‘Yes, my friends,’ Yegor said and in a few moments he thoughtfully added: ‘I still can't believe that we all wanted to return to Swain Reefs specifically. There’re so many other fascinating places in the world!’

‘Surely there’re,’ Mike smiled. ‘But all of them are more or less explored. But Swain for me is like a fairy tale that came true: kind, happy and incredible...’

‘And very unpredictable,’ Josh continued after his friend. ‘It was only at the Swain, where the most unbelievable things happened to us. I don’t have the slightest doubt that we were being led somewhere then. To some important place, it seems.’

That's why the thing I want most in the world is to come back there and continue. Compared to this, everything else is much more boring.'

'This story at Swain Reefs resembles me of a fairy tale too,' Bob said seriously. 'I do love fairy tales. I read a lot of them during my childhood.'

At that moment, the three older friends looked cheerfully at young Bob and tactfully covered their smiles with their hands.

'But, when Kathy started coming to my place, the first thing she did was to move them to the balcony,' Bob sighed. 'She says I should be masculine and cool, whereas fairy tales are written for children. But in fact, I think she understands nothing in it.'

Everyone shook with laughter.

'Relax, my nephew, you're among those who also love fairy tales,' Josh replied. 'Even though, we're much older than you are. See, how we've voted for a new fairy tale in Swain? All as one!'

'It's cool!' Bob smiled happily.

* * *

Smiling warmly, the Father and Angels were looking at their romantics returning to the Swain. It was very good that this time, they were going there not for treasures or hoards - the Father could see their hearts well. This time, something completely different was beckoning His children, something much greater.

They could not explain what it was, but the taste of what they had felt on Swain on their last journey, apparently, did not let them forget about it.

So now, His children were returning to Him without being aware of it themselves. They were sailing forward, following only their hearts. But in fact, these feelings were the most reliable compass on Earth.

The Father was looking at them with love. Well, it will be hard for Him to refuse such kind and persistent children. ‘Sail, sail on, my dears. I will prepare a very beautiful fairy tale for you,’ He said. Having heard this, the Angels glanced at each other and smiled merrily.

* * *

‘So, friends’ - Josh told his companions as the day was ending. ‘In half an hour, we’ll be passing a place called Tangalooma. However, we have enough time before dark, so we might try reaching to the end of Moreton Island today. What do you say?’

‘Whoever understands life doesn’t hurry more,’ Yegor pronounced with emotion. ‘I don’t remember where I heard this saying, but I like it very much. I am definitely for Tangalooma. The end of the island is uninhabited, whereas Tangalooma is a hotel with a good meat restaurant. On its tables lie long-long menus with various yummy dishes and magnificent desserts... Will we sail past all these?’

Bob, sitting next to Yegor, gulped excitedly.

‘I’m for Tangalooma too,’ he cast his vote.

‘You don’t have to ask me,’ Mike joined the conversation. ‘We finished our previous journey on this island, so it’d be quite symbolic to start a new from here.’

‘I’m happy that after a year, we are all thinking alike, friends,’ Josh laughed and turned the ship’s helm. ‘It’s decided! We will sail to Tangalooma.’

The island began to quickly increase in size and soon the *Dolce Dive* catamaran dropped anchor at a beautiful and windless place.

When the solar disk touched the horizon, friends had already gotten to the island by zodiac and settled at a table with a magnificent panorama of the bay.

‘Well, my dears!’ Josh said solemnly after everyone placed their orders, ‘We began our previous trip by making a plan. Back then, we looked for a sunken ship. But now, we are looking for something entirely different. I don’t even dare to formulate it into words. Nevertheless, we still need some kind of plan. So, who has any suggestions in this regards?’

Yegor sighed, breaking a minute-long silence.

‘There are no good ideas yet, friend. But on the other hand, there’s an idea on how to facilitate the thinking process a little,’ he said and called a waiter.

Soon, a bottle of nice Australian wine appeared on the table. Having instantly filled all the glasses, Yegor proposed drinking to new ideas. After the friends drank and ate a little, Mike began speaking.

‘Last time, we indeed looked for a sunken ship, so we had a clear logic. We chose the spots between the Swain’s reefs that were difficult for old sailing ships to pass through in bad weather, right?’

Everyone nodded in agreement.

‘However, this time, we’re looking for something completely different.’

‘That’s correct,’ Yegor said. ‘Previously, we searched for sunken ships, but now we’re after something abstract which we gave a general name *Avos*.’

‘Well said!’ Mike smiled. ‘We’re really sailing for all that unusual which happened to us on our first journey to continue.’

‘Although, we might actually come across another sunken ship,’ Josh spoke his thoughts.

‘Anything can happen in Swain,’ Yegor shrugged with his shoulders. ‘Last time, we saw that even our thoughts sometimes came true there. So, let it all follow the same scenario. The main thing is that it’s all incredibly interesting and so unusual that it takes your breath away.’

‘That’s right. But what will we start with?’ Mike asked. ‘On our previous trip, we simply pinpointed the spots on the map and risked to have trusted Yegor’s new word *Avos*.’

‘So, let’s rely on it once more,’ Bob entered the conversation, ‘and put the dots on the map again.’

Everyone fell silent and thoughtful.

‘Ah, Bob’s right,’ Yegor said a moment later. ‘Why change something that worked well?’

‘Good thinking,’ Josh agreed. ‘We’ll head where our dots coincide most.’

‘Hm, yeah, right,’ Mike smiled broadly. ‘Whether we’ll find there: corals, another sunken ship or unidentified underwater object, is no longer up to us.’

‘Wow!’ Bob’s eyes shone. ‘I’ve heard about an unidentified flying object, but as for the unidentified underwater one...’

‘Well, it seems a lot is possible with the *Avos*’ plan,’ Yegor replied. ‘It’s exactly why we are all coming back to the Swain after a year with such interest.’

Then, the Russian diver filled the glasses with wine again.

‘So, friends,’ he said, ‘let’s drink to the continuation of our fairytale in Swain!’

‘To the incredible plan *Avos*!’ Josh smiled and raised his wine glass.

‘And to the most interesting thing I’ve ever had,’ Bob added.

‘To *Avos*!’ Mike summarized and the friends clinked the glasses.

It was not in vain that Yegor had been teaching them this old Russian tradition for so long.

* * *

After a couple of days, catamaran *Dolce Dive* was passing by a place called Inskip. A little canal divided a large Fraser island and the mainland in that spot. Sometimes, it was very difficult for ships to sail here. Especially in low tide with big waves. However, that day the ocean was calm and, besides, it was also high tide time.

Our friends rapidly passed the difficult section and after that calmly sailed along the inner water area of the bay. Another forty minutes later, they were already anchored in a suitable lagoon located a couple of miles away from the town called Rainbow Beach.

‘Josh,’ Yegor turned his friend, ‘do you know why this place is called Rainbow Beach?’

‘Can I try to answer this question?’ Instead of the Australian, Mike responded with a mysterious smile.

‘Sure,’ Yegor nodded and looked at him with interest.

‘Maybe it got its name because of the local sky,’ Mike laughed and pointed at a couple of big clouds with his hand.

Yegor looked in that direction and smiled as well. Between these clouds, a bright piece of the rainbow was clearly visible.

‘It seems there is some true in your version,’ he nodded in agreement.

‘Look! There is another rainbow over there!’ Bob joined the conversation and pointed in a slightly different direction.

‘Okay, friends, I have no more doubts left,’ Yegor gave a satisfied chuckle, ‘town’s name is out of the question.’

‘I like your version,’ Josh smiled, ‘but in fact on the local beach just a lot of colorful sand.’

Everybody laughed cheerfully.

‘Yeah, there are interesting places here’, Mike said, ‘perhaps, we should take a walk around the town in the evening.’

‘With pleasure,’ Josh agreed, ‘but only after we complete our plan.’

‘By placing the points on the map?’ the nephew asked him, guessing.

‘Exactly, Bobby,’ his uncle nodded, ‘in a day or two, we will already be in the waters of the Great Barrier Reef. And it is better for us to know the direction beforehand.’

‘In addition to all this, we will probably have something to discuss this evening at the local café,’ Mike smiled broadly.

‘And if we are very lucky, we will have something to celebrate at once.’ Yegor smiled broader than the American

Everybody burst out laughing.

‘Ok, guys, let’s get down to our work. Do you remember well how we did it last time?’ Josh asked.

The team nodded simultaneously.

‘Then, let’s start in the same order. The detailed maps of Swain are waiting for us on the computer. Place ten dots on them just like the last time. Then, I will sum up the results.’

* * *

Four Angels: Asli, Few, Nias and Sain, were sitting on the crossbar of the catamaran looking at their earthly wards.

‘Guys, is there anyone who already knows what our Father has prepared for them?’ Angel Few asked his friends.

The other Angels exchanged glances and shook their heads negatively.

‘So, what are we going to do? Wait for the results or better ask our Father right now?’ inquiring Few asked once again with a smile.

However, in that minute, a warm answer came by itself in their hearts. For a second, the Angels exchanged surprised glances and burst out laughing.

‘You have come up with such a wonderful idea, Father!’ said Angel Asli. ‘It seems that the result will be unexpected by our guys.’

‘The more interesting it will be for us to see their reaction,’ said Nias, ‘and at the same time observe how they will solve the problem.’

‘For some reason, I think that they will easily cope with it,’ the Father said cheerfully.

‘I have the same opinion,’ said Angel Sain, ‘and if they have any questions, Yegor will find them help quickly.’

All the Angels laughed sonorously again.

* * *

In the evening of the same day, the four friends were sitting at a table in a cozy cafe located near the seashore. They all got there by taxi that they had ordered over their phones. This is because the way from the lagoon shore to this town was not within walking distance.

Despite the delicious dishes on the table, the faces of our friends this evening looked a bit thoughtful. It was clear that the result they had got after checking all the dots surprised them a lot.

‘Yeah, friends everything looks absolutely different this time,’ the American diver said thoughtfully, ‘I wonder, what does it mean?’

‘You are right, Mike,’ Yegor nodded, ‘last time we had three places where dots matched and they stood very close to each other. And this time, we have not a single coincidence’.

