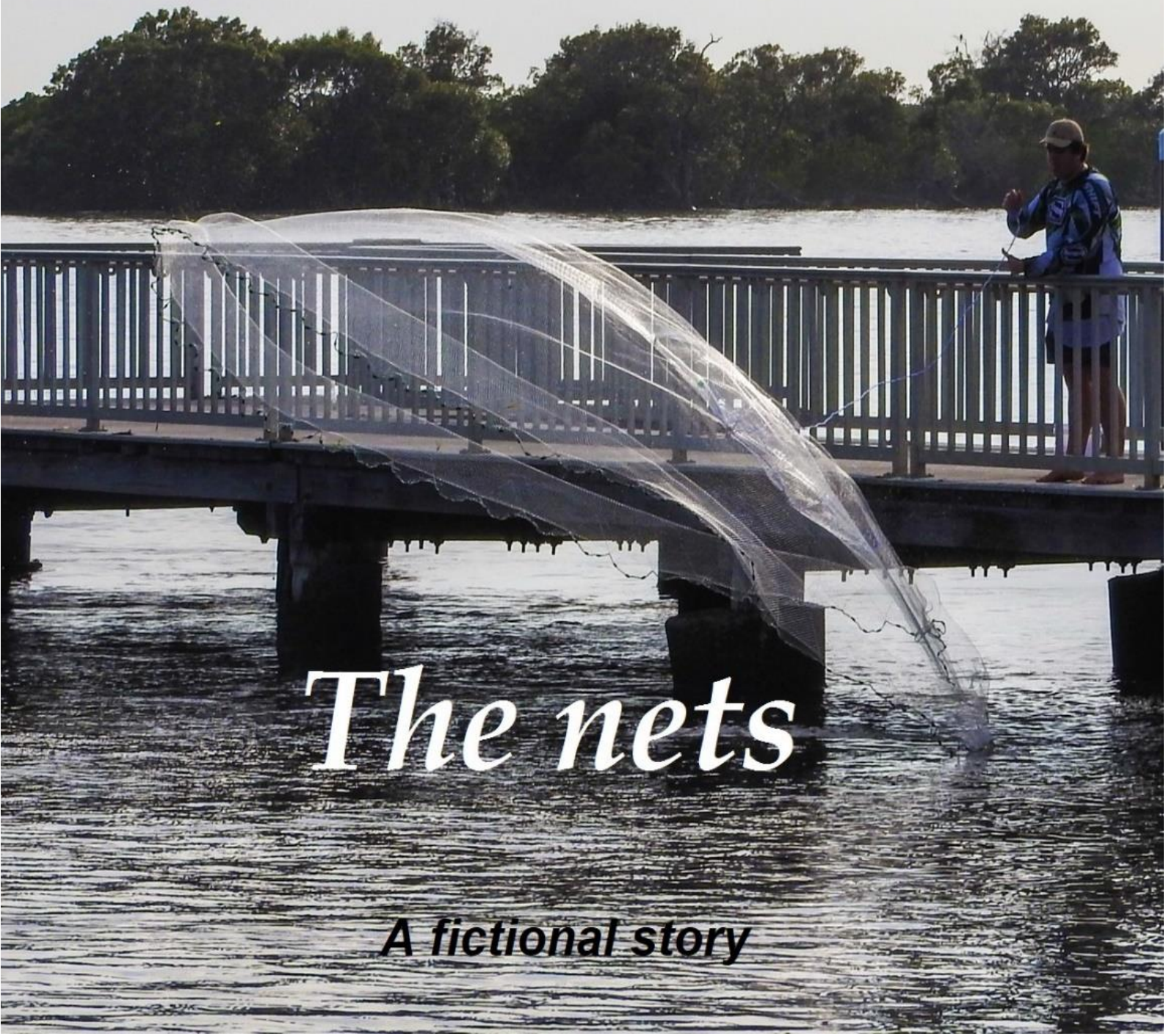


Igor Bondar

*Once upon
a time in Heaven*

The nets

A fictional story



Chapter 1.

‘Hey, friend, it looks like we’re on the right way,’ said doctor Eliot Brown as he studied the data on his computer screen attentively. ‘Indeed, our phantom next to the new screen has increased in size.’

‘Well, well...,’ professor Leo McQueen quickly came to his friend and sat on the nearby chair. ‘Hum, right... Indeed it has. Almost by eight percent. It’s interesting..., it’s very interesting.’

‘Yes, growing, our screen magnet is growing,’ El leaned back thoughtfully in his chair. ‘Indubitably, it is growing thanks to the higher resolution graphics of the screen. But where is it growing and why?’

‘Now, only God knows,’ Leo shrugged his shoulders.

‘Come on, mate! What God? I don’t believe in all that.’

‘I don’t believe much either. Just a convinient expression,’ the professor smiled. ‘But frankly speaking, sometimes I wish someone would help us find answers to many of our questions.’

El laughed out.

‘Was it said by a lazy scientist or by a lazybones-like scientist?’

The friends shook with laughter.

‘It’s your choice,’ the professor said in a more serious tone and went back to his desk. ‘Now, let us proceed with our work. We haven’t yet made any measurements of the latest video and audio samples.’

‘Well then, let’s get down to work,’ El replied and turned to his computer screen.’

* * *

Two angels: Glan and Ev were attentively watching the work of their earthly wards. Today, they have slightly managed to help the wards move in the right direction.

‘It’s a pity that our guys came so close to the gist of the problem, but they don’t believe in God and in our world,’ a snow-white Glan said. ‘They will find it difficult to express everything that is happening just by using the language of their formulas.’

‘If at all possible ’, Ev continued and sighed sadly, ‘Meanwhile, Earthly time is flowing and now it is flowing very fast.’

‘That’s right’, Glan agreed, ‘I think, my friend, that is exactly the case when we should ask our Father to help them advance with this issue quickly.’

‘I agree, Glan,’ Ev nodded. ‘It is a crucial issue, indeed.’

