

The background of the entire cover is a photograph of a dirt road that starts in the foreground and curves into the distance, disappearing into a vast, rolling green field. The sky is a vibrant blue with scattered white clouds. The overall mood is peaceful and expansive.

Igor Bondar

*Once upon a time
in Heaven*

Gretta

Fictional story

Forty-two meters

It took Alex a long time to arrive at this place. He could have put the same effort into traveling to some ordinary tourist country a couple of times. First, he had to fly to a small town at the edge of the world, lost in its endless forests. As it turned out, there were just a few flights available to this place. Then, he drove off-road all day from the town to get to some lonely village. Only his bank card knew for sure what this trip had cost him.

But, that was not all. The next day, from early morning until evening Alex had to walk down the untrodden forest along a small river. Fortunately, the day before in the village, he had found a decent place to stay and someone who told him the way. He also had drawn a sort of map with a pencil for Alex.

The places which Alex was going to visit, were unknown and unexplored for most villagers. Moreover, it seemed that he alone knew that one could meet an intelligent creature there. In order not to excite the imagination of local residents, Alex introduced himself as a botanist looking for a rare plant in the forests. He even came up with a long name which he himself could not even repeat. Weird scientists all over the world are treated with an understanding and the guy got his hopes up that it would work here as well.

In fact, Alex got the coordinates for his destination from an unusual source. The source that many people would not consider at all. But the young man took this source seriously.

Six months ago.

'Why would you do that, Alex?' Ian looked into the eyes of his friend. 'You've never been interested in such dives before.'

'Everything changes, my friend, things don't stand still,' Alex replied philosophically.

'Not always,' his friend objected. 'You see, I haven't changed and still enjoy the good-old simple diving. And you, suddenly, started to experiment with these deep dives for some reason, and, even more, with air in the tank.'

'Maybe it just means that our tastes differ?' his partner smiled. 'Simple dives are just fine to you, but I'm already bored with them. I want to change something and try new things in life.'

'But it can be dangerous,' Ian objected.

'There are so many dangerous things in our world, my dear friend,' Alex said philosophically. 'The flight to get here was dangerous, driving a car or boat these days is also not safe.'

'All right, Al,' Ian laughed and made peace, 'suit yourself, you're a big boy. Just be careful with the depths. You know how it goes sometimes with air in tanks.'

'Okay, buddy,' Alex nodded, 'I'll be careful.'

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An hour later, the friends anchored near the quiet coast of a large green island. Looking overboard, they both smiled: despite the great depth in this place, they could see the seabed quite

well. This meant that the visibility today was fine and diving ought to be interesting. The divers slowly gathered their equipment and put them on.

'Be careful with the time at a depth,' Ian said.

'Don't worry, mate,' Alex smiled, 'I'll be there for no more than two or three minutes. Then, I'll go to decompression depth.'

'Well, then I'll meet you in an hour on the boat,' Ian said, waved to his partner and dove first.

When the bubbles from his friend's dive went far enough from the boat, Alex followed him. Underwater, Alex looked at the compass and mapped out the direction. Southeast of their boat, there was the strait 170 meters deep. The diver headed towards it.

At first, the sea bottom smoothly went down. However, at a depth of about 20 meters the Alex suddenly approached a steep cliff. Further ahead, there was only blue, the bottom of which was not visible. The diver's eyes lit up. He swam a little away from the edge of the reef and slowly began to descend along an almost sheer slope. Alex, of course, understood well the danger of deep dives with air in his tank and he was not going to exceed the depth of seventy meters today.

In fact, the maximum permissible depth for amateur diving is forty-two meters. In case of more serious depths, it is assumed that a diver uses special breathing gases which are studied at technical diving courses. However, some divers often violate this rule. Of course, in this case, they bear all the risks on their shoulders. Alex was one of them. He had already dived several times to a depth of 70 meters.

Now, with his arms and legs spread wide, he slowly went down along the vertical underwater cliff like a parachutist. From

time to time, Alex glanced at his depth gauge: 50, 60, 70 meters. At the last depth, the diver pressed the button that supplied air to the compensator. In a couple of seconds, he stopped and hung in the water a few meters from the wall.

The bottom of a strait was not yet visible from where he was. He could only see a small cliff ledge about 10 meters below. Alex looked around, feeling some dizziness caused by nitrogen. There were no fish around him, but he could see some bright sponges on the surface of a stone wall. Alex looked at them for a couple of minutes. After that, he got prepared for the lifting. However, at the last moment, the guy looked down and his attention was suddenly caught by an object on the ledge.