‘And on the top of it all,’ Josh shrugged his shoulders, ‘even the smallest distance between the closest dots is more than a mile in our case. And this is a lot. So, there can be no question about coincidence.’

‘Well, if only we don’t talk about the option of vice versa coincidences,’ Yegor murmured, reflecting.

‘How is that?’ the friends asked together.

Yegor looked at them and suddenly coughed in a very demonstrative way.

‘Guys, am I the only one who has a scratchy throat or someone has it, too?’ he asked with the most harmless voice.

Everyone around started to laugh. Soon, a bottle of good Australian wine and a can of beer for Bob appeared on the table.

‘So, what did you mean, Yegor?’ asked Josh after they took a sip of their drinks.

‘I think, I also guessed. Yegor, shall I try to answer?’ Mike, who was sitting and looking thoughtfully in the direction of the ocean, suddenly responded, instead of the Russian diver.

‘Have a try, mate!’ Yegor smiled.

‘Extremity, friends. It is all about extremity,’ the American started to talk, though a little confused, but when he saw uncomprehending eyes of Josh and Bob, he explained: ‘You see, the complete coincidence of all the dots - is one extremity, and the complete mismatch of the dots is also an extreme, but a different one. Is it clear?’

‘Well, to some extent,’ Josh said thoughtfully, ‘but what follows from that?’

‘Extremes always says more than a dull middle,’ Mike continued, ‘and our extreme with no coincidence too is, supposed to mean something’.

‘Yes,’ Yegor nodded slyly, ‘is it more clear now?’

Josh and Bob nodded their heads a little bit more confidently.

‘Well, it makes sense,’ Bob said slowly. ‘However, the match of all the dots means that there is something in that place. So, what does the absence of coincidences mean?’

‘Complete and indisputable absence’, clarified Josh, while thinking.

‘Exactly, complete absence of coincidences, friends. I would even say it is a kind of demonstrative absence,’ Yegor said with a mysterious smile and poured wine into his friends’ glasses, ‘so, friends, let’s drink to our unusual plan “*Avos*”?’

Everybody clinked their glasses and were about taking a sip when in the last minute Josh suddenly hit his forehead with a palm.

‘*Avos!*’ he exclaimed joyfully, ‘that is where the entire plan is hidden, friends. Our result is *Avos!*’

‘How is that?’ the friends asked together.

‘*Avos* is a case, uncertain, hope. Did I understand the meaning of this word correctly, Yegor?’ the Australian looked at the Russian diver.

Yegor nodded cheerfully in confirmation.

‘Well, a case can be everywhere and every time. It does not need a special place!’ Josh continued.

Everyone tried to comprehend his speech and suddenly started to smile one by one too.

‘You want to say...’ Mike began to speak.

‘Yes, friend,’ Yegor grasped his thought, ‘Josh is absolutely right! *Avos* has to be nowhere and everywhere. It is like an inevitable surprise.’

‘*Avos* can be in any place where we are,’ suddenly Bob started to talk.

‘Great, nephew!’ the uncle slapped him on the shoulder, ‘well done!’

‘Well, friends,’ Yegor smiled broadly, ‘in my opinion, getting such a result means that *Avos* plan took us to the second level of the game. The unusual most interesting game called Swain.’

‘Does this game have a third level? And how many levels are there at all in it? And what is the prize going to be in the end?’ Bob, who played all these games since childhood and was computerised by them, started to gibber.

Everyone laughed.

At the same time, the Invisible angels laughed, sitting at a nearby empty table, and the Father looked at all his children from Heaven with a cheerful smile.

* * *

The next day, the catamaran gaily sailed along the calm waters of canals towards Hervey Bay. This time Yegor was at the helm, whereas Josh, Mike and Bob settled down at the table on the back deck. They chatted at ease and interrupted only when a pack of dolphins passed them by. In this case, the friends with interest always followed them with their gazes and then returned to the conversation.

‘It is interesting and even a little unusual this time to swim to Swain with no plan,’ said Josh.

‘Why are we without a plan?’ said Mike, ‘beautiful diving is a good plan itself.’

‘Especially since Swain is an entire divers’ country, the size of which is fifty by eighty kilometres’, said Yegor, who sometimes participated in the conversation from the Captain’s place, ‘and what is more, this country is almost unknown.’

‘Is it not a great plan,’ asked Mike, ‘to dive in new beautiful places and enjoy underwater world? Well, and wait for the unusual plan Avos to bring us something.’

‘In my view, it is a very good plan,’ Bob, who was sitting at the table in a triangular hat, judiciously agreed with his friends.

‘Yes, I absolutely agree, friends!’ Josh raised two hands, ‘I also like this plan. I did not say that it is bad, just that it is unusual.’

‘Then, get used to it, friend,’ Mike smiled, ‘after one or two times diving in beautiful places we will quickly be accustomed to all this.’

The divers smiled having good feelings about the forthcoming trip.

‘By the way, Bobby,’ Yegor suddenly changed the topic of the conversation, ‘how did Kathy let you go on a trip this time? Calmly or not?’

‘You know, much better than the last time,’ the fellow said seriously. ‘Last time, she did not believe long after the trip that we found underwater treasures, indeed. Well, until I bought a flat, car and a little yacht.’

‘Did she believe then?’ Josh smiled.

‘What options did she have?’ Bob laughed, ‘and more, she let me hang my triangular hat near the door, despite the fact that she hates it very much.’

Everyone burst out laughing.

‘That is what treasures does to women,’ Yegor summed up.

‘Definitely,’ the guy nodded and suddenly looked at his friends. ‘And this time, for some reason, she said that she’s always wanted to live in a house near the ocean. What do you think? Did she say that without any hint?’

His older friends exchanged their gazes and smiled slyly.

‘Well, how do I tell you, Bobby,’ finally Yegor started to speak, ‘actually, this question can be a regular process. To broaden your horizon in that area I would suggest you to read the famous fairy tale of Pushkin “The golden fish”. It must be on the Internet in English translation.’

‘Really?’ the fellow asked with interest. ‘What is this fairy tale about?’

‘Well, an old man presented his old woman with a new washtub. Then, she later wanted a house, then a bigger house, and so on.’

‘Just like in real life,’ Bob replied with greater interest.

‘Well, yes. There was a fish that fulfilled all the wishes of an old man.’

‘Really? And how did it end?’

‘Well, when the old woman desired to eventually become the queen of all the seas, then all her houses disappeared and she turned out to be sitting near an old broken washtub,’ Josh answered instead of Yegor who had read this book once.

‘Ohh,’ said Bob with a feeling and added after a while, ‘I need to give this book to Kathy’.

The older friends burst out laughing.

‘But be very careful, Bobby, or a real washtub can be thrown at you once.’

Without dots

By the end of the day, the travellers reached the port of Urangan, which was familiar to them. Having stayed there for the night, they refuelled the catamaran’s tanks the next morning and replenished their food supplies from a local supermarket.

It was ten o’clock in the morning, when they finally sailed into Harvey bay and headed towards the Great Barrier Reef slowly.

By the day’s end, the divers managed to arrive at the southernmost inner end of Fraser Island. Here, protected from waves, they decided to stay overnight. Meanwhile, the friends checked the weather forecast once more. For the coming week, the wind was expected to be from fair to moderate which was quite acceptable for the crew.

On the next day, even before sunrise, *Dolce Dive* catamaran raised its anchor and sailed into Coral Sea. As the distance to the Swain reefs was rather long – nearly two hundred and seventy kilometres – the divers decided not to make haste but make an intermediate stop on the islands called the Banker Group.

That day, a fresh side wind blew, so the team did not turn on the engines. When the lads had set all the sails, the *Dolce Dive* paced at a speed between seven and eight knots per hour. It was quite satisfactory for the friends aboard, so they switched autopilot on and settled themselves comfortably on the rear deck.

It was very quiet on the ship that was going under its sails, using no engines.

‘Bobby, what do you hear now?’ Yegor turned to the guy with an old sea trick.

‘Well, nothing,’ the young man shrugged his shoulders, ‘it seems quiet now.’

‘It’s because you’re green,’ a smiling Josh interfered the conversation, catching his friend’s thought. ‘Though, we do hear that thanks to this wonderful wind blowing, our money is being saved on fuel the we spare.’

Everyone burst into laughter.

‘I ought to get Kathie to listen to it somehow. She will surely like this sound,’ the lad smiled back, catching his breath.

About eleven o'clock, Lady Elliot Island drifted past them far from the ship’s board. Three hours later, they sailed alongside Lady Musgrave Island.

‘Well, my friends, will we stop for lunch somewhere there or go on sailing till sunset?’ Josh asked everybody.

‘I prefer to stop here for a bite, friend. We aren’t hurrying anywhere,’ Yegor said thoughtfully. ‘Generally, the underwater area is very nice here. It’s only two o’clock. We may try diving under the ship until the sun drops.’

‘Why not? It’s a wonderful idea! I too want to pay a visit to the local underwater kingdom of the sea. I’m totally for the stop!’ Mike spoke with a smile and raised both his hands.

Bobby waved his three-cornered hat in agreement.

‘So well, it is decided then,’ Josh nodded, switched off the autopilot and turned the helm.

* * *

Having swam underwater below the ship amid beautiful corals and coloured schools of fishes, in the evening, our friends settled on the catamaran’s rear deck and prepared themselves to meet the sunset.

‘Wow! What a joy it has been!’ Mike reflected. ‘Though we, the humans, are dry land creatures, for some reason, the underwater world is far from alien to me.’

‘I agree with every word of yours,’ Yegor nodded.

Bobby, who dived in pair with his uncle, smiled admiringly.

‘Right, it was great indeed’, Josh said and then, he added, ‘but tomorrow, a long enough passage to the Swain lies ahead. Nearly one hundred sixty kilometers to the reef. Therefore, friends, we’ll turn the engines on for some time to increase our travel speed. By doing this, we’ll surely get to the site before sunset.’

‘And we must set off as early as possible,’ Yegor added.

Everyone nodded in agreement.