‘You are right, my dears,’ the Angels suddenly heard the kindest Voice in the world. ‘They should be given some assistance here, indeed. Well, I will come up something convincing for them.’

‘Thank you, Father!’ the Angels replied in unison and their faces shone with kind smiles.

* * *

The Father looked at the Earth lovingly. It was a place where He was bringing up His children for thousands of years. It was a place from where all the best people were coming to His eternal home after their earthly lives.

There was a time, when His children lived very simple lives on the earth: they travelled by foot or horses. Nevertheless, it did not hinder them to think about the meaning of life, to seek height in it and to seek Him. So many bright souls then came to Him in Paradise! Now, they were all living together with Him as one kind and friendly family. And, it shall be so forever.

Much, if not everything, had changed on Earth since that time. Very little remained from the former, simpler way of life. All the people now studied various sciences for many years, lived in their own houses, drove cars and travelled by planes. Almost every person now had their own smartphone or a computer with which he could find the information on any fact, past or present. The Father was giving people many new opportunities, But...

God smiled sadly for how little the people on earth had been using all these opportunities in the right way indeed. They were interested in everything in the world, but not what was really most important for them.

Money, worldly goods, empty talks, debauchery, various misleading opinions and false teachings. These and many things alike were basically taking all of the time from the people. Very few paid attention to their own problems. Therefore human pride in some places has already reached the degree of complete blindness or irrationality.

High moral standards were gradually fading away or they had acquired some ugly traits. Governments of several countries and even some Christian leaders had already considered that to be normal. And the humankind, that was led astray by the lies and the fog of sins, sank deeper and deeper into *its civilization* which stood rather far from the rules that God had once brought to earth.

Civilization or progress itself, of course, did not represent evil. It was more like an atom that He once gave to people and which could either bring them great benefit or destroy their world. Here, everything depended only on that in whose hands that lay. For kind people, everything serves for the good. His Paradise has much more than that and everyone lives there in happiness and peace. But for sinful, proud and evil people, any kind of civilization and progress always serves for the bad.

Therefore, only kind and peaceful people without many sins could resist it all, while keeping a healthy, sober worldview. And these were His most beloved children on earth.

* * *

That night, El dreamt an unusual dream: he swam underwater among colorful fish and corals, along the sea bed. Generally, the doctor loved the sea and would often snorkel during his vacations. Although, the idea of becoming a diver and descending deep into the realm of the sea had not come to his head somehow.

In the dream, the scientist felt rather comfortable in the blue of the water. He would turn his head around looking intently at

the underwater world and its inhabitants: beautiful corals, schools of fish and sometimes, dolphins and marine turtles.

The sea bed led quite steeply down, into the depth but the scientist calmly continued to swim along. The sunlight penetrated less and less, it was becoming darker and darker around El. However, it did not frighten the doctor at all and he felt the desire to swim further and deeper. At some point, it became completely dark around him.

Right after that, the sea unexpectedly began to brighten. However, it appeared somewhat differently. The doctor looked around, while trying to understand what it was and suddenly he realized that it was not the sunlight that penetrated there. The water shone as if by itself, with each of its particles like a tiny source of light.

‘So, that’s how it all occurs in the deep,’ the amazed scientist thought. ‘Apparently, under high pressure the water begins to produce light.’

Therefore, with a greater enthusiasm El swam further into the deep. The sea around him became brighter and after some time, the doctor intuitively raised his head and saw a water surface not far above.

‘How can it be?’ thought he. ‘I kept swimming down and eventually returned to the surface.’

He surfaced close to the shore. After a while, El had already set foot on a magnificent sandy beach. But it was a very unusual beach. As with the water, it all shone from within: each grain, each shell, each palm tree. El lifted his head and saw the sky and the birds that shone with the unusual light .

The doctor stood looking around, amazed.

‘Do you like it here, dear Eliot?’ suddenly he heard a soft voice coming from behind and turned around.

Right in front of him, there stood a well-built young man with snow-white wings, smiling warmly. He shone from within as well and it looked very beautiful.

‘Hello’, astonished El spoke out in reply and after a little thought, he added, ‘I would be very pleased, if you could tell me how you know me and where I am, actually?’

However, a few moments later, the scientist slapped himself on his forehead in shame.

‘Oh, I am sorry... could you kindly tell me first, how I can address you.’

The shining man nodded his head cheerily.

‘That’s not a problem, dear Eliot. I am your Angel, my name is Glan. You may call me that. At the moment, you are in Paradise. Well, I know you because I have been with you all your life. If you have any other questions, please don’t hesitate to ask.’

After hearing that the doctor was literally stunned and only after some time could find his tongue again.

‘Angel... But, there’s no God and no Paradise. All that is fiction! Please, don’t take offense...’

‘What can I say, my dear? It is quite possible that I would think similarly if I were in your place: so much information about God is distorted and much more is forgotten and forsaken. In addition, many things on the earth distracts from this now. Even those who very much wish to rightly figure all this out find it hard to do it today. That is why I am not surprised at your answer at all, nor am I offended by it.’

The doctor kept staring at his unusual interlocutor in surprise.

‘But as I can see, you do exist.’

‘I do,’ the Angel smiled.

‘Well then, could you somehow prove all this to me? So that I can believe it,’ said the doctor, scratching his head.

The shining man thought for a few moments and then laughed out loudly.

‘Alright, dear El, I will present one such proof to you as a scientist.’

‘Thank you,’ the man replied in a serious tone.

The Angel stopped smiling and gave Eliot a serious look.

‘I have to tell you something: it is very important and it is related to your work,’ he began.

‘My work?’ the scientist became perplexed again. ‘You know about my work?’

‘I know everything about you, El, I am your Angel,’ the interlocutor smiled. ‘The subject you working on now is extremely important indeed – for many, by the way. But, there is a severe inaccuracy in your work which will not let you understand the problem completely.’

‘Inaccuracy?’ a spark of a true scientist shone in Eliot's eyes. ‘What inaccuracy? Could you explain it to me?’