Alex looked more attentively. This object was strangely of regular shape. It was a perfect circle about one meter in diameter. This circle also differed in color from other stones on the ledge.

'Oh, what is that?' the guy thought with surprise, 'where could this circle come from?'

The diver looked at the computer. He had already been at this depth for two minutes and thirty seconds.

'Well, nothing terrible will happen, if I go down by ten more meters and then immediately come back up,' he thought and released the air from the compensator.

After that, Alex began to dive deeper. However, the bad did happen. When the diver almost got close to that circle, he decided to add a little bit of air into his compensator to stop. But soon, he noticed that, in spite of his efforts, the descent continued for some reason. The guy tried to row with fins, but the depth was still increasing. Then, there was a strange sound. Alex realized that something bad was happening to him.

Of course, he had heard of such things before. Obviously, this was a nitrogen narcosis caused by a serious excess of the permissible depth, which violates the perception of reality. The guy continued to descend lower and lower as if in a dream. Soon, his circle was already somewhere above. However, the guy's brain worked well.

'Well, that's all,' he thought very calmly for some reason. 'It seems that I have finished my dives. It's a pity that Ian will very upset.'

The wall, meanwhile, continued to float upward. But, he saw it with his side vision - for some reason, the guy did not want to turn his head or move his hand or foot. Soon, the diver felt that it was becoming hard to breathe.

'So, the end of my life has come,' the thought flashed through him and with great difficulty, he took one more breath.

* * *

'Well, that's all, take your ward,' Gretta heard a sad voice of the Father.

'Oh, such a pity,' she whispered softly, 'I really believed in him. My Alex had such huge potential...'

'I feel sorry for him too, my dear, but it happens...'

Gretta did not take her eyes off the diver. Suddenly, she looked up.

'Father, can I try one more time? Just once! I do not know why, but I am sure that I will be able to wake him up this time.'

For some time, silence settled.

'You love him and believe in him so much,' she heard a warm voice, 'Okay, try one more time.'

'Thank you, Father!' Gretta smiled happily. 'I will try very hard to please you.'

'All right, all right,' she heard a kind laugh. 'Good luck! But, remember that he must go all the way by himself.'

* * *

Alex suddenly caught himself thinking that for some reason, he breathed easily. Surprised by it, he tried to raise his eyelids that had lowered themselves recently. He succeeded but immediately froze from what he saw. Now, he found himself near a sandy bottom and it was quite dark around him. The diver instinctively pulled a hand with a depth gauge to his eyes and looked at the glowing screen. He shuddered in surprise - the depth in this place was 162 meters.

'How is it possible?' he thought in confusion. 'People can't be this deep underwater if there is air in their tanks.'

The guy tried to move his flippers, hands and head, and he succeeded. His whole body seemed to be just fine.

Suddenly, Alex noticed something glowing twenty meters away from him. He looked attentively. The glow seemed to approach him because it was increasing in size.

'What is that?' the diver was surprised again.

In a few of seconds, the guy was stunned to notice that the source of the light was ... a girl. Dressed in all white, she was walking on the bottom and smiling at Alex. Her blond hair was beautifully flowing underwater. The water within a radius of

two meters around her was shining with some sparkling light as well.

The diver froze, powerless to move. Meanwhile, the girl came really close to him and looked in his eyes in a friendly manner.

'Now, everything is clear,' Alex thought clearly, 'I'm dead, that's for sure.'

'Not really, though you tried very hard,' he heard a pleasant female voice. 'Hello, Alex! Nice to meet you.'

Alex's eyes got as round as the lenses of his diving mask.

'What the...' he began to think.

'Not what but who,' the girl corrected him with a smile. 'Sorry, Al, I just hear your thoughts. My name is Gretta, I'm your angel.'

'Angel? What kind of angel?' the guy reflected and, suddenly, another thought came to his mind. 'Where are her wings then? I've read that angels should have wings.'

'Oh, Alex, Alex,' the girl in white sighed, 'where are your manners? What did your mother teach you? First, you need to say "Hello" to a stranger and then something like: "Nice weather, isn't it?" and only then can you start asking about some wings or anything else.'

Such criticism made the guy blush a little. However, he smiled cheerfully in a moment. Although, it looked funny as he had a regulator in his mouth.