‘Well then, let’s sit for a couple of hours more and go to sleep,’ Mike summed up.

At that moment, the sun’s disc touched the line of the ocean. The friends silently watched the day give way to the night.

‘What point are we sailing up to this time?’ the nephew asked his uncle.

‘Last time, we started from the Twins reef, Bobby. Although this time, I want to begin our trip on the Swain from the Howard Patch reef. It is a bit closer to us and much bigger, by the way. We’ll be safe from high waves anchored behind it.’

‘And next steps, we’ll decide on the spot,’ Mike added. ‘*Avos*’ plan doesn’t presuppose any long-term predictions, basically.’

* * *

Well before the sunrise, the crew hoisted anchor and, having made a curve around Musgrave Island, the *Dolce Dive* catamaran

set its course for the Swain reefs. The wind's direction was the same, so the friends set all the sails again. After that, the catamaran's speed reached seven knots per hour. Josh started the engines and the speed increased by five knots more.

'That's a going,' the captain said satisfied. 'We'll sail with the engines on for about three hours, then we'll turn them off. Further, we'll have enough time left to get to the site under the sails.'

Josh remained at the steering wheel, while the rest of the crew moved to the bow. There was almost no noise from the engines. The waves were smooth and rolling that day, so the sea swell did not hinder the lads from having a relaxed talk.

'I'm still thinking,' began Bob, 'what may we generally come across at the Swain?'

'The youth are always inquisitive,' Mike pronounced with a wise air.

'That's right,' Yegor nodded and added, 'Well, not to worry, it will pass. Say, in about twenty years, he will come to realize that expecting something good is hardly worse than the good itself.'

The elder divers began to smile.

'What's that about?' the young man asked blankly.

'Well, Yegor meant that we're also excited about what awaits us there, on the Swain,' Mike explained, 'simply, he's spoken in a high-flown manner.'

'Ah! I s-e-e-e,' Bob nodded respectfully.

The Russian diver instantly turned away, so that his broad smile could not be seen.

‘It should be quite boring to live with no interest at all, Yegor. There must be some interest still,’ Mike said. ‘But in Swain’s case, we’re treading onto completely unknown and unstudied territory. That’s what is truly interesting.’

‘What d’you mean?’ the Russian diver asked him with interest.

‘Well, for instance, when you go fishing, you can catch a fish, which can be of different sorts. But it will always be only fish,’ Mike began illustrating. ‘And when you go to hunt, you will shoot a wildfowl, for example. Regardless, your trophy will be only of such kind.’

‘It’s also advised to watch out for other hunters around there...’ Bob added, making everyone laugh.

‘I agree,’ Mike nodded. ‘But as for the Swain, we begin such *fishing* that no one will tell when and what we’ll catch. That’s the most interesting point.’

‘You mean, we’re going to do like *superfishing*?’ Bob quickly found the definition.

‘Right!’ Mike burst into a cheerful laughter.

‘That’s how the youth can give the right definitions,’ Yegor smiled.

‘Seriously,’ Mike continued, ‘last time, we had chess, a chest and a sunken ship *Avos*’, and an antique bottle, and much more.’

‘What may there be this time?’ Bob asked.

‘I can’t tell,’ Mike shrugged his shoulders, ‘and I don’t want to know until the time comes, frankly speaking.’

‘I reckon we’ll have some prompts,’ Yegor said.

‘Prompts?’ Bob wondered.

Mike bent his head closer.

‘I’m sure there will be something like this,’ the Russian diver replied. ‘For some reason, it seems to me that the result of all this going on should be us understanding something. Otherwise, why all this? In any case, it means some grand meaning stands behind all these events.’

‘The meaning of what?’ Mike asked.

‘I don’t know currently,’ Yegor replied honestly, ‘but something important for sure. Decorations around us were very large, they could not have appeared without important reasons. So, there must be some serious meaning in this all.’

‘I agree with most of that,’ Mike nodded.

‘It’s pretty unreasonable to make any suppositions further beyond this,’ Yegor shrugged his shoulders. ‘Why look into the end of the fairy tale? It must be read from the beginning to the end to enjoy every page of its contents.’

Everyone shone a smile at such beautiful comparison.

‘Hey, friends, won’t you have a look at the dolphins?’ they heard the captain’s voice and looked at where he was pointing to.

A big group of dolphins was swimming near their ship in parallel, some of which would leap high out of the water and

cheerily fall back. The dolphins slowly overtook the ship and moved on.

For long afterwards, the enchanted divers stood watching them swim away.

The Swain

The next day, the travellers woke up late. They had nowhere to hurry to: two weeks of amusing diving in various parts of the Swain reefs laid ahead. In addition, they did not have any specific goal.

After a good breakfast at ten o'clock, they sat on the rear deck to make their plans for the day. After a short discussion, they decided to first dive in the outer side of the reef where they were at the moment. Then, they drew lots – who the first would be to go underwater.

Fortune smiled on Mike and Josh. Bob was to accompany them on an inflatable boat; Yegor had to stay on the catamaran by the lot, then go and dive with Bob later. Josh and Mike checked their equipment leisurely, then put it on and embarked on the boat. Bob joined them and they slowly set off towards the outer part of the reef.

Yegor waved them good-bye and left, taking his thermos bottle to the ship bow. There, he sat down and began watching colourful fishes that swam in a shallow water under the

catamaran. He spent nearly fifteen minutes and emptied a couple of cups with the fragrant drink.

Everything went remarkably well, but suddenly Yegor felt the need to look along the board to the catamaran's rear. What he saw was so unusual that the thermos bottle cup fell from his hand. On the edge of the back platform, there sat a mermaid. Her sparkling scaled tail was hanging beautifully down to the water. She was straightening her white hair with some comb, looking with a smile at the Russian diver.

Yegor smiled back by force of habit. And that was the silliest smile of his life. Realising in his heart that what he was seeing now cannot be at all, the Russian diver closed his eyes. Then, to be secure, he rubbed them well with his fists and shook his head. At last, he cautiously reopened his eyes and looked towards the mermaid again. There was no sign of her on the catamaran's rear deck.

The diver sighed with relief. He thought it over for a while and looked suspiciously at the thermos bottle with coffee.

'Has someone poured something in it for fun?' was the first thought that crossed his mind.

But then, he threw this thought aside: no one would have done it among his friends. The Russian diver himself had never noticed any hallucinations before, therefore the incident seemed more than unusual to him.

Immersed in his thoughts, he slowly rose to his feet and headed towards the rear part of the catamaran to check if everything was on its place there. Having come to the platform, he saw that it was

wet. It could have been due to numerous reasons. Perhaps, some of his friends had rinsed their equipment before diving.

The diver came closer and froze suddenly: in the corner, under the step, there lay one rather big scale. Yegor hiccupped and carefully took it. They had not fished on this trip yet, so there was nothing the scale could have come from.

‘It all hasn’t possibly been a hallucination,’ the stunned diver thought.

Yegor sat down on a step. He devoted the following ten minutes to thinking about whether he should tell his friends about this or not. His innate honesty was voting for telling them everything, while the reputation of an idiot, which could stick to him after telling such a story, was against. Yegor postponed such an uneasy voting until later and treaded to the ship bow to finish his coffee.

* * *

The underwater world met Mike and Josh solemnly: just a minute after they had dived, a huge, gracious manta swam right below them. Our friends watched her glide away for a long time and then, they proceeded along the splendid corals of the reef.

That day, the divers were purely pleased with plenty of inhabitants. Sea turtles, reef sharks, groupers, octopuses and shoals of colourful fishes would come one after another. The friends turned their heads all around, marvelling at the beauty of virgin underwater nature.

Hardly any fin of a diver had ever swum there before them. An exciting sense of being explorers added colours to the friends' mood. On their way, they swam into a couple of small caverns that were finely overgrown with blue-white corals inside. Josh turned on his torch so that the friends could watch them for some time.

On the sandy bottom of one cavern, there lay a big ray, nearly one and a half metres in diameter. In another cave, there lived a big school of beautiful striped fish. Exiting the second cavern, Mike stopped and began examining something on its bottom. Then, he took a diver's knife and began to scrape the item. Josh, who observed all that with curiosity, swam up closer. Mike's efforts produced a small item, which was apparently of earthly origin.

The friends looked at the thing intently and amusedly. Having scrubbed and cleaned it with the knife, they finally realised that it was a metallic buckle with a prominent relief image on it. Mike stared at it thoughtfully for a few moments and put it away into his vest pocket. After that, they continued their underwater trip.

The air of their tanks gradually came to an end, and diver's underwater computers suggested them rising a slightly higher. Not arguing with them, Mike and Josh swam to the peak of the coral reef. Having ascended to a five-metre depth, they found a beautifully overgrown coral slope and swam around there until the time for the decompression stop was out. After that, Josh released a red buoy to the surface for Bobby to see, and the friends began rising to the water surface.

Later in the evening after dinner, the friends settled around the catamaran's rear deck. Josh and Bobby were relaxed and smiling, reflecting on the feelings they had received from the last brilliant diving. Yegor was thinking about something, and Mike's face also bore a shadow of thoughtfulness while twisting the belt buckle, that he had found on the sea bottom. The American diver had cleaned it well, so the letter *N* could be distinctly seen on it.

'What's on your mind?' Josh asked his friend. 'If it's about this buckle, you shouldn't bother: some fisherman had dropped it in the sea occasionally. The fishermen here aren't as scarce, as we, divers.'

Mike smiled.

'Well, I don't worry about it much,' he shrugged his shoulders, 'simply, there's one thing that seems a bit strange to me.'

'What's that?' Yegor wondered sincerely.

'This letter *N* on the buckle,' he replied, 'it was made in a very unusual style.'

'It may be,' Josh reacted and having taken the buckle from Mike, he turned to examine it for a few moments. 'Well right, there's something in it. An unusual design of the letter. However, now all producers are striving to make something original.'

'Precisely,' young Bob caught the thought. 'There're hundreds of brands with one, two and three letters.'

‘You’re right, friends,’ Mike smiled, ‘but I’ve only already seen the exact same design many-many years ago. And I’ve never come across it since.’