The Angel nodded.

‘Specifically for this, God has allowed me to see you. Well, the main mistake you make is that you consider your phantom to be a mere energy. However, it is not so at all.’

‘It isn’t so?’ the doctor looked at the Angel with interest. ‘Then, what is a phantom?’

‘The right question is not *what*, but *who*. That phantom is a living thing.’

‘A living thing? Oh!’ open-eyed Eliot asked. ‘How can it be?’

“Well, it is like many other things from our world, in which you don’t believe,” replied the Angel, looking at the scientist with a smile. ‘Your problem is that all your research is limited by earthly laws. You do not believe in God, in powers of the light and darkness. Therefore, you are not able to see this issue from many aspects and in the correct way. And as a result, you can’t assist in finding a solution.’

It took the doctor some time to think it over.

‘A living thing, you say..., how can it be?’

‘It can. It is a kind of parasite or pest unseen to the human eye. They appear between the screen and the consciousness of a computer user. These substances can cause addiction in a human being to use the screen and they can suggest some thoughts.’

‘Could you explain it in more detail?’ the scientist asked the Angel.

‘It’s simple, El. For instance, if a human being uses a computer as a useful tool and controls the time of its use well, there will not be any phantoms, whatever the quality of the screen may be. This parasite cannot exist without human reaction.’

‘Hmm, interesting...,’

‘Of course. However, if a human being turns to the screen for every reason and spends all his free time immersed in it, that means that a parasite has already appeared. And, he starts influencing the wishes of the human being to some extent. What’s more, better on-screen graphics will increase the speed of this process.’

‘Why does the phantom do this?’

‘There is nothing unusual. Why do lianas vine around trees? Only in this case, the energy and strength of a human are stolen. There is another point to it. While being the substances of the darkness, they also try to draw the people into *darker* places.’

‘Oh, it is very interesting!’ the doctor began commenting on what he had heard, but suddenly he woke up.

The end of this phrase he pronounced already in his bed. El looked around slowly remembering the world he was used to. The sun began to shine through his window and the birds could be heard singing around outside.

‘Well, what a dream...,’ Eliot spoke to himself quietly. ‘I’ve never seen such a dream before.’

He laid in his bed for some time.

‘Angels, living phantoms, Paradise. Wow! What a dream! That could be a good plot for a new fairy-tale,’ El smiled and threw his blanket aside, briskly getting up.

Several minutes later, the scientist was taking a shower and even tried singing a song. Naturally, the doctor tried to forget his recent dream. There was no place in his life for anything unscientific or irrational.

When jets of warm water washed shampoo off his head, Eliot wiped his eyes with his hands and stood astonished.

Right in front of him on the shelf, there laid a small shell from his dream. It shone by itself, from within.

‘Alright, dear El, I will present one such proof for you as a scientist,’ the doctor instantly recalled the words of his interlocutor from a dream.

* * *

Amanda parked her car near the shopping centre, got out of it and walked slowly towards the entrance. She always came there once a week to make purchases for her big family.

However, despite the early hours, the shopping centre was crowded. There were mostly young people waiting in line at an electronics shop. The woman had never seen this before, so she drew slightly closer. Her curiosity took over and she addressed a guy who was standing in line.

‘Good day young man, could you tell me why are all these people here?’

The white-haired lad turned to her politely.

‘Good day, madam. Haven’t you heard that *the* sales of a new mobile phone, *Orange 100*, starts today?’

Amanda shook her head.

‘Oh, you haven’t?’ the lad wondered. ‘We’re looking forward to it, so everyone in this line wants to buy it first. Some of them have been here since last night.’

‘Really?’ the woman spoke slowly, slightly surprised. ‘It appears that there’s something special in the phone, right?’

‘Oh, yeah’, the young man nodded, ‘it has a more improved user interface, seven-core processor and...’

Then, for the next couple of minutes, the woman kept listening to words that were unknown to her.

‘I see, emm...,’ she finally replied.

Amanda was about to thank the lad and then get a shopping cart when suddenly, one more question came to her mind.

‘Do you know if this phone is for sale only today?’

‘Well, no,’ the young man replied. ‘It’ll be available for sale constantly from now on.’

‘Can’t you order it online, then? Or to pick it up in a few days, when there won’t be a long line for it here?’

The young man gave a shiny look.

‘Of course, not! I must have it today. It’s very important!’

‘Ah...,’ the woman replied in surprise and nodded to the lad. Then she walked towards the shopping cart.

But, while on her way she stopped, immersed in her thoughts and took out her two-year old Samsung mobile phone from her purse. Having turned it in her hands, thinking, she shrugged her shoulders uncertainly and put it back. After that, she took a shopping cart and began pushing it between the shelves.

* * *

As usual on a Sunday morning, professor Leo was out fishing. Every weekend, he and his wife managed to get out to the country to their small house by the lake. From there, Leo

loved much to sailing his boat somewhere for fishing in the morning hours.

On that day, with the first rays of the sun, he embarked on his small cutter with his fishing rods and went to a small island, near which he loved to fish. Usually, there were various kinds of lake fishes. The professor reached his fishing spot, dropped the anchor and threw a bait. After that, he uncovered his two fishing rods and a moment later, two colorful floats began drifting on the calm water surface.

Leo settled himself comfortably at a small table and poured himself some fruit tea from a thermos flask. There was not a single bite that morning. It was quite a long time after the professor finished his tea and sandwiches but the floats did not move at all.

‘That’s strange,’ Leo thought and looked at the sun that had already risen high above the horizon. ‘I never had such bad luck fishing, as far as I can remember.’

Having watched his motionless floats for another twenty minutes, the professor decided to end his dull venture and head home. He reeled in his first fishing rod. All the baits on the hooks were untouched. Leo folded the rod, encased it and put it back to its place. Then, he reached his arm to take the second rod.

But, he’d hardly touched it when the float suddenly went underwater.

‘Well, at last!’ the fisherman’s heart leapt cheerily.