'I'm sorry, Gretta, my fault. That thought just somehow jumped into my head,' he thought.

'Okay,' the girl laughed and a second later, the wings appeared behind her back. 'Here are my wings for you. Do I look like an angel now?'

'Yes, you look like a real angel,' Alex tried to think carefully and correctly. 'Your wings are beautiful. Now, I can see that you're an angel.'

This time it was the girl's turn to laugh.

'Alex, you haven't had so many right words for thirty years. My hearing refuses to accept such thoughts from you. You'd better think like you used to.'

The embarrassed guy kept silent and did not even know what to think.

'Actually, my dear, the shape doesn't really matter. It often changes. It's only our soul that matters,' Greta said more seriously, came closer to Alex and took his hand. 'Okay, Al, we'll finish with jokes some other time. We don't have much time now, so listen to me carefully.'

The guy felt the warmth of her hands even though they were underwater. He seriously looked at the girl and waited for her to continue speaking.

'There are a lot of things that I can't tell you right now. Those are the rules. But you should know that we love you very much,' Greta smiled warmly. 'Now, listen to me carefully. Don't waste your time, Alex, as you do now. Look for the right path in life, my dear.'

'What path? Where can I find it?' Alex thought unwittingly.

'Think about it, look for it, and you'll understand,' Greta replied. 'You'll find all the clues on Earth.'

'Will you help me?' after a while, Alex thought, looking at her.

'I've been doing this your whole life,' the girl sighed. 'But you rarely listen to your heart, Al.'

'I will try,' the guy sincerely thought after a few seconds and then came up with another idea. 'Will I ever see you again on Earth?'

Gretta thought for a moment.

'Sure, if you want to. But, it won't happen until you make progress. That's the rule. I can't push you forward, Al, I can only explain what you've already understood. I can also help you and send my thoughts to your heart. But, you have to walk the main part of the path on your own.'

'I'll do my best, Gretta,' the diver thought warmly. 'Thank you so much for everything you do for me.'

The girl smiled.

'Do your best, my dear,' she said softly and stroked his head. 'I begged to give you one more chance. That's because I have great faith in you.'

'I will try my best', this time the guy thought calmly and firmly.

'All right, that's all for today. Now close your eyes for a few minutes.'

Alex obediently complied with her request.

'Where and when will I meet you again?' he thought with his eyes closed.

'You'll find out when you'll be ready. Also don't tell anyone that you saw me,' he heard Gretta's voice, which was fading away.

* * *

When Alex opened his eyes, everything around him was much lighter. He looked down and saw the familiar blue sea instead of the darkness of the seabed.

'Well, and where am I now?' the guy thought and looked at the depth gauge.

His device showed a depth of 42.0 meters. Alex laughed out loud from such accuracy.

'Okay, Gretta, I got it. No more violations,' he thought.

After a while, he began to slowly go up to the decompression stop. However, a doubt entered his mind along the way.

'Hey, Alex, wasn't it a mirage? Angel, deep bottom, some kind of strange light, unusual conversation...' he thought.

Scratching his head, he decided to look at the history of this dive, stored on his diving computer. Soon, his smart device showed that five minutes ago, its owner was at a depth of 162 meters.

'So, it's all true!' the diver thought with a happy smile.

* * *

Three months later, Alex was sitting at a cozy table on the veranda of his house, drinking an aromatic coffee and reflecting. It was an early morning but the guy liked to wake up at the crack of dawn. It had been like that almost from his very childhood and he could not do anything about it. People call such persons ‘early birds’. Alex liked the special smell of early morning, silence, the absence of people, an ability to be alone with only one’s thoughts. And, in general, there was always something special for him in the birth of every new day.

On the table, there was a small book in front of him with the image of a white angel on the cover. ‘What do we know about angels’ it was titled. There were dozens of such books with different angels on the cover and different names on the shelf of his room. Over the past months, Alex had read all that he could find on this topic.

Actually, the guy had never been an atheist – he believed in all, to an extent, including the existence of something after death. However, if he had seen such books somewhere before, he would have certainly passed them by. But, now, a lot had changed in his life.

It was as if he had risen from a child’s sandbox and suddenly realized that there was a big and interesting world around him. Namely because of that, all his previous activities and businesses now seemed not to be that serious for the guy – the story that had happened to him underwater affected his vision of the world dramatically which was actually understandable.