Everyone looked at the American diver amazed.

‘So, where have you seen such design of the letter *N*?’ Yegor enquired quietly.

‘In one book which I really liked reading in my childhood,’ the American replied cheerily. ‘Written by Jules Verne, *Twenty thousand leagues under the sea*. Certainly, you’ve heard about captain *Nemo* and his submarine *Nautilus*. It comes from there. Also, there were many pictures in the book, namely there I’ve seen this sign for the first time. Accordingly, it served as *Nautilus*’s emblem.’

Everyone stared at Mike in silence.

‘It’s just a coincidence, I suppose,’ Bob put forward his version at last.

‘A story from your childhood? Namely that, which you loved much? And now, it suddenly emerges on our first day at the Swain,’ thoughtful Yegor spoke in a low voice. ‘Me, I used to love reading fairy tales about mermaids when I was a boy...’

‘Mermaids?’ Bob asked, looking blankly. ‘What’re mermaids to do with it?’

Mike and Josh looked at the Russian diver with interest.

‘Oh! Come what may!’ he sighed. ‘All right, I’ll tell you everything. After that, I’ll be an idiot, of course. This is why I did

not want to talk about it firstly. But in addition to Mike's story, my case begins to have, in my opinion, an important meaning.'

'Case, an idiot... Yegor, what're you speaking about?' Josh asked his friend with a confused voice.

'Well, that's nothing, not to bother, friend. Simply today, I saw a mermaid on our catamaran's rear deck. Well, she was combing her hair there, see?' Yegor looked at the friends, sitting with big round eyes, sighed and continued his narrative.

* * *

'Fine, now it is as it has been before,' angel Few smiled, having inserted a new scale into the mermaid's tail.

'It looks quite neat now indeed,' the seamaid smiled replying. 'Thank you!'

'Thank you for helping us on the earth today,' angel Nias said.

'Well, I've had plenty of fun too,' the mermaid laughed again. 'If you could see those rounded eyes of the diver! Well, until he began rubbing them with his fists.'

All the angels there shook with laughter.

'We saw it,' angel Asli explained, 'and laughed heartily too.'

'It was the first time for me on the earth, generally,' the seamaid replied. 'Well, nothing, I liked it there. The sea is somewhat similar to ours.'

'There is some resemblance in it,' angel Sain agreed.

‘Call me, if you need me once more,’ the mermaid smiled, waved at the angels and jumped into the waters of Paradise Sea.

There, she immediately swam into the blue. The angels waved after her from the high shore.

‘So, friends, do you think our divers will manage to comprehend the meaning of all that correctly?’ angel Few asked his friends.

A complete silence fell for a while.

‘I reckon they have a good chance anyway,’ angel Nias smiled at last. ‘But the challenge is slightly more complex this time. What did Yegor say about them getting to the second level?’

All the angels laughed merrily again.

‘Well, it’s their second arrival to the Swain, therefore the level should be the second.’

‘Alright, friends, let us fly to them and hear everything on the spot ourselves. What’s the use of guessing if it will all be clear in half an hour,’ angel Sain suggested.

The friends nodded and cheerfully waved spreading their wings.

* * *

‘Well, that’s the whole story,’ Yegor drew the conclusion, ‘all that I found at the place where the mermaid had been, was this scale.’

The Russian diver put a typical silver ten cent-sized scale on the table. Total silence fell on the catamaran.

‘A scale, you say?’ Josh pronounced very calmly. ‘From that mermaid’s tail probably...’

‘It resembles one of a mirror carp scale a bit,’ Mike noted, examining the finding.

‘Maybe mirror carps and mermaids are relatives?’ Bob questioned in his turn.

‘So, well,’ Yegor sighed, ‘that’s why I didn’t want to tell you all about it. I knew you won’t believe it. I wouldn’t believe myself if I heard something like that.’

Josh gave his friend a questioning look.

‘You know, Yegor, we’ve known each other for fifteen years now. Certainly, you like to laugh and play jokes, but you definitely don’t like to look like an idiot at the end,’ the Australian smiled. ‘Therefore, I believe you, although this story sounds just incredible.’

‘And I believe,’ Bob said, ‘just because it happened on our first day on the Swain.’

‘I believe you too, Yegor,’ Mike added, thoughtfully turning the buckle in his hands. ‘Then, this all should have some sense. Let’s figure out what it might mean.’

‘Stories from childhood, various dreams of youth,’ Josh began thinking aloud.

‘No! No! No way!’ Yegor objected raising both his hands. ‘You’re speaking it alright, but too formally-dry.’

Then, the Russian diver coughed politely and looked at the cupboard emotionally. Mike caught his eyes and smiled.

‘I agree with Yegor: it sounds a bit dryly,’ he said.

Josh laughed out, understanding his friends’ thoughts and went to the cupboard for a bottle of wine.

‘Alright, following our good old tradition, we’ll try wetting this conversation a little,’ the Australian pulled out the cork and filled glasses. ‘Well, friends, let’s drink to new and amazing riddles of the Swain!’

* * *

‘So, my friends, we’ve got a few news since our first day on the Swain,’ Josh spoke twenty minutes later. ‘Who’s got anything to say in regards to this?’

At that moment, the sun disc touched the horizon and the wind was calm. Only small waves, lapping against the ship’s board disturbed the fallen silence from time to time.

‘This time, as it seems to me,’ Mike began slowly, ‘the *Avos*’ plan is trying to draw us to some thoughts.’

‘What thoughts?’ interested Bob asked.

‘Let’s think it over together,’ Yegor said and leaned on the chair relaxed. ‘Well firstly, it all happened during the first day at the Swain, so, it means someone doesn’t want us to waste time here.’

‘It seems so,’ Josh nodded, ‘what else?’

‘Then, there comes the buckle and the mermaid,’ Mike started to speak. ‘The only thing that connects both of these is that Yegor and I were passionate about these things in childhood.’

‘Perhaps, we are supposed to return to childhood?’ Bob spoke with his eyes shining. ‘But why are we supposed to return there?’

His elder friends fell about laughing.

‘Not you, Bobby, us,’ his uncle could hardly speak, catching his breath finally, ‘because you haven't really left your childhood properly yet.’

Bob frowned, thinking, and then looked at his companions cheerily.

‘Well right, I’ll put it in a different way. What is it that I still have, but you haven’t...?’

A new gale of laughter followed for an answer.

‘Good boy,’ Josh said, admiring his nephew. ‘You’ve managed to defend yourself beautifully now.’

‘I have practiced a little with Kathie,’ the lad dropped his eyes modestly.

Everyone smiled.

‘So, let’s go on,’ Yegor said, ‘children... what particular qualities do they possess? Well, certainly, they’re more open...’

‘...then, you and I just merely believed in fairy tales, Yegor. We were much more trusting,’ Mike spoke for him.

‘That’s it! Exactly!’ Yegor shook up. ‘Trustfulness...’

‘Right, I too think the answer lies here,’ Josh caught the thought cheerily. ‘It means we all should become more trusting with everything we see on the Swain. For it is only people who trust that are capable of believing in something truly.’

‘And I read the Gospel last year. Well, I felt interest for it after our last travel,’ Bob began abruptly. ‘I recall a phrase from it: *become as little children*. I think it has some relation to our topic of discussion.’

The adult divers looked at the boy in surprise.

‘Bobby, from where did you get the wisdom?’ Yegor asked, whistling in surprise.

‘Well guys, something about kids we've already figured out,’ the lad smiled modestly.

Then, he put on his hat contentedly and went to the cook-room to eat a deserved, sweet bun. This way followed by a cheery laughter of his friends, of course.

At that moment, the four angels were laughing nearby. Today, their wards have solved everything excellently.

The Wall

Next morning, the friends raised the anchor and headed further, deep into the Swain reef. Though this time, it took them only a couple of hours to the next stop: they had nowhere to hurry,

riddles would find them by themselves, while the underwater world was marvellous everywhere in those places. Josh chose a suitable lagoon at the atoll and dropped the anchor in its sandy part.

An hour later, Yegor and Josh went to dive. Bob took them on a zodiac to the site and Mike promised to cook something tasty by their return.

The reef, which the divers intended to descend to, was not at the outer side of the atoll, therefore water currents should not have been strong there. Soon, Josh and Yegor, counting to three, catapulted themselves from the zodiac, their backs forward; while in flying, the Russian diver managed to wave his hand to Bob.

Noiseless world of wetness took the divers to its bosom and instantly pleased with a good visibility. It was more than twenty metres in depth right below them, but blocks of corals were clearly visible on the bottom. Josh and Egor slowly descended to them, looking around, and after headed along the bottom and edge of the reef.

Life on the sea bottom differed slightly from that near the reef. Here, there were more of various rays and coloured fishes that like to dig themselves in sand. At times, divers could see the heads of Moray eels and mustaches of lobsters. Once, there swam past quite a big triangle-headed bottom shark, which was called guitar-shark for some reason.

Our divers remembered well yesterday's discussion and were mentally ready to any unexpected findings or incidents. However, the time was passing, but nothing unusual happened. Having saturated themselves with marvelling at the beauty of bottom

world, the friends swam upwards along the reef's slope. In addition, their computers began to hint that it was time to rise from the depths. The fellows did not argue with smart gadgets. Soon, their depth meter indicated 15 metres.

Josh and Yegor decided to swim around, keeping at that depth for ten minutes and then rise for a decompression stop. The divers glided along the reef's wall and found themselves to open a drastically different world. Here, they came across shoals of colourful fishes, sea turtles and groupers. There were plenty of marine plants in that area too. Big fan corals and plants resembling underwater bushes could be seen often, most of which were standing out with huge black blossoms.

Everything went smoothly, when suddenly Josh stopped and called his friend's attention with a gesture. In a few moments Yegor was near. The Australian's halt was caused by interest to an entrance to some big underwater tunnel. One look at it was enough to understand that it was not a sort of tiny caverns: the daylight penetrated as far as eight metres inside the cave, but its end could not be seen.