He sharply pulled the rod. Jerks from the fishing line meant that there was something on the hook. And it seemed that

something hooked there was not small. In a moment, the rod bent into an arch.

Nevertheless, the professor was a seasoned fisherman: in some five minutes, his fish was struggling somewhere near the boat. Leo did not hurry, as he knew that a tired fish is easily drawn. After a new series of jerks, the fish's resistance faded. The professor pulled his catch closer to the surface.

As if following his wish, the fish swam out to the water surface and held. Leo glanced at it and stood in astonishment. He had never seen such a catch before: the fish weighing near a kilo was shining by itself in the water.

Leo rubbed his eyes with his free hand and looked at it again. Nothing changed. A big, beautiful fish was moving its fins slowly, shining quite brightly from its inside.

'What's happening?' was the first thought of the professor 'Such a fish can't be!'

He suddenly recalled a children's fairytale about a golden fish that made wishes come true. From such a thought, Leo smiled somehow silly and even giggled.

'Alright, I must take it out anyway and then, we'll sort it out,' he thought and took a scoop net that laid along the board of the cutter.

Leo dipped it cautiously into the water slightly away from the fish. The shining fish stood in its place as if nothing happened, looking at the professor trustingly. The fisherman began moving the scoop net closer. When it almost approached the fish, it suddenly jerked and...

Every fisherman knows the feeling of despair, when a catch comes off the hook. Leo felt that to the full extent.

‘Mmm....,’ he moaned in helpless disappointment, ‘got away...’

He pulled his rod up and the float and two hooks began swaying in front of him.

‘It’s slipped away,’ Leo sighed, then he sighed deeply again, ‘and who will believe me that I’ve seen a shining fish? Ah, I should’ve taken a picture of it...’

* * *

That day, two Angels looked at their earthly wards much more cheerily. Sometimes, they even laughed remembering some episodes from the wards’ recent past.

‘I’ve been thinking all the way, friend,’ Angel Ev smiled, ‘which of our lads had more rounded eyes: my professor when he saw a golden fish in the lake or your doctor, when he saw a shining shell in the shower room?’

‘I can’t tell,’ Glan laughed in response. ‘But, to my mind, their normal eyes’ shape has not returned to them yet. And, of course, they will have amazing news when they meet together.’

‘Right, the Father figured it all out brilliantly for our wards,’ Angel Ev noted.

‘Spot-on. Thank you very much, Father!’ Glan looked upwards gratefully.

‘I am always pleased to help you, my dear!’ the Angels heard a familiar voice. ‘I am sure that this will help our guys to understand everything correctly and move forward.’

‘Of course, Father!’ Angel Ev smiled. ‘Now, we shall guide them where needed.’

‘Good luck to you, and you are welcome to ask me if you need something.’

The Angels waved warmly in response.

* * *

On Monday morning Leo and Eliot met at work as usual. First, they sat down to drink coffee, following their tradition. However, today, they looked at each other in a strange manner.

‘You know, El,’ Leo began the talk, ‘I went fishing on Sunday.’

‘Great,’ the doctor reacted and sipped his coffee. ‘Did you catch anything?’

The professor looked at Eliot intently.

‘You’ve known me for quite a while now El. I reckon you believe that everything is okay with my mind,’ he started.

‘What do you mean, mate?’ the doctor wondered. ‘Certainly, I know that you are one of the most intelligent people I have ever met.’

‘Thank you, but there is something I have to tell you and it will sound very strange,’ Leo continued slowly.

The doctor lifted his brows questioningly.

‘You’ll laugh at me, but I caught a golden fish yesterday. To be more precise, it was an ordinary fish weighing near a kilo, but it shone by itself from the inside.’

El choked from surprise.

‘Oh, really? Show it to me!’

‘You know, it got away at the last moment,’ Leo shrugged his shoulders helplessly.

Doctor Eliot kept silent thinking it over.

‘You don’t believe me, friend? I understand,’ the professor sighed. ‘But, it was there indeed, I saw it as well as I see you right now.’

‘I’m not keeping silent because of that, Leo,’ El replied. ‘How did it shine?’

Having heard an unexpected question, the professor shrugged his shoulders in amazement.

‘Well, I don’t know. Like some light globes usually shine, perhaps, not too brightly. I was absolutely sure that the light was coming from the inside of it.’

‘It’s curious,’ the doctor could only say.

‘What is curious?’ the professor asked in uncertainty. ‘So, do you believe me or not?’

‘I believe you, my friend. I believe you very, very much,’ El replied, looking at his interlocutor somewhat weirdly.

Having said this, the doctor rose from the armchair and went to his work table where he pulled the upper drawer and took out a small box. He came back and he placed it in front of the professor.

‘What’s this?’ Leo asked amused.

‘Open it and you will see,’ the doctor replied smiling enigmatically.

The perplexed professor opened the lid and slowly took out a small shell. The whole shell was shining from the inside, just like his fish did yesterday.

‘Where did you find it?’ Leo asked after a minute of total silence.

‘In my dream last night,’ El replied.

As he noticed his stunned friend’s look, he retold his recent dream in detail. After that, the friends continued to drink coffee for about five minutes without saying a word.

‘What’s happening to us, El?’ the professor finally said.

The doctor shrugged his shoulders in response.

‘The only reasonable answer that comes to my mind is that my dream was real; your catch only proves that.’

‘It seems that you’re not far from the truth...,’ the professor spoke slowly, turning the shining shell in his hands.

‘During the weekend, I tried to understand the reason for its shining,’ El said, ‘but, I figured out nothing. It simply glows from the inside without any cause.’

‘Apparently, it comes right from some other world,’ Leo responded thoughtfully.

A minute later, the professor put the shell back in the box and reached to take his cup of cool coffee.

‘Tell me your dream in detail once again, friend. Try not to miss any, even the slightest detail.’

‘Alright, Leo,’ El replied and he began retelling his dream.

Chapter 2.