Of course, as Gretta had asked, he did not tell Ian and all his other friends about what happened to him on that dive. Although, to be honest, it was quite difficult: sometimes, the memories of that unusual day even took Alex’s breath away.

The guy took a sip of his coffee, looked at the sun that was already over the tops of the trees and got lost in thoughts again. Well, it seemed that he had already read everything about angels. Of course, he had heard something about them before from other sources. Nevertheless, having read such a great deal of books about these kind inhabitants of another world, it was impossible for Alex not to notice the difference in their description in various authors' books. Moreover, the intrigue was added by the fact that all the information in these texts was taken mainly from various ancient writings. But, the authors of these books did not seem to have any practical experience of communication with angels. Alex did have it.

'Eh, and how can I now properly figure all this out?' He thought. 'Gretta told me that all the answers are on Earth. Well, yes, there turned out to be many of them, indeed. But, they vary sometimes, so how can I know which of them is correct?'

The guy scratched his head. Then, another thought suddenly came to his mind.

'Gretta told me that she'd always prompted something at me through my heart, but I listened to her poorly. Maybe I should try to learn to hear my heart better? But, how can I do this?'

Reflecting, the guy took one more sip then put his hands on the armrests of the chair, tilted his head slightly forward and began to listen to himself. A minute passed, but his heart told him nothing.

'Maybe I am incapable of this?' Alex thought. 'There are people who do not have, for example, an ear for music. Perhaps, for some reason, I can't hear my own heart?'

Then another thought suddenly came to the guy.

‘Maybe it’s all because I first need to ask something in order to get an answer?’

This idea inspired Alex so much that he put his hands on the armrests again.

‘Gretta, how can I learn to hear you in my heart?’ he asked very clearly.

‘Good morning, Alex!’ suddenly a thought appeared in his head.

The guy even flinched in surprise. The intonation of this thought was so bright and new that he immediately realized that it definitely had not come from him.

‘Gretta, is it you?’ Alex muttered tentatively.

‘Eh, some things in my AI do not change ...’ He suddenly heard a new thought in himself. ‘Again, neither “hello” in response, nor “nice weather, isn’t it?”’

Alex unexpectedly froze at first but after giggled cheerfully.

‘Gretta! It seems that I can really hear you. That is your sense of humor for sure’. Alex muttered, choked and added, ‘I’m sorry... Good morning!’

‘Well, even a diver can learn how to ride a bike. Though, of course, it takes patience...’

Alex smiled widely again. However, after a while, he suddenly stopped talking.

‘Am I not going crazy here?’ The guy thought this time. ‘Laughing with myself, thinking about something and talking to someone. I’ve done without it for thirty years...’

The answer to this thought was a complete silence.

‘Gretta, are you here?’ the guy asked uncertainly after some time.

‘Yes’, he heard inside himself.

‘Why didn't you answer my previous question?’

‘You have to answer it yourself, Al’, he heard. ‘Either you believe in me, in angels or not. People can choose different things. Back then, underwater, I told you and showed you all that I could. That's all I can do for you. After that, the choice is up to you’.

Alex became full of thoughts for a while and then bowed his head guiltily.

‘I'm sorry, Gretta, something's got into me. You see, it's one thing to see you. But to hear you in my mind... that's a different story. But you warned me and I believe you. Let's just not talk about it anymore,’ he said and raised his head. ‘It turns out, Gretta, that all the thoughts that I have inside, come from you?’

‘Oh no, my dear, of course not,’ he heard a warm response. ‘It's just the first time I've tried so hard for you to hear me well. But in fact, your thoughts can be very different and come from different sources. You should pay attention to them and be careful.’

‘Careful?’

‘Of course. It's no secret that all the bad things and words in this world begin with thoughts,’ the angel replied. ‘But you can easily recognize the thoughts from me – they're always bright, they would never advise you to do something bad or risky. They'll make you feel good and happy. By the way, your conscience and critical view of yourself also comes from me.’

‘Interesting, so interesting...’ Alex could only say. ‘I wish I could know more about that, Gretta. I think it is very important to be able to hear you’.

‘All right,’ he heard another thought in his head after a while. ‘You’ve honestly tried to figure it all out. So I’m happy to tell you something useful about it. I’ll wait for you.’

At that very moment, Alex’s phone beeped. He took it quickly and read the message that he just received. It read, ‘I am waiting for you in’, followed by the coordinates of a place - latitude and longitude. At the end of the message there were two letters: ‘Gr’.