The friends took torches from their vests' side pockets and switched them on, then they slowly swam inside. Width of the tunnel allowed them to swim side by side. The divers turned their heads examining walls, following spotlights from their torches. The cavern was covered inside with beautiful light-blue and rose-coloured soft corals. Soon, the tunnel winded slightly to the right and then to the left. And suddenly the divers rested against a flat wall.

Its looks made our divers hold stunned. The wall, in front of which they were now, was not made by nature, but artificial, hand-made, five metres wide and four metres high. It was made of matted silver-like metal with a big door in its centre. That it was a door, its shape together with two hinges proved that. There was nothing more on it: neither a handle, nor an eyehole, not even a doorbell.

Josh and Yegor stood with their eyes blinking through their diving masks for several minutes, looking at each other from time to time. The latter they needed to be sure they have not lost connection with the reality and that it was not a mere delusion. Finally, the eyes of the friends became more conscious. Gradually, they began to accept the thought that doors could be underwater. By the end of their recovery, the divers swim closer to wall and started to examine it.

Yegor knocked on the door three times as he would do at home. Although, nothing happened at all: the door would not have noticed his act. Then, Josh took his small camera from his pocket and made several shots, glanced at Yegor slyly, pulled a knife and tapped on the door much louder with its handle. It was some kind of Spanish rhythm. Maybe the Australian was knocking in same manner on some door on land. The outcome was the same.

At that moment, Yegor's diver computer began beeping. Josh's comp joined by singing a few seconds later. The friends glanced at each other and, having shrugged their shoulders, they started off to the cave's exit slowly. Having swum out, Josh immediately took a buoy, which could be hermetically closed and let it to the water surface. After that, he tied another end of the

rope to a stone near the entrance to the cavern. Then, the friends began to prepare for coming to the surface.

* * *

An hour later, the four friends were sitting at a table with a delicious dinner on it cooked and served by Mike. They were eating as cows eat hay: slowly, monotonously and unemotionally. All their feelings and thoughts were far from taste sensation. At times, they would take Josh's camera and look at pictures on its small screen in turns. Finally, there came first questions.

‘Did you knock loud enough at the door?’ Bob asked.

Yegor shrugged his shoulders in uncertainty.

‘Well, like I'm always knocking at the door,’ he replied. ‘Josh knocked on it with his knife's metal handle and it was loud for sure.’

‘Perhaps, nobody was at home?’ Mike made a supposition. ‘Well, they too may go out on business somewhere. Now they can be back...’

All the divers smiled somewhat weirdly.

‘Well now, you and Bob will be checking this when you get there,’ Josh replied. ‘Perhaps, you'll invent something there or find a hidden doorbell.’

‘Maybe we should try something new there?’ the young man wondered.

‘Of course, try. We had very little time left and we’ve found nothing: neither a peephole, nor a doorbell, not even a spot for placing chip to open it. A simple, smooth door and an even wall. It all may be located somewhere near there, at its side.’

‘All doors must open,’ Mike stated with confidence.

‘Without a doubt, mate!’ Josh smiled. ‘So, let’s think how exactly it should be...’

The friends sat in silence.

‘Alright, I and Bob will have a look at it on the spot,’ the American diver said and they went to ready their equipment.

* * *

Bob and Mike came down from the buoy, holding by the rope and instantly, they found themselves right at the cave’s entrance. In the last year, the lad remarkably improved his diving skills, completing *cave diver* and *wreck diver* courses. So now, the American fellow was absolutely sure of his partner.

The divers took torches from their pockets, switched them on and headed into the cavern’s depth. Having swum two turns, they came out to the wall and the door. And though, Mike and Bob were prepared for this encounter, the spectacle still impressed them: they stood watching it silently for a couple of minutes.

Finally, they regained their ability to act. According to the preplanned, the divers began inspecting the corals right by the wall: they checked if one of them could have been a secret door-

opener. However, everything was in vain. In twenty minutes Mike and Bob gathered at the centre of the cave to look at the door and thinking again.

A couple minutes later, Mike took a knife from his pocket and knocked on the door loudly. His version of hosts being not at home was not proved. No one opened the door this time. Several minutes after this, Bob came up with a thought. He swam to the door and drew a circle, then a square and a triangle with his hand. He had come across such keys in a computer games before. However, the door remained closed.

Mike, who carefully observed the lad's drawing on the door, suddenly approached to wall and wrote the word *Avos* with his hand. But even such an original try had not any effect.

Soon, our divers' computers started reminding them that it was highly desirable that they moving to the surface of the water. Mike and Bob hung at the door for some time more, then turned around and swam to the exit.

* * *

On that day's evening, all four friends sat thoughtfully at the table on the catamaran's rear deck. Josh and Yegor finished listening to Mike and Bob's diving story. The American diver's idea of writing *Avos* evoked in them a broad smile and respect.

'Right, friends, it seems this time, the task has proved a little more difficult,' Josh spoke slowly. 'Perhaps, we should think it all thoroughly before going underwater again.'

Everyone nodded in agreement.

‘So, let’s look at this issue slightly wider. Who has got anything to propose?’

A total silence fell on the ship for next ten minutes. At the end of the gap, all six eyes were looking at the cupboard lamentably.

‘Right, got it,’ Josh felt the general mood and went for a bottle of wine.

Twenty minutes later, the discussion continued more cheerily.

‘Well firstly, let’s start from the main point,’ Yegor spoke. ‘There can’t be underwater walls with a door out of meaning, moreover, on such distant and unexplored reefs as the Swain is.’

‘I totally agree with you,’ Mike nodded. ‘It’s only the *Avos*’ plan that could have engineered such a task for us.’

The other divers nodded their heads as one.

‘Although, if we’ve got the puzzle, it means that it is within our powers to find a solution for it,’ Egor finished his thought.

‘Guys, can we be unable to find the solution?’ Bob asked his friends somewhat quietly.

‘With such thoughts we won’t be able for sure,’ his uncle replied, copying his shy manner.

Then, the friends’ first gales of laughter rolled over the ship.

‘So, we know that all of this is the *Avos*’ plan and that God stands behind it. Anyone doubting regarding this here?’ Mike spoke.

‘What doubting could be here?’ Josh shrugged. ‘We do remember our previous expedition, remember after what the chest moved, remember how the mast shaped as a cross glowed on the ship, we do.’

‘Mmm,’ Yegor moaned and slapped himself on his forehead. ‘Why couldn’t it have come to my mind right away!?’

Everyone fell silent and looked at the Russian diver impatiently waiting for continuation. He raised his cheery eyes.

‘The cross! Last diving we began by tying a descending rope to the mast in shape of cross and when we were leaving, the cross glowed, remember?’

Mike scratched his head smiling.

‘Certainly, the cross, Yegor! I’ve written the word *Avos*’ on the door by intuition today. I wasn’t far from correct solution: I should’ve drawn merely a cross.’

‘Exactly!’ Yegor smiled.

‘For some reason, it seems to me that it is the right key,’ Josh grinned. ‘We’ll check it tomorrow morning.’

‘By the way, who go underwater next?’ Bob asked suddenly.

Everyone thought in silence.

‘Well, this case is a serious one, friends. Maybe, we’ll cast lots to make it fair?’

Having thought for a while, the other divers nodded. Bob quickly made four pieces of paper, putting crosses on two of them

and a triangle on the third. Then, he threw them into his three-cornered hat and shook.

Mike took a paper with the first cross, Yegor picked the second and Bob got the one with the triangle, by which he had to fetch the divers on the zodiac.

* * *

The following morning, Mike and Yegor were swimming to the familiar wall as if they were to pass an exam. Certainly, they had the solution, but was it correct or not, only the door could decide it. They held for an instant a metre away from their goal, then Mike giving way to Yegor, as he was the author of the idea.

He made a short flap with his flippers and touched the door. Then, he drew his hand from top to bottom and from side to side. After that, the Russian diver put his hand away and moved a little to one side.

Nothing happened for three seconds and the friends managed to glance at each other. Suddenly they heard a click. Mike and Yegor fastened their eyes on the door, which let a few air bubbles out and started opening slowly. The divers' hearts pounded from happiness. After all, their solution proved to be right.

A minute later, the door opened fully, touching the wall from another side. The divers stared at the doorway with their eyes wide open. It was more than unusual: on its outer part, the water was normal, while inside, it was such, which they never have seen before.

The water seemed to consist of tiny particles that were shining by themselves. These shining dots were in motion, and the water seemed as if it were alive.

Mike stretched his arm forward so that it could reach the other side of the doorway. The instance he did it, his hand's skin began to shine sparkling. The American diver pulled his hand backwards from surprise, but a few moments later, he put it forward again. Yegor joined him with pleasure, so some time later, there were two hands sparkling at the other side of the doorway.

Having done that, the divers looked at each other questioningly. As if understanding each other's intentions, they nodded in agreement and swam through the doorway: first Yegor, then Mike.

On the other side, it was quite bright. The divers could distinctly see even, beautiful walls with steps of some ladder leading upwards. They both raised their heads and glanced at each other instantly. Water surface was just a metre above them. Apparently, the sea level on this side of door was completely different. The divers looked at each other once more and went up the stairs.

* * *

An hour and ten minutes passed, Bob's zodiac touched the catamaran. Josh looked at his nephew with some thrill and undercurrent happiness.

‘So, they haven't returned, have they?’

‘No!’ he responded cheery and excited. ‘It means they did go through it, uncle! We agreed they won’t stay underwater for more than an hour.’

‘They are there: I feel it,’ Josh nodded smiling. ‘The key proved to be the right one.’

He gave his hand to Bob rising on board to the rear deck.

‘Sit down, nephew. Let’s wait for them and watch the buoy through binoculars.’

The elder Australian settled himself in an armchair and put his hands behind his head.

‘Don’t worry, Bobby, nothing can happen to them, if the cross was the key to the door.’

‘I’m sure of it too,’ his nephew replied. ‘Although, I’d much like to know what’s happening to them now.’

* * *

‘So, my friends, our romantics have solved the task finally,’ angel Asli said.

‘They have’, angel Sain smiled, ‘although at a certain moment, I thought we’d have to make some prompts for them.’