A screen troll Sluic was waiting impatiently for his inseparable Mike to awake. It was almost ten o'clock in the morning but the guy was not about to get up. Unfortunately, Sluic could not make human dreams shorter.

The troll was seven years old. Namely that number of years ago, Mike bought his first computer. At first, Sluic was very tiny in size. However, the lad's attraction to gadgets with displays and the troll's slyness did its job, so, at the moment, it was much bigger than the screen itself.

Sluic looked towards Mike's bed and giggled contentedly: Mike was rubbing his eyes with his hands.

'Come on, Mikey, come on. Wake up, finally! You've got a whole bunch of news on your computer,' the troll began to send thoughts to the young man through a channel they were connected with for a long time.

The guy began to move in his bed, then stretched and threw his blanket off and trod to his computer. However, on his way there he suddenly fidgeted and went to the toilet.

'Of course,' Sluic grumbled displeased, 'as always, I'm only in the second place for him in the morning.'

A minute later, the lad sat down by the computer and began scrolling the endless chats from his friends. His troll from such actions of the guy was having his full breakfast - Mike's energy, accumulated during a night's sleep, was partially given to him.

After five minutes, Mike felt the need to go to the kitchen to grab a bite.

‘Stop, stop, Mikey!’ rebelled the troll, who did not finish his breakfast. ‘Where are you hurrying to? You haven’t looked at Steve’s messages at all. Or, have a look, there’s a beauty at the side of a display. Mm, she has so few clothes...’

Mike followed this suggestion obediently and the troll continued feeding. As he got full, he leaned back to rest behind the computer screen.

‘Oh, fine,’ it waved its tentacle at Mike, ‘now, you may go and have a good breakfast, mate. You need a lot of energy for us.’

Mike closed his laptop and trudged to the kitchen. Meanwhile, the troll put one his tentacles over the other and began whistling his favorite troll song.

* * *

‘Yeah, friend, it seems that our education is starting to expand in the direction we did not expect,’ said professor Brown after El finished his narration.

While saying this, he was thoughtfully twirling a luminous shell in his hands.

‘Well, I would say it is still too early to talk about that for sure. Although there are already enough facts for such reflections,’ replied the doctor. ‘So, what are we going to do now?’

‘I wish somebody would tell me,’ Leo shrugged his shoulders. ‘Maybe, we should start with reading something on God and Angels? How does everything work there? Because we are real ignoramuses in this sphere.’

‘Not a bad idea,’ the doctor agreed and then chuckled. ‘I never thought that someday I will seriously have a talk about that topic.’

‘Yeah,’ the professor smiled, ‘and as I remember, someone even laughed at me for saying a few words about God several days ago.’

Both of them laughed cheerfully.

‘Oh, indeed... Though on the other hand,’ Leo proposed more positively, ‘the wider the interests of a scientist are, the more interesting the whole area.’

‘There is something true about this,’ his friend nodded, ‘however, this area, in our case, goes somewhere upwards.’

‘That is ok, we will cope with that,’ the professor said optimistically, ‘but just imagine - our phantom is a living being! Psychology is at play here and probably biology or zoology and who knows what else.’

‘But we will be able to truly fight with it as a result of such an approach. Without this, we will only measure it all the time,’ the doctor smiled. ‘Yes, this news changes everything fundamentally.’

‘You bet! Imagine that something new and alive appears from the computer screen and human consciousness. And it lives by itself but apparently strongly dependent on both the first and the last. All this is incredibly interesting! Here, you can do a lot of experiments.’

‘Exactly, I was thinking about it too,’ his friend agreed and suddenly laughed, ‘We could try, for example, to enclose this shell to the screen’

They both laughed again.

‘Well, now we will have to attach a lot of things to it,’ the professor summed up and habitually went to make coffee.

* * *

‘So, everything turned out well,’ Angel Glan smiled joyfully.

‘Yeah, buddy, now what remains is for us to add some new, helpful information to our smart ward’s heads,’ said Angel Ev.

After that, the Angels sighed.

‘Oh, it will not be easy to do this with our very wise guys.’

‘You are right,’ Glan put a hand under his chin, ‘about two hundred years ago very few people doubted in the existence of God or dark beings. And now people have invented all sorts of different scientific names to use instead of the old and real ones and lost a simple and clear essence.’

‘Don’t worry, we will explain it to them somehow,’ said Angel Ev who then asked, ‘so, friend what kind of useful book are we going to give them first?’

Both Angels sighed again. The choice of useful books in the language understandable by their scientists was very small.

‘Ok, we will try to give them something,’ said Angel Glan.

‘I also have a good idea about that,’ suddenly the Angels heard the cheerful voice of the Father.

* * *

Soon after Mike went to school, troll Sluic headed to chat to his pals. Two other trolls lived in the flat - Mo and Og. Troll Mo was fed by Mike's mom. Mo led her through the endless shopping, beauty salons and long-lasting TV series. Troll Og was fed by Mike's dad. Og liked to drag him into bars and provoke him to start different scandals. He also found unsuitable TV shows for him. Mike's parents did not like computers very much but a number of TV programs was enough for the many plans of the trolls.

'Hi, Sluic,' the troll heard the voice of one of his pals after he entered the next room.

Giggling, Og and Mo were sitting on the sofa.

'Hi, dudes,' Sluic responded, 'well, how are you?'

'Not so bad,' Mo replied. 'Yesterday, my ward bought two expensive dresses and in the evening, a wonderful scandal happened about the money spent.'

'Yeah,' said well-fed troll Og, 'my client said so many bad things to his wife that they will sulk at each other for a week. So, we have a lot of food now!'

Both trolls giggled loudly.

'It is always pleasant when friends are doing well,' said Sluic with a little envy, 'oh, I wish my ward finds a girlfriend soon.'

'Yes, everything is much cooler with scandals!' troll Mo nodded to Sluic, 'because it is like you are always sitting on a diet with those TV series. There are, of course, a couple of emotions but it is not enough and, of course, it can't be compared with a nice quarrel.'