Alex's heart began to beat faster.

‘Do I have to go there?’ he asked excitedly. ‘I’ll be there fast, Gretta!’

‘Take your time, my dear,’ he heard a warm answer in his heart, ‘we have plenty of time’.

In the forest

Alex's long journey through the forest was quite comfortable. If it wasn't for the mosquitoes, that tried to solve their problems with nutrition at his expense from time to time, he could even call it pleasant. The guy was walking along the bank of a small picturesque river and, sometimes, he made a stop to drink some hot coffee from his thermos and eat a sandwich.

The sun was shining brightly in the sky and birds were singing beautiful songs all the way. Sometimes, Alex would look at his smartphone to check the direction and see how long it would take to get to the end of the route. His digital friend was more than a useful thing in this distant place.

Finally, by three o'clock, Alex was almost at his destination. GPS showed that it was only a few hundred meters to the area with mentioned coordinates. The river bank in this place was quite high and not overgrown. The guy was walking through a beautiful forest glade with a great view of the river and its opposite bank.

Of course, Alex was very excited at this point. His human mind just could not accept the fact that now there was something in his life that surpassed all his previous ideas. Of course, he liked to read different fairy tales as a child and strongly believed in them. However, the guy couldn't even imagine that his real life would be more incredible than a fairy tale.

As he walked through a group of big trees, Alex came to another picturesque glade and suddenly stopped. He saw a beautiful tent in the midst of this glade. It somewhat reminded him of a big tourist tent, but it was dazzling white and its shape was very unusual. Next to the tent, he saw Gretta, who warmly smiled at him. She looked almost the same as the last time he saw her. From a distance, one could even think that she was an ordinary person.

'Hi, my dear Alex! I'm glad to see you again,' the guy heard the familiar voice as he came closer.

He suddenly caught himself thinking that the intonations of thoughts that had recently come to his heart were close to her real voice.

'Hello, Gretta,' Alex warmly smiled back, 'finally, I can talk to you in real life without any regulator in my mouth. Thank you for agreeing to meet with me.'

Gretta cheerfully nodded. At this moment, a big yellow butterfly began to fly right next to them. The angel smiled and raised her hand after that the butterfly to sit on it. Gretta laughed and began to spin with the winged guest. Alex warmly looked at them and suddenly realized that he could see the butterfly even when the angel covered it with her body. This idea made him shudder. Finally, Gretta raised her hand and the butterfly flew away.

'Uh... Gretta, I just realized that I can see a butterfly through you,' Alex said in confusion.

'My world is very different from yours,' the angel smiled. 'I think that you've already read something about it in those books about angels. They express a lot of real facts.'

After that, Gretta warmly looked at her earthly ward.

'Well, dear, you can ask me anything that is interesting to you. I'll try to answer your questions.'

The angel slowly moved through the green meadow and the guy went next to her.

'Gretta, how come I can hear you in my mind? And quite correctly, as I understand,' Alex looked into the angel's eyes with interest.

She laughed loudly.

'Oh, Al, I wish I could show you what this world really looks like. Of course, people have already mastered the Internet, connected various convenient services via satellites and much more. But in fact, all this is only the smallest part of the opportunities in the world of yours and my Father's. And, believe me, these opportunities are enormous.'

'Can you tell me anything about it?' the guy's eyes lit up with curiosity.

The angel thought for a few seconds.

'I cannot tell you everything right now, Al. There are things that I cannot reveal and some things that you probably won't understand yet. However, I can try to convey something to you.' Gretta stopped, sat down on the soft grass and signaled Alex to sit next to her. 'Actually, this world doesn't really look like how you used to imagine it. Everything on this planet consists of the same tiny particles, for example, you, this grass or river. All differences in earthly forms are just the result of their different combinations. So, these particles for the Father are similar to the elements of a construction kit that He can use to create any matter on Earth, even the living ones. Do you understand what I'm saying?'

The guy, who had been listening to the angel with his eyes wide open, nodded.

'I had a similar LEGO set when I was a kid. I often constructed houses, cars or something else from the same elements.'

'I remember,' Gretta warmly smiled. 'Then, let's move on. So, in the view of people, all forms on Earth exist and evolve according to the laws discovered and described by earthly scientists,' Gretta continued. 'But for the Father, the Creator of all these elementary particles, they can also change and develop according to His higher laws and His desires.'