‘I was convinced from the start they will solve it all themselves,’ an optimistic Few spoke.

‘Well now, friends, we must to be guiding them in our world,’ angel Nias continued. ‘We have a very delicate work ahead of us.’

‘So, we’ve got our wards here finally!’ Few smiled broadly. ‘Ah, we should have met them well here. It is a pity we don’t have a cupboard here...’

All of the angels burst into laughter.

‘Well, no not worry: we’ll find something more interesting for them. So many-many amazing things here,’ angel Sain said laughing.

‘Now, friends, let us go to watch them come into our world.’

‘Let us go,’ angel Few replied. ‘The first events the Father has certainly prepared for them. Very interesting to have a look at it!’

* * *

Mike and Yegor swam to a wide step, stood on it and rose from the water. For several minutes they looked around in surprise. Everything was unusual and beautiful. Light walls and ceiling of the room, in which they stood, were sparkling with different hues as well. Even from the air around them, there emanated a soft light. Therefore, everything was lit well.

There was no one in the room. An arch-shaped exit could be seen at its end. The divers, who were still breathing the air from their tanks, looked at each other inquiringly. Then, Yegor took out his regulator for a moment, made one breath and put it back. Mike gave him a questioning look. Yegor smiled back and signalled that everything seemed alright. A minute later, he took out the regulator again and breathed several times.

‘From my point of view, the air is suitable here, friend,’ he spoke out. ‘You wait a little and watch after me.’

Yegor continued to breathe in and out.

‘Mate, how good it smells! Like a blossoms’ fragrance.’

Mike watched his friend for two minutes more and then took out regulator from his mouth with confidence.

‘Well, if something were wrong, I’d have already felt it,’ he said and sniffed the air. ‘Ah, it smells so nice indeed!’

‘Reminds a lilac,’ Yegor thought.

‘What’s lilac?’ his friend asked.

The Russian diver stood stunned.

‘Mike, I haven’t spoken about the lilac aloud, I’ve only thought of it,’ he whispered.

Mike stood still.

‘Oops!’ he finally reacted amazed. ‘Where we have got up to, buddy?’

‘I’m afraid to imagine even,’ Yegor shrugged his shoulders. ‘But I like it here. It smells good. It’s not so bad to read someone’s thoughts, perhaps. I wouldn’t mind to take use of such a possibility, for instance, at some important business negotiations.’

Both divers grinned.

‘Yegor, let’s check it once more: what am I thinking of now?’

‘Pork ribs, Mike. The restaurant near your home. Are you hungry?’

‘Oh boy!’ the American diver raised eyebrows amazed. ‘I wish I could overhear my wife somehow...’

‘Not worth it, friend’, Yegor replied doubtfully, ‘can be unpredictable consequences...’

The divers laughed cheerfully.

‘I’ve never thought there could be such fragrance in tunnels. Even my mood’s improving with such air,’ the Russian diver said. ‘Well, Mike, shall we go further?’

‘Sure!’ the other diver replied. ‘If it’s so exciting here, then what will be next?’

‘Don’t even know,’ Yegor smiled and sighed happily. ‘I never think I could happen to visit a place, where no one has treaded upon yet apparently.’

Mike nodded and started to remove the fins. Yegor quickly took his fins too. Then they went up on the steps to a flat place. There, they decided to leave their equipment and continue their trip wearing only diver’s boots and short-sleeve suits, carrying small underwater cameras in their hands just in case.

‘Our guys won't worry about us?’ Yegor asked.

‘They’ll kill us likely, if they know we didn’t go further,’ Mike replied reasonably. ‘Don’t worry, Josh is an experienced diver, he’ll figure it all out for us. Who knows what will come next, therefore, it is crucial to see as much as possible while there’s an opportunity for that.’

‘I agree’, the Russian diver nodded, ‘let’s go ahead, mate.’

The Other World

The divers proceeded along the water edge towards the arch.

‘Yegor, look what that huge turtle,’ Mike suddenly noticed and pointed to the water.

Right near the water surface, there was swimming a big tortoise indeed. As everything else around there, it was shining from inside, although, the lads were gradually accustomed to this glowing. Having watched the local inhabitant for a while, they turned towards the arch and continued their journey.

‘Have a good trip, guys!’ suddenly they heard a voice sound behind them.

The divers turned around from surprise and saw the turtle’s head above the water, watching them leave. Yegor coughed and Mike shook his head.

‘Did you hear it?’ the Russian diver asked.

Mike nodded affirmatively.

‘D’you think it was that?’ the American asked smiling, still looking at the turtle as not to seem impolite.

‘Are you talking about me?’ a slightly creaky voice sounded again. ‘Well right, it is me who has wished you have a good trip. Is politeness a bad thing?’

The friends watched the turtle's beak move synchronously with the voice.

'N-no... politeness isn't bad at all,' Mike murmured.

'It is not too bad at all,' Yegor added. 'We do similarly at times, although turtles have never wished us a good trip before.'

'Is it so!?' the tortoise wondered sincerely. 'Oh! I am so ashamed for my kin...'

Said that, the turtle's head disappeared under the water.

'It is ashamed, Yegor..., ' Mike pronounced slowly. 'Hey, where have we got to?'

'I've no idea,' his friend replied. 'Though, everyone is polite here: it's not the worst thing I've come across in my life.'

'Alright, let's go through this arch,' the American suggested.

'And let's recall good manners, while walking,' Yegor smiled, going by his side. 'It looks that we'll need them.'

The arch proved to be rather short. After a few steps, the friends already have been under open sky. Having treaded a little more, they looked around.

Only due to being tired of wondering at everything, the divers' eyes were not widened to the extreme.

There were green and blooming trees a long way down, beautiful birds were flying in the sky, which was strewn with colorful clouds and sparkled in all colors. And although there was no sun, it looked incredibly beautiful. Next to the divers, a small beautiful waterfall flowed from the mountains.

'Look, what a beauty!' Yegor finally said.

'That's true,' Mike echoed. 'I was in a place like this once when I was a kid.'

'Probably not,' the Russian driver doubted. 'The thing is that stories from our childhood always seem very bright.'

'Perhaps,' Mike smiled. 'However, to be certain about that, we should get back to our childhood and compare.'

As soon as he said that, the landscape in front of them suddenly began to change. The mountains and forest disappeared and instead, they could see a street of a small old town with a house on it. The friends just stood in stunned silence and didn't even know what to think. Yegor looked at Mike.

'Where are we?'

'This is the house where I grew up,' he replied slowly.

'Really?' Yegor said in surprise. 'And what are we gonna do here?'

'I don't know,' Mike shrugged. 'I often wanted to go back to my childhood and it seems that it finally worked. Shall we go to the house?'

Yegor nodded and they slowly moved along the sidewalk. In a minute, the friends walked up to the porch. At this moment, the door suddenly opened and an old man got out on the doorstep.

'Grandpa Tony! Mike exclaimed with astonishment and explained. 'This is my grandpa who died long ago.'

The old man looked at them with a smile and spoke in a cheerful voice.

'Glad to see you again, grandson, and your friend, too,' he walked down the stairs and hugged Mike. 'I've never thought that we would ever meet again, and under such circumstances.'

'What circumstances, grandpa?' the American said in surprise.

'It's a long story, grandson, and there is actually no need to explain. You'll know everything in due time. In a nutshell, there is the earthly world, and there is also the world of God beyond it. Now, we've met on the border of these two worlds.'

'But why did we meet?' asked Mike who couldn't take his eyes off his grandfather.

'It all makes sense, Mikey. Look for it,' the old man said with a smile.

Suddenly, everything began to vanish into thin air. In a few seconds, the friends once again stood on the edge of a beautiful cliff. Mike was silent and Yegor sighed next to him.

'It must be nice to see grandpa after all these years. I would love to see my grandma, too.'

At this moment, they suddenly saw a huge transparent ball descending to them from above. It looked like a soap bubble made by some kid but it was much bigger. The diameter of the ball reached about three meters. Inside the ball, there was a pretty girl. She placed her palms on the inside of the ball and looked at the friends with a smile. The bubble slowly approached them and then touched the ground where they were standing. Right there, it burst, turning into a bunch of splashes.

'Hello there, my dear grandson!' a beautiful girl said.

'Who are you?' Yegor asked in surprise.

'I'm your grandmother whom you wanted to see. Remember, I loved to tell you stories. Your favorite one was about the Grey Wolf. And I also baked you delicious pancakes, and we often walked in the park near the house.'

'Grandma?' Yegor still couldn't believe. 'But you look much younger than me.'

'You are now in the place where any reality is born. And it can look very different at various times,' the girl smiled. 'All right, so you're used to this look?'

The young girl quickly began to change and, in a few seconds, she looked fifty years older.

'Grandma!' Yegor shouted happily and rushed to her.

'There you go, you finally recognized me,' she replied with a smile and gave him a warm hug. 'Well, hello, grandson, nice to see you again.'

After that, the grandmother slowly began to vanish into thin air.

'Best of luck with sorting things out and finding the right path in life, guys,' the divers heard her distant cheerful voice.

There was complete silence for a few minutes.

'I wish we had a minibar here now,' Yegor finally said quietly.

'It would be great,' Mike agreed.

At this moment, they suddenly saw a cupboard, the same as on a catamaran and a small table with two glasses and a fruit platter on it.

'It's crazy,' Yegor could barely utter.

'That means we're standing on the edge of the abyss of desires?' Mike came up with his version.

Yegor opened the cupboard, took out a bottle of wine and filled the glasses. The friends had a drink without saying a word. Right after that, two chairs appeared near the table.

'Actually, I've just thought about them,' Yegor admitted.

'It turned out well,' Mike nodded and they sat down. 'But let's be more careful with our desires here, man.'

'I agree,' Yegor said. 'Who knows what may appear...'

'We'd better think about what's going on here,' Mike said after a while. 'So, it's obvious that all our dreams come true here.'

'It appears so. And I think that we'd better not waste them for nothing. Let's try to find the answer to something really important,' Yegor suggested.

'I totally agree,' the American nodded. 'And what's important to us?'