‘Well, I would not say so’, troll Og giggled, ‘sometimes I immerse my ward into such a movie out of which I get a salad, second dish and even champagne for lunch.’

‘Oh, and I am eating so well only during shopping’, troll Mo signed, ‘When my lady enters the store she cannot stop until all the money runs out. Oh, I have learned to tempt her so well! And, it almost always ends in scandal...That is when I have a great feast! But it is a pity that her husband keeps cutting her budget all the time.’

‘Yeah,’ Og responded with a feeling ‘some of our colleagues are so lucky to live with millionaires. I have met some of them a couple of times. They are huge like elephants!’

All the trolls signed enviously.

‘Do not complain’, finally said Sluic, ‘on two floors below there is a highly moral couple. So, their trolls are the size of table tennis balls.’

Og and Mo placed their tentacles on their mouths in horror.

‘Yes dudes, it is a sin to complain about our life’, said troll Og with a feeling after a minute.

After chatting a little bit, the trolls said goodbye and went to their corners to wait for their feeders.

* * *

‘Well, how are you doing, friend? Did you find anything interesting?’ Professor Leo closed the book with a red cover and put it on top of the stack of other books.

After that he looked at El with dull eyes.

‘God, devil, prophets, demons. Then again demons, prophets, devil and God. And not a single hint about our phantom’s nature’, the doctor smiled wearily, ‘Well, all this of course can confirm my recent dream. But it definitely cannot bring us any closer to the solution for the main question.’

‘Perhaps, one more cup of coffee?’ proposed Leo.

‘Oh, no! And from coffee to me it is already bad too,’ the doctor shivered and suddenly his eyes gaily flashed, ‘maybe let’s drink a little something stronger? Do you remember how a sip of cognac sometimes helped us find interesting solutions?’

‘Mmm, a sip of cognac?’ the professor asked more cheerfully. ‘Why not? At the same time, we will disinfect our throats from the book dusts that have settled there.’

Another twenty minutes later, friends chatted more joyfully at their coffee table.

‘Yeah, mate, it seems like we will not find anything interesting here even in a thousand years,’ said doctor Eliot, ‘they lived in a completely different world. Kings, plowmen, potters. I did not even notice any scientists, not to mention computers.’

‘All this is true, my friend. But our glowing shell is only a few days old. And that means that another world is still alive and well. Somebody from modern times must surely know about that at least someth...’ the professor suddenly stuttered but after a second he happily slapped his palm against his forehead, ‘Yes! There is a solution, friend!’

‘What solution?’ asked the doctor with pleasant anticipation.

‘Tom Bering! Do you remember our classmate Tom Bering?’

‘Well yes, I remember. We were not close friends then but he was a nice guy. I remember he even helped me with my coursework a couple of times,’ the doctor scratched his head, ‘And why are you talking about him?’

‘Do you know who he is now?’ Leo mysteriously screwed up his eyes.

‘No,’ the doctor answered, ‘I have not seen him since that time’.

‘I met him a couple of years ago at the university reunion. You were away with your wife at that time, remember?’

‘Yes, so what?’

‘Well, nothing special’ the professor leaned back in his chair joyfully, ‘but he is now a priest at one of the churches’.

The doctor’s fork rang loudly on his plate.

‘A priest?’ he asked surprisingly.

‘Yes!’ the professor cheerfully nodded, ‘And he is the one who can really help us a lot right now’.

The doctor thought for a few seconds.

‘Tom is a physicist, and therefore he is very familiar with the basics of our question. He is a priest and that is why he knows much more about different scriptures and other sources of information on this topic’ Eliot reflected aloud.

‘Exactly!’ Leo nodded and cheerfully turned his gaze to the table. ‘Pour me some more drops of this clever liquid, mate, and after that we will search for his location on the Internet’.

The two scientists clinked their glasses happily. Five minutes later, professor Leo McQueen was already on the phone arranging a meeting with priest Thomas Bering.

* * *

Angels Glan and Ev stood not far away from the armchairs and smiled happily.

‘Phew,’ Ev sighed with relief, ‘oh, finally, we seem to have a wonderful and short way to share the right information with the guys. Thanks to our Father, He helped us so much.

‘You are so right Ev! I remember Tom since student days. He thinks in a very correct way’, Angel Glan looked up with warmth, ‘Yeah, Father chose a more interesting option than all our books. Tom is the best candidate for various explanations.’

‘Of course, he is a former physicist and that means he can tell El and Leo a lot in a language they will understand. This is very important now,’ El agreed.

‘I hope so much that soon they will hear everything they need’, Glan smiled.

* * *

The computer troll Sluic this morning as usual laid next to the screen and whistled his song. His feeder Mike had recently gone to school and the troll had spent time waiting for him. Suddenly his rest was interrupted.

‘Hey dude, how are you?’ he heard a familiar voice of Og from below.

‘Hi,’ he responded and quickly jumped off the table. ‘What can happen to me? The Internet works, computer is fine and the

most important thing is I get enough food. And, as far as Mike goes, I hold him tightly now. He will not run away from me.

Both trolls giggled gaily.

‘Computer is, of course, a really good thing,’ Og agreed and scratched under one of his tentacles. ‘And me and Mo are doing well, too. But we have a thought, maybe we should try to make them addicted to something else?’

‘Are you serious?’ Sluic flinched with interest. ‘It is always good to cause new addictions, but what do you want to add specifically?’

‘Rumor has it,’ the neighbor responded, “that troll leaders organized special courses. They teach trolls how to make people addicted to something and which new addiction to choose. There are almost all the latest novelties for which clients are clinging to today. And it is interesting that the boss himself organized all this.

‘Courses from the chief?’ Sluic even straightened up, ‘That is really very curious. We should definitely go there - always need to be closer to his ideas. See how he taught us how to develop people's addiction to computers and television.’

‘Mo and I thought the same,’ Og smirked, ‘So, let’s go there together after a couple of days? Well, I suppose they will tell us everything there. Where to pull our feeders to and the best way to do it.’