Alex sat up in surprise.

'Are you kidding?'

'Of course not. Just look at all these miracles that He has shown to people over centuries! They break all the earthly laws that you know. Just think about it, how could our Father have done it, if He didn't own the earthly matter?' Gretta looked at the guy warmly. 'That's why, my dear, our Father always and easily controls everything in this world. Everything but the people's hearts. In this field, He gives them complete freedom to choose their fate.'

Alex stared at the river, lost in thoughts.

'So why do people see all this and still don't understand?'

'Some of them have understood or guessed, but you're right, there aren't many. This is particularly true for those who sincerely reach for God and follow His commandments. There are also people who have never really been much of believers, but they're very kind and it's important to them to understand the

meaning of life. The Father also helps them,' Gretta sighed. 'Well, and the rest should do something on this Earth during their lives anyway. Of course, the Father always invites them to His wonderful world, but they, as the sad experience shows, are not really in a hurry to go there. So let them create and study earthly laws, live by these rules, earn money and goods, find different goals and pleasures. Though, to be honest, they won't need any of that after their earthly lives.'

Gretta looked closely into Alex's eyes.

'And the Father won't need any of that as well. It's like temporary decoration made by people only for convenient living on earth.'

'Decoration for seventy years...' the guy said thoughtfully. 'You know, Gretta, everything that you've said for some reason resonates in my soul. To be honest, I've had some similar ideas on this topic before. Interesting, isn't it?'

'Well, scuba diving washed your head very good, that's for sure,' Gretta laughed cheerfully. 'Well, until you began to take those deep dives.'

Alex smiled and shrugged in some doubt.

'You're probably right, Gretta. On the other hand, at the deep bottom, I met you.'

'Silly,' the angel sighed. 'There are more right and beautiful ways in life. If the Father didn't decide to give you a second chance, all this would've been over.'

The guy fell silent in confusion.

'Is it so serious?' finally, he softly said a minute later. 'Then, I should thank you and Him for believing in me. I'm sorry and I'll try not to do anything stupid again.'

The angel warmly looked at him.

'Good. Now, let's discuss the ideas which made you want to meet me.'

'With pleasure,' the guy nodded. 'Though, after what I've just heard, this subject doesn't shock me anymore.'

* * *

Gretta got up, and the guy followed her. They walked slowly through the low grass towards the river. The angel continued the dialogue.

'That's right, Alex, the exchange of thoughts is just another possibility from the world of our Father. By the way, many people noticed this long ago and already use some of its elements. That's why the word "intuition" has become so popular on earth.'

'Intuition also relates to it?' the guy asked with surprise.

'Of course. This is the shortest way to the right decision, without analysis and serious thinking activity. Who else can know all the answers and quickly send the relevant thoughts to people, if not God or angels?'

Now, many things have become clear,' the guy murmured. 'But you said that the thoughts in my head can come from

different sources. So they can come from somewhere else besides you and the Father?'

Gretta nodded.

'Yes, Alex. Now, we've come to an extremely important issue that also has great practical importance for every person. But there's one condition. Of course, I'll tell you something about it right now. However, the rest you'll have to find yourself after our meeting. You can find out all the necessary answers on this subject on Earth. This search and the work in this direction will be very useful for you.'

'All right, Gretta, I'll do my best,' the guy nodded. 'You've already done so much for me. Thank you!'

The angel warmly smiled back.

'I'm always happy to help you. So, Al, every thinking person, and not only a person, can be compared to fire, figuratively. As you know, where there's fire, there's smoke. So, this "smoke" comes from all mental processes, emotions, and desires of people. Every person creates some mental and emotional atmosphere around him. And, other people can feel and perceive this atmosphere. Do you understand what I'm saying?'

Alex, who had been carefully listening to the angel, nodded with uncertainty.

'To be honest, I understand the words. However, the meaning is quite unusual, I can hardly get it.'

'That's not bad,' Gretta smiled. 'So, other people can be filled with this "smoke" without noticing. No wonder they can quickly accept some ideas after hanging out with some people. By the

way, these traits are often used in advertising - they always create the necessary atmosphere.'

Gretta and Alex reached the water. They sat down on a fallen tree by the river, and the angel continued to speak.