After a moment of silence, the friends reached for their glasses again.

'Well, for example, to figure out what the meaning of life is. Your grandpa and my grandma have been hinting at it,' Yegor finally came up with a fresh idea. 'Let's ask!'

'Okay!' the American agreed and they both stared at the sky.

At this moment, they saw a large heart in the sky gleaming in all shades of red. It seemed kind of alive to the friends.

'It's a heart, Yegor...' Mike muttered.

'Beautiful,' the Russian diver added, 'it means that love and kindness are most important of all.'

The friends fell silent again. In a minute, the American suddenly stood up.

'Listen, let's go back to our friends. I think we've got a lot to talk about. And preferably in the place where our dreams don't come true right away,' Mike said.

'I had the same idea,' Yegor replied. 'The question is too serious to rush. First, we need to discuss it with Josh and Bob.'

'That's right, pal, let's go back to the cave.'

The Russian driver got up from his chair, which then vanished into thin air along with the table and cupboard. Mike and Yegor looked at the wonderful abyss for a few more seconds and then went back to the arch.

* * *

'Bobby, Bobby, look! I can see the guys' buoy on the water,' Josh said.

'Right,' Bob said and looked at his watch. 'It's only been an hour and fifteen minutes.'

He came to the zodiac and untied it. Then, he started the engine and swam to pick up the divers. Josh went out to the bow of the catamaran. In five minutes, Mike and Yegor were getting out to the aft deck.

'Well, fellows, did you manage to go further?' Josh asked.

'Of course,' Mike said mysteriously. 'We got it. We've been on the other side for a long time, about three hours.'

Bob and George looked at each other in confusion.

'Guys, you've been underwater for just one hour and fifteen minutes,' the guy said.

'Oh, these time tricks are nothing,' Yegor waved away. 'You should hear the story about the places we've been to! You won't believe what we've seen. It's unbelievable! But let's us change clothes first, and then we'll start from the beginning.'

Mike and Yegor's story took a couple of hours. At first, Bob and Josh listened to them with great mistrust. Even their experience of staying on the Swain reefs couldn't make them believe what happened to their friends. However, Mike and Yegor were telling their story in vivid details, complemented each other's words, and, above all, were surprised just as much as their friends. And eventually, Josh and Bob believed them.

'Yeah, friends,' the older Australian finally said, 'I couldn't even think that I would ever hear things like that on Earth.'

'All the stories that I've read before, uncle, are nothing compared to the story of Mike and Yegor,' Bob said.

The divers smiled at the guy's words.

'No doubt, you've touched the very ground of something really important. Perhaps, the most important. There's a reason Yegor's grandmother told you these interesting words about the other reality,' Josh continued.

'Well, yes,' the Russian diver nodded, 'after all that happened, I have no doubt that there was a true source of reality.'

'Kind reality,' Mike added. 'It's important. The huge heart in the sky demonstrated it to us.'

'Actually, the cupboard showed that too,' Yegor coughed. 'Someone really loved us in that place, that's for sure.'

Everyone burst out laughing.

'Mike, Yegor,' Bob asked with blazing eyes, 'and what if you wanted to see, for example, a dinosaur? Would it appear there?'

Yegor choked up, and Mike's eyes just pop wide open.

'Josh,' the American said quietly, 'are you sure you'd take this kiddo with you?'

The Australian looked at his nephew with some doubt.

'Bobby! Do you promise not to do or want anything out there without my permission?'

Mike and Yegor attentively looked at the guy too.

'Okay, okay, why do you ever worry about that...!' Bob looked confused, 'I was just asking. Why do I need dinosaurs? I need to get back to Katie in perfect health.'

The guy's eyes suddenly lit up with fun.

'Friends, can I at least see Katie in a bubble? Just one wish, huh?'

The adult divers smiled cheerfully and looked at Josh.

'Okay, Bobby, but just one,' the Australian smiled too. 'To be honest, I wouldn't mind seeing this too.'

The divers burst out laughing.

'All right, friends, jokes aside, let's think about serious questions,' Mike said. 'Who knows, maybe it's the only chance in our life to learn something really important. It's be a shame to miss it.'

'I agree,' Josh nodded. 'And what serious questions should we ask there?'

'About *Avos*,' Yegor suddenly said. 'What is *Avos* and who is behind it.'

'That's right,' Mike nodded. 'After all, that's why we are here.'

'Got it,' George said. 'What else?'

'I think we should ask there what we should learn from this trip,' Bob suddenly suggested.

The other three divers looked at the guy with interest and then, without saying a word, clapped their hands.

'You're growing up, Bobby!' Mike nodded approvingly. 'Excellent question.'

'Very good,' Yegor agreed. 'And what else?'

After this, they kept silent for three minutes.

'Oh guys!' Josh said. 'There's a place to ask, and the reality is open but we have nothing to ask.'

'But that's great,' Yegor shrugged. 'Since there are few questions, there is little unclear in our lives.'

'Let's ask how often we can come to Swain for a new tale?' Josh smiled.

'That's a great idea, uncle!' Bob raised his cocked hat.

'The opportunity to go back and live a fairy tale is great happiness. Excellent, my friend! Be sure to ask this,' Yegor nodded.

'Well, guys, are you going to dive now or wait until tomorrow morning?' Mike asked.

'What morning are you talking about?' Bob scratched his head in surprise. 'I should see Katie in a bubble today!'

Everyone laughed.

'Now, my friends, only now,' Josh said. 'The weather's so changeable and life's unpredictable. Real fairy tales are always waiting for true romantics. And those, in turn, never postpone anything for tomorrow. Go ahead, Bobby!'

'Ahead!' exclaimed the guy cheerfully.

And they both went to prepare the equipment.

'By the way, guys, take some pictures there. As Yegor and I completely forgot about cameras out of surprise.'

'Of course,' Josh said.

'And say something polite to this turtle,' Yegor added with a smile, 'she's cool...'

* * *

Thirty minutes later, the zodiac, run by Mike, already carried Josh and Bob to the buoy on the water surface. The American wished them good luck and then the Australians somersaulted in sync on *three*. As Josh and Bob met underwater near the rope, they dove down. When they reached the entrance to the cave, they looked at each other, turned on the flashlights, and moved inside.

The wall with a closed metal door was waiting for them in the old place. They swam up and stopped next to it. After this, Josh moved his hand along the door from top to bottom and then from side to side. The time of worry for the divers lasted only a few seconds. After this, they heard a click and the door slowly began to open. The divers looked at each other happily.

When the door was wide open, they stared at the sparkling water on the other side for a while. Then, like their predecessors, they moved their hands forward and watched the sparkling skin. Only then did the Australians swim inside.

Everything looked the same way that Mike and Yegor described them. Water and light walls sparkled and it was very

beautiful. The divers swam to the stairs and got to the surface. Like their friends did earlier, they left their equipment on the ground above, and moved along the pond in their boots, wetsuits, and with cameras in hands to the arch. Remembering the promise, Josh looked at the water. There was a big glowing turtle swimming in the corner of the pond.

'Good afternoon!' he said politely. 'And warm greetings from Yegor and Mike.'

Bob giggled. However, the turtle poked her head out of the water and looked closely at the guys.

'Nice to hear that,' she said in a little squeaky voice, 'say a big hello to your friends from me too. And you have a safe journey!'

Stunned Josh and Bob looked at the polite turtle chatting with them and realized that all that they heard from their friends was the absolute truth.

'Thank you very much!' the young man mumbled and, just in case, even waved his hand to the turtle.

She was grateful and waved her left flipper a couple of times in response. At this, they broke up.

After that, the Australians moved on to the arch. Then, they came out and approached the place that their friends described in detail. The view from the cliff was fantastic and everything looked incredibly beautiful.

The friends enjoyed the perfect scenery for some time and then got back to the scheduled plan. Josh, according to the agreement, started first. He thought for a moment, and then suddenly, two cozy chairs appeared behind them. The Australians stared at them

with their eyes wide open and realized that this place was really magical.

The divers sat down, and then, Josh looked at his nephew.

'Well, Bobby. It's your turn to make a wish. But be careful, don't deviate from our agreement.'

'All right. Uncle, do you think it'd be better to say it loud or to myself?' the guy asked with doubt.

'Say it loud to be sure,' Josh said reasonably.

'I wish,' Bob began to speak carefully, 'my Katie could fly here in a bubble like Yegor's grandmother.'

As soon as he finished, a large transparent bubble approached them from above. It was rapidly increasing in size, and there was someone inside it. Soon, the friends could clearly see the girl, and the guy immediately recognized his Katie.

She was anxiously looking sideways, placing her hands on the inner surface of the bubble. As the bubble came up to the guys, she noticed them and stared at Bob in surprise. He also watched her with his eyes wide open and even gently waved his hand.

'Don't you want her to come out of the bubble?' Josh asked him.

'No, that's fine,' the nephew replied and waved even more.

'Hm... that's wise,' the older Australian nodded approvingly.

The girl inside of the bubble turned her head, looking for a way out. But then, the bubble suddenly began to rise up again. Bob waved her goodbye with a special warmth.

'That was awesome!' he said when the bubble with Katie was out of sight.

'Yeah! I would never believe that if I haven't seen it myself,' his uncle replied.

'I wonder - did she see something or not?'

'You'll know when we get back,' Josh said emphatically. 'But you'd better practice now the look of a psychiatrist in case she tells you something about that. All other options are worse, trust me.'

Both Australians burst out laughing.

'I agree! Well, uncle, it's your turn to ask the important questions.'

* * *

At this time, Katie was sitting on her bed and scratching her head, lost in thought. The dream she had just saw was so strange that she didn't even know what to do with it. In this dream, she was flying in a big transparent bubble over a beautiful cliff and met Mike with his uncle. Mike waved his hand and she waved back. After this, she began to rise in the bubble somewhere to the sky, and then, she woke up in her bed.

The dream was very vivid, she had rarely seen dreams like that. Katie took her smartphone and googled "dream with flying in a transparent bubble", just in case. The first search result was a popular Peruvian song with the same name. Then, there was some

advertisement of some hot-air balloon flights. There was no result about real dreams. Katie put her smartphone aside, lost in thought.