‘I will be ready at any time,’ Sluic replied gaily.

After that, they said goodbye, slapping loudly at each other with tentacles.

As soon as the professor and the doctor parked their car near the church and got out of it, the priest descended to meet them from the steps.

‘Leo, El, I am so glad to see you! I really did not suppose that I would ever meet you again. And especially in my church,’ the priest gaily screwed up his eyes, ‘As I remember, you have always been convinced atheists.’

‘We were... Hi Tom, I am very glad to see you, too,’ the professor warmly embraced his former classmate and after that gave way to the doctor.

‘Hello Tommy!’ the doctor smiled, ‘I just found out about your new position yesterday.’

‘And today you are already here. It seems that science is indeed getting close to religion,’ the priest laughed, ‘Well, ok, let’s go to my room. I will make you some coffee and you can tell me all about the reason for your visit.’

One hour later El and Leo finished their long narration. Tom was silently sitting in an armchair all this time, thoughtfully twisting a luminous shell in his hands. Finally, after a while, he spoke with a smile.

‘Something like that is rarely heard of. Very rarely. My congratulations, friends! It looks like Heaven loves you for something, because you were shown so many things.’

‘Or what we are working on now is important to them,’ the doctor proposed his version.

That too, of course,’ Tom agreed, ‘but to bad guys, anything close to this will not even be shown.’

The priest poured more coffee into his friends’ cups.

‘And as for your research with phantoms and computers, they are really important. Darkness sticks very quickly to new technologies nowadays and then influences people. Here, there is no longer time to speak but to sound the alarm.’

‘Darkness?’ the doctor asked in confusion, ‘Could you tell us about it in detail? Leo and I went through a dozen of books on this subject and we are still lost.’

‘I feel sorry for poor physicists,’ the priest laughed cheerfully ‘Ok, I will try and explain everything to you in understandable language. However, it won’t be a short story.’

‘The longer, the better my friend,’ Leo looked seriously into Tom’s eyes, ‘This is what we came here for. This question seems to become the most interesting and important in our lives. So we need to know about this as much as possible.’

‘Well then, it is better to explain everything from the very beginning,’ said priest Tom and leaned back in his armchair.

* * *

Og, Mo and Sluic entered quite a large basement hall. The enormous trolls with different posters sat everywhere along the walls.

‘Wow, they are all so huge here!’ said Og with envy. ‘It seems that all these new methods feed them very well.’

‘Yeah,’ Sluic nodded rubbing his tentacles. ‘Something tells me that we did not come here in vain.’

‘Hey, dudes,’ a large grey troll appeared in front of them. ‘My name is Gro. What did you come for?’

‘Well, we want to get our clients addicted to something new. We heard that you have all the information about the innovations,’ said Og, ‘Also, they say that you provide consultations on all these issues.’

‘Of course’, the troll smiled in a sugary way demonstrating all of his ninety-three teeth, ‘The boss himself organized this project. He is very interested in people getting addicted to something new with greater force.’

‘We are so lucky to have come here!’ Mo could not restrain his joy. ‘Where are we better to start from?’

‘First, you should go to our psychologist, dudes. He will help you identify predispositions of your clients for new habits and give you some necessary advice.’

‘It is clear’, Og nodded, ‘and then?’

The huge troll burst out laughing.

‘And then my dear, we have several hundred options to choose from. Modern addictive electronics, endless computer games, aggressive advertisements, eternal forums and other types of chatting, various newfangled esotericism and so on. We have ideas in all areas. We do not waste any time here. So, let’s find out your customer's aptitudes first and after that, develop this or that area’, he blinked with one eye, ‘or maybe you will come up with something yourself. Usually, people who are already addicted to something will believe almost everything.’

Og, Mo and Sluic exchanged glances cheerfully.

‘Why did not we come here before?’ Mo said, ‘I have spent so many dietary days because of this boring TV series!’

‘Absolutely right, dudes,’ troll Gro nodded ‘always follow up on boss’s innovations. So, let us go to our psychologist now. He starts to consult with you about your clients in an order.’

The trolls moved further down the hall.

* * *

‘So, friends, let us get started,’ the priest said and smiled, ‘but first, try to forget everything you learned at school and University at least for a while.’

The doctor and professor nodded their heads in agreement.

‘Very well. So, the entire world, everything that you see all around: all the rivers, seas and mountains were created by God. He is very kind and omnipotent. Also, He wants to have real, kind and loving children very much. By the way, it is not rare for people to have such desires as well’, the priest smiled again, ‘However, kindness cannot easily emerge on Earth by itself. A tree will not become kind even in a million years, and an animal also will not become kind in a million years. As for human, if everything is well-explained to him and he tries to do it all, then he can become kind. This is because he has a soul - a compass from God. It will always show the direction to love and kindness.’

Tom paused for a moment, took a sip of cooled down coffee and continued.

‘So, namely because of this, the Lord created a place where a human can attend to this most important school of life. He created our planet Earth and after that gave people rules through

His Son. Following them, people can reach this kindness and love. Am I explaining this clearly?’

El and Leo nodded their heads together.

‘Then, let’s move on. Now we’ll talk about darkness,’ Tom continued his narration. ‘Unfortunately, not all people on Earth choose love, kindness, and light. Someone does not want to have anything to do with them, and it is possible too, because of real freewill – it’s always freewill. God gave the opportunity of free choice to everyone. That is why people have a right to choose other paths even if they lead to a dead-end.’

‘Dead-end?’ Leo asked surprisingly.

‘Yeah,’ Tom shrugged his shoulders. ‘Who needs all this darkness? The Creator of this world who is Kindness and Love? No, of course not. That is why all the darkness is temporary and will definitely end. The Son of God talked about it many times when He was on Earth.’

‘Well,’ Doctor Eliot frowned a little, ‘actually, there are other opinions of that.’

‘Could we discuss it some other time, El?’ the priest laughed, ‘You promised to forget about your knowledge for the time of the story.’