'I should say, Al, that the "smoke" from one person is usually insignificant. However, a group of people with similar thoughts can create quite a strong atmosphere. Earthly psychologists noticed this feature a long time ago and called it "collective consciousness". A thinking atmosphere can also be transmitted through different media sources, such as the news or movies. Have you noticed, Alex, that after a good movie, you want to be kinder and do good things, and after a scary movie, you are always tense?'

The guy, who had really thought about this matter before, nodded his head with a smile.

'Of course, I have, Gretta. But, now I'm curious as to what happens next with the ideas that get inside me or inside others from outside?'

'You see, my dear, it is hundred percent up to a person. If these ideas or desires are foreign to a person, they either go away...'

'Go away? Are they alive?' Alex interrupted the angel with surprise.

'To some extent. All the thoughts that don't come from angels or the Father can be very figuratively compared to some invisible leeches or mosquitoes. But, only they look for similar

emotions and thoughts in other people. If they don't find the emotions and desires that they need in a person, they still try to evoke them. However, if they fail, they usually go away. Well, and if some of them don't want to go away, they just burn.'

'Burn?' Alex was surprised again. 'Why would they burn in me, for example?'

'Any darkness, Al, can always be dispelled by simple light,' Gretta smiled back in response. 'In the same way, any passions, obsessive desires and negative emotions can always be destroyed by calmness, honesty and goodwill of a person.'

At this point, the angel stood up and warmly looked at the guy.

'That's all, my dear. I've already told you a lot more than I planned today. Now, it's your turn to think and search. A person should look for the necessary answers on his own, only in this case will he appreciate them very much.'

Alex stood up, too.

'Of course, Gretta, I'll look for them. All this is really important and interesting to me. Really...'

'I know, Al,' the angel nodded. 'That's why I asked the Father to give you one more chance.'

* * *

After a while, it was time for Alex and the angel to say goodbye.

'I'll leave you this tent until tomorrow. Get some rest here and sleep, it'll be very dark here soon,' Gretta brought the guy to the construction covered with shiny fabric. 'And go home as you wake up tomorrow.'

'Thanks for your concern, Gretta,' the guy cheerfully smiled.

Of course, he did not want to spend the night in the open air to the delight of local mosquitoes.

'There's a small bed inside. It's quite comfortable for one night,' Gretta said.

'Can I look inside?' the guy just could not fight his curiosity.

The angel smiled and nodded.

Alex began to look for a zipper to enter the tent but soon, as he went around it, he returned to Gretta with a puzzled look.

'Erm... and where's, actually, the entrance?'

'Everywhere,' Gretta laughed. 'This tent is from our world. You can freely enter it and go out through this fabric.'

'Wow!' the guy exclaimed and suddenly thought about mosquitoes: 'Probably, it won't be difficult to fly through this fabric for someone else, too.'

The angel laughed cheerfully.

'Sorry, Al, I can still hear all your thoughts. No, mosquitoes or bugs cannot go through this fabric, that's for sure. Animals

and even other people cannot get inside as well. It's made just for you.'

'Unbelievable!' the guy exclaimed once again and took a few steps towards the tent.

He looked at the angel and extended his hand. To the touch, this tent reminded him of water rather than the usual matter. The guy moved his hand further, and... The hand suddenly began to slowly disappear inside the tent. Alex's eyes lit up and he took a firm step forward.

A few minutes later, the excited guy exited the tent.

'Gretta, it's amazing! Everything in this world turns out to be so interesting and unusual!' Alex looked around and suddenly saw that there was no one near the tent. 'Gretta, where are you?'

'I'm here, Al,' he suddenly heard the answer in his heart.

'You left already? I didn't have time to say goodbye...'

At this moment, Alex heard the laughter in his heart.

'It's impossible to say goodbye, my dear, to someone who is always with you,' he got a new idea.

This thought made him happy and joyful.

'I see, Gretta. Thank you so much for everything! I'll do my best to sort it all out. And, I look forward to our next meeting!'

'I'll wait for you, too. Good luck, Al!' the guy heard the angel's answer in his heart.

Island

Alex saw that the strings, showing the air pressure on the inner side of the sail, slightly sagged. He looked at the wind's direction on a control board and smoothly turned the wheel. A few seconds later, the yacht mainsail was perfectly filled out again.

The guy looked at the control board and was pleased to note that the yacht's speed had increased to six knots an hour. Of course, he could also put another sail in front, a spinnaker, because the wind direction was quite suitable. This would increase the yacht speed by a couple of knots. However, Alex did not do it. Now, he usually preferred a middle ground between calm and haste.

The captain turned on the autopilot and took a thermos filled with hot coffee from a special niche. He went to the yacht bow and made himself comfortable near the side. The sea was almost calm today and there was a bit of tailwind. From time to time, ocean swell gently raised and lowered the yacht, and low waves waggled it along the length. The weather was fine that day: the sky was clear, only small groups of snow-white clouds were floating somewhere over the horizon.

Alex was in a very good mood. In general, he was always in a good mood when he was alone with the sea. Besides, today, he was heading to a small deserted island, where the angel Gretta was waiting for him. Almost a year has passed since the last time he saw her in the woods. Much has changed since then.

A funny thing: it always turned out that as soon as he thought that he had already understood something well in this world, something always happened that clearly showed that he actually did not understand so much. And that he was still at the beginning of an interesting, but very difficult, path.

Day after day, thought after thought, he sorted out the most interesting questions in his opinion: the meaning of human life on earth, the reasons for the things that make him happy or sad, the forces that help him or oppose him. At the same time, he felt the world of his angel and his Father more and more. Apparently, he did not work as badly because Gretta agreed to meet with him again.

This time, their meeting place was a remote island in the Coral Sea. Alex sipped some coffee and looked directly ahead. He already could clearly see the island, to which he heading, on the horizon; it was only a few hours away. The guy finished his coffee, twisted the lid on the thermos and took it to its place. After that, he sat down in the captain's chair, leaned back and reminisced.

* * *

The topic of human thoughts was much broader than Alex could have imagined. In fact, he immersed himself in a whole science where he had already been for thirty years but did not even know anything about it. After two months of studying, he was shocked by the things that he had discovered. He had never

doubted that his thoughts belonged to him, but now he began to see the real picture.

It all made sense now. Now, he understood why after watching some adverts, he suddenly started to think about the things that had never come across his mind before. The guy also began to notice that he always wanted to buy much more than was planned right after entering a supermarket. His desires were changing specifically in the territory of a supermarket.

After watching the news, he noticed that for a few hours, he could not get off his mind the thoughts he had not even had at all before. After seeing a romantic scene on TV, he immediately found himself thinking about his girlfriend. After watching the advertisement of some delicious food, he was always dying to have a bite. Alex was surprised that not so many desires of a person were his own but caused by any outside influence.

He spent the next few months struggling to figure out what the man called Alex really wanted without various “hooks”. The guy became very attentive to his thoughts. All these months, Gretta always helped him and her help was invaluable to Alex.

* * *

When the island was only a couple of miles away, Alex turned off the autopilot and switched to manual control. Then, he turned on the engine and folded the sails. He approached the coast from the leeward side and picked a cozy lagoon with a wide coastline and bright greenery among all the places to stop.

When the depth was five meters, he dropped anchor on a sandy seabed and looked around. He did not see Gretta on the shore yet. The guy untied the canoe from the side, put a small towel and his inseparable thermos into the backpack, took a paddle and swam to the shore. Soon, the sand began rustling under the bottom of his small boat.

Alex got out of the canoe, pulled it high on the shore and moved along the beautiful coastal strip. At that very moment, he saw a girl walking towards him from the opposite side of the lagoon. The guy immediately recognized Gretta by her figure and gait. He quickened his pace and a few minutes later, Alex and the angel finally met. They looked at each other for a few seconds and smiled happily.

'Hello, Gretta,' Alex said first, 'I'm so glad to see you again.'

'Hello, my dear,' he heard the familiar voice of the angel whose eyes shone with warmth. 'I'm happy to see you again, too. It's such a beautiful place, isn't it?'

The guy nodded.

'I know that the past year was not simple for you,' Gretta went on, 'but now you've finally begun to understand something in this world. It's interesting, isn't it?'

'Yeah,' the guy nodded with a smile. 'If someone told me a couple of years ago how the world works, I would laugh out loud.'

'Trust me, you still don't know much,' Gretta gently stroked his head.

'Really?' Alex was surprised. 'How much should a person know about the world to figure it all out?'

'He doesn't need to know everything. Leave it to the Father and to us angels,' Gretta replied. 'A person just needs to be kind, honest, sincere and moral. The more is revealed to those who want to know more.'

The guy smiled.

'But I'm really interested in that and I can't help it,' he cheerfully