'I'll have to somehow ask Bob if he saw me in a transparent bubble in a dream,' the girl thought. 'I will definitely see in his eyes whether there's something more behind this dream or not.'

Having decided that, she laid down on the pillow with a pleased smile.

Avos

'Well, let's start,' Josh said and looked towards the abyss. 'What's the point of this life? For example, for us?'

At this moment, they saw four big bubbles below. They were kind of grey, nondescript, and also of irregular shape. Then, these bubbles began to rise up. As they moved, they became more and more rounded, grey colors gradually changed to bright ones, and their size increased. After a while, four bubbles flew past the divers and continued their way up.

Here, the bubbles became even brighter and more beautiful. Soon they began to sparkle and it was so bright and beautiful that the guys couldn't take their eyes off it. After that, four big bubbles went even higher and disappeared in the beautiful sky.

Bob and Josh kept silent for a few minutes.

'That's interesting,' the older Australian finally said. 'This gives us a lot to think about it in the evening. So, the next question, Bobby?'

The guy nodded. Josh looked again towards the abyss.

'Dear *Avos!* Is it okay if we come back here sometimes? Well, say, once a year or two?'

At this moment, they saw an incredibly big flock of snow-white birds flying from the bottom of the canyon. There were so many of them, perhaps, several thousand. This huge living mass quickly went up the sky and formed a big figure.

At some point, Bob and Josh could clearly see a giant hand with a thumb raised up – the worldwide approval mark.

'You see that?!' Bob was excited. 'Uncle, they give us the green light!'

'I see!' Josh replied happily.

After that, he took out his camera and took a couple of pictures. After a few seconds, the flock broke up and the birds flew away in different directions. The Australians watched them go with their eyes wide open for a long time.

'Well, that's a show,' Bob said. 'I've never seen anything like that.'

'Yeah, that's amazing,' Josh got his breath.

A few minutes later, he looked at his nephew again.

'Well, Bobby, we have one question left,' he said. 'And it's really important. Are you ready?'

The guy picked up the camera and nodded. George turned towards the canyon again.

'What is *Avos?*' he asked.

At this moment, they saw four snow-white angels smiling and waving at them. Something very big and beautiful shimmered behind them like a giant sun. This Sun had his own eyes and a big kind smile. In a few seconds, everything disappeared.

'Angels, uncle,' Bob muttered.

'And there, behind them...' Josh added quietly. 'I'm afraid to say that but I think it was God.'

* * *

'Well, finally, our boys have seen us,' angel Nias smiled.

'That was great. What do you think, which one of us did they like most?' angel Sain asked.

'Me, of course,' the cheerful Few replied. 'Unlike you, I combed my hair before the meeting.'

The angles laughed cheerfully.

'Yeah, it's great that Father came up with this idea. It looks like an very interesting fairy tale for our guys. And it makes them think about many things and draw the right conclusions,' angel Asli continued.

'That's true, it was an awesome solution,' angel Sain nodded. 'And we had so much fun meeting them!'

'All right, it's time to fly to their ship already,' angel Nias suggested. 'Let's listen to the conclusions they make from today's meeting.'

'And we'll also find out what they say about us there,' Few smiled and the angels flapped their wings.

* * *

'Yeah, guys, our evening conversations here sound like a retelling of some cool science fiction movies,' Mike chuckled.

All divers were sitting on the aft deck of the ship and drinking coffee. The Australian just telling Mike and Yegor about what happened today.

'There's some truth in your comparison,' Yegor smiled. 'Though, I think it wouldn't be much difficult to see aliens or a spaceship there if only we wanted to.'

All the divers burst out laughing.

'It seems so,' Josh nodded. 'But let's discuss the answers that we received today. They seem very important to me.'

'So, spaceships are not so important already...,' Bob muttered. 'Well, then our trip needs to finish....'

The other three adult divers laughed out loud.

'All right, Bobby, jokes aside,' Yegor stood up for Josh. 'So, episode one. We'll find out later what Katie could see from the bubble. So, there's no point in guessing until we're home. Right?'

Bob and the other divers agreed.

'Great, let's move further,' the Russian diver continued. 'The story with four rising balloons. It seems pretty clear to me. During their earthly life, people should become wiser, kinder, and more beautiful in their thoughts and actions. How do you like this version?'

'I find it reasonable,' Mike said. 'But maybe also more trusting and simple-minded?'

'Correct,' Josh said. 'That's why kindness, honesty, simplicity, and so on stand for the bright colors of the balloons. And grey colors, that we saw in the beginning, represent lie, anger, grouchiness, and so on.'

'Excellent, uncle,' Bob smiled. 'Simple and clear. It'd be difficult to come up with any other explanation.'

'Great, let's move on then,' Yegor said. 'Next episode, a flock of birds in the form of a hand showing thumbs up. A generally accepted sign of approval.'

'It's also pretty clear,' Josh smiled. 'Avos is waiting for us next year or later.'

'Correct, I agree,' Bob nodded. 'By the way, I can't figure out why all the pictures turned white?'

'I think we should carry these memories in our hearts. It's more important and it seems to be enough, I guess,' Mike said. 'I have no other explanation.'

'I agree,' Yegor nodded. 'Everything should be alive and real.'

'Accepted,' George said. 'Let's move on to the last episode. What do you think about it?'

The friends kept quiet for some time.

'There's actually nothing to think about,' Bob smiled. 'There is God and there are angels too, and they love us very much. Though, we actually knew it before.'

'Yes, and we were eager to talk to them. That's why we went to the Swain. And, perhaps, that's why they showed up,' George said with a smile.

'Yeah, it's their choice and their trust in us,' Mike added quietly.

They kept silent for a minute.

'I think we'd better not tell anyone about the cave and the door to the other world,' Yegor said. 'If that made sense, the pictures would be better. But in this way, let it remain our personal experience. After all, it was a meeting of those who love and know with those who believe and seek.'

'Well said,' Josh smiled.

'I also think that we shouldn't tell anyone about that,' Mike said.

Bob and Josh nodded with approval.

'So, about tomorrow. What else do we want to see?' Josh said.

They thought for a while.

'Actually, I don't have any questions left,' Mike said. 'Perhaps, we can just ask to be shown something that'd be interesting or useful for us?'

'Good idea,' Bob smiled. 'Maybe my nice little starship will eventually show up this way?'

All the divers burst out laughing again.

'I agree, Mike,' Yegor nodded. 'Let them decide what to do.'

'Great, let's stick to their plan tomorrow,' Josh summed up the conversation.

* * *

The next morning Mike and Yegor went underwater again. This time Josh drove them on the zodiac. As decided the day before, the guys didn't have a clear plan. They just wanted to go to different places on the other side of the cave, look at the local life, and, perhaps, see something new and unusual.

As always, they somersaulted from the zodiac, met underwater and moved to the cave. Here, the friends turned on their flashlights and swam inside. The divers routinely turned right, then turned left and...

Instead of the metal wall with the door, they just stopped at the dead end of ordinary corals. Confused Mike and Yegor tried to find the wall anywhere near with their flashlights. However, there was nothing handcrafted in this place anymore. Only blue and white soft corals, as well as flocks of glass fish. In a few minutes, the divers moved back, swam out of the tunnel and looked around.

Outside, it looked exactly like yesterday and the day before yesterday. They shrugged and swam inside again just to be sure. Again, they found nothing but corals there. As they swam back, the divers looked at each other in confusion and began to prepare for floating up. It was time to tell the news to the guys.

* * *

'Well, friends, it looks like the *Avos* plan is finished,' Yegor said.

All the divers were sitting on the aft deck of the catamaran, discussing the latest news from Mike and Yegor.

'Not exactly, in my opinion. We've already got the answers to all our questions,' Josh said. 'Therefore, better say that the *Avos* plan took a break until the next time.'

'For a year,' Bob said confidently. 'Cause we asked them to come here in a year, and they agreed.'

'I guess, this guy is right,' Mike nodded with a smile. 'I think, indeed, it's one year.'

'I'm sure, too,' Yegor nodded approvingly. 'One year means it's a good time for us to reflect on what we saw. We should let it all go slowly through our head and heart.'

'Well said, friend,' Josh nodded. 'Even after a nice dinner, we need a break to digest everything. And we've got so much food for our heads that it'll take at least one year to comprehend it.'

'Perhaps,' Bob said. 'But what are we going to do here next?'

The older divers looked at him with surprise.

'Bobby, do you like diving after all?' Yegor asked.

'Well, yeah, I do,' he replied.

'So, we're gonna dive, explore the wonderful underwater world, and have nice dinners. And also talk and laugh a lot,' the Russian diver said.

'And also have intellectual conversations about what we've seen here,' Mike added with a big smile.

'And at the same time, we'll always know that the *Avos* plan and its authors are any moment somewhere near,' Josh added.

After that, everyone fell silent for some reason.

'And in a year we'll meet them again,' Bob smiled.

'Perhaps. And maybe there'll be something different, new, but no less interesting,' Yegor uttered. 'Let's leave it for a year. And then we will enjoy new events and adventures together. After all, anticipating a holiday, Bobby, is a great holiday in itself.'

* * *

The Father was looking at His romantic divers with a smile. With great pleasure, He let them touch some secrets of His main world during this trip. The world, which is usually hidden from people in their earthly life. But the world, that He sometimes open to very kind people with a pure heart and a living faith.

His cheerful romantic fidgets were looking for the answers to some really important questions in life so sincerely that He couldn't help but drop the veil. For some reason, He strongly believed that everything that happened would benefit them.

Actually, He always was very happy to trust his children. And maybe that's why so many of them met his expectations in full.

Epilogue

Seven days later, the catamaran Dolce Dive left Swain and headed South. Josh was at the helm, and three of his friends were sitting at the table on the aft deck. They cheerfully talked about something and laughed. Their journey was coming to an end.

Any tale, even the most beautiful one, eventually comes to an end. That's a fact. But the good news was that there was an infinite number of the best, kind and interesting fairy tales in the *Avos* plan's library.

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