‘Yes, friend, let us be quiet a little for now’, Leo agreed with Tom, looking at the shell in his hand. ‘Because in recent times our science cannot explain everything.’

The doctor smiled and nodded his head in agreement.

‘Ok, Tom, I am sorry. We ourselves came to you to get the other answers... Please continue!’

‘Very well, then let’s move on,’ the priest spoke again, ‘So, the darkness which is completely unnecessary to God will

disappear later. But now it may even be useful in some way. Well, it is just like the weight on the bar for an athlete. However, in this case darkness helps kind people to become stronger in opposing evil. It is impossible to make a conscious choice only in a good environment.'

Tom interrupted for a minute and finished his cold coffee.

'Next, let us move on to your question about a phantom. The phantom that you are studying right now appears only with the participation of a person. Of course, dark forces provoke people to take this or that incorrect step. But, without reciprocation of a person himself, it does not make any sense and the phantom will not emerge.'

'And what about the higher resolution of graphics on the computer? Why does it lead to the growth of the phantom?' the professor asked him.

'The quality of the graphics only speeds up all these processes', the priest answered, 'but the principle itself remains unchanged anyway. If a person does not accept the rules of dark forces then the phantom does not appear. Reasonable usage of computers does not lead to the appearance of phantoms. This principle, by the way, manifests also in many other areas of human's lives. Moderation in food, alcohol or the time you spend watching TV for example, will not give rise to addictions. But overindulgence does. However, a person can always hold on to moderation if he wishes so because the Lord never gives us loads above our strength.'

'Never?' the professor said surprised.

'Everything is always done according to the capabilities of a person, Leo', the priest nodded with a smile, 'Not a gram more than a person can bear.'

‘However...’ El shook his head. ‘Is God really that omnipotent and accurate?’

‘Of course, He is a Basis of both power and accuracy, my friend, and you cannot even imagine to what extent,’ Tom seriously looked at him and laughed suddenly. ‘Why do you think I once left an enthralling physics lab and got interested in God?’

‘Is it cooler here?’ the doctor asked intuitively.

‘A million times more, mate’, nodded the priest.

‘Yeah’, Leo sighed, ‘And we only had gaps before luminous shell and fish in this question.’

‘Don’t worry - it will be more interesting for you now. Real scientists are always interested to learn more’, Tom said with a smile.

They all fell silent for a couple of minutes.

‘And how are we supposed to fight phantoms, in your opinion?’ the professor finally asked the priest.

‘Perhaps, it is just like fighting any other addictions of people. The main thing for the person here is the understanding and awareness of the problem. People need to understand well and see when their communication with computers is normal and when dependency is already there. That’s half the battle in this. Because if people like everything in this question, then why will they fight with something and change something in their life in general?’

‘I agree,’ nodded the doctor.

‘Me too’, said the professor. ‘However, we need to outline this problem for people very earnestly. Of course, in a language they understand with a lot of arguments and supports. We will

have to justify scientifically the principles of computer addiction. Otherwise, who is ready to believe in an invisible phantom?’

The priest sighed with a smile.

‘It is true, friends. And it seems that this will be your further work. You should look for and find the most convincing arguments,’ he said, ‘only then will they believe you.’

* * *

‘Well, friend,’ Angel Glen jumped joyfully, ‘the main thought was successfully conveyed to our geniuses!’

‘Yes,’ Ev next to him, rejoiced ‘they finally understand what they should do and how.’

‘And, in addition to it all, they became believers themselves. The Father has turned everything around so awesomely!’

‘Yes children, today we have something to be happy about, indeed,’ they heard a dear Voice from above, ‘Well next, a lot will depend solely on our guys.’

‘They will not fail, Father. We have known them since their childhood,’ said Angel Ev.

‘I believe in them very much too,’ the Angels heard in response.

* * *

Trolls Og, Mo and Sluic were coming back home in a great mood.

‘It is so awesome, dudes, that you decided to go there,’ said Sluic enthusiastically. ‘We learned a lot of new and useful things there! Now I will try my best to seduce my Mike.’

‘I will do my best to catch my lady, too,’ Mo giggled cheerfully. ‘I want to be as large as that troll from the exhibition. Oh, I will find out very soon how else I can feed on her.’

‘Well, if others can work this out, then we will succeed too,’ troll Og agreed. ‘I also do not mind extending my ration. So, dudes, we are going to start working today.’

‘Right now,’ Sluic grinned, ‘First of all, I will test Mike when I come home. What other tendencies does he have? I wish there were more of them.’

‘We will soon know everything,’ said Og, scratching himself.

After that, they entered the flat.

* * *

It was already dark when Leo and El drove home. A little rain drizzled quietly outside the window and the car wipers periodically knocked the drops off the windshield.

The scientists were silent. They’d learned a lot of new information for the last few days that now, they just wanted a little bit of silence. They needed to think it all over slowly, to feel and probably make something of this a part of themselves, because humans are, above all, what they think and feel.

‘Our project with phantom got an incredible continuation despite the fact that it initially did not seem to be very serious,’ said Eliot quietly.

‘Yep’, the professor responded quietly as well, ‘I even get a little vertigo from all this news.’

From time to time, other cars passed by them. The light from their headlights reflected beautifully in the drops of water on the sides of the windshield.

‘Yeah, friend, our task does not seem to be the easiest one,’ finally said Leo, ‘serious research is forthcoming.’

‘I agree, but we like our jobs. Besides, it is not the first time that we’ve had a lot of work,’ the doctor replied optimistically. ‘The most important thing is that we now understand what we need to do.’

‘Yes, I basically have no serious questions left. It is going to be an ordinary job from this point on, indeed’, Leo nodded.

‘Not so ordinary, friend,’ El smiled. ‘Now we have got something in our jobs that we did not have before.’

‘Really?’ the professor asked surprisingly, ‘and what is that?’

‘The help of Heaven,’ answered the doctor in a voice that sounded a little different.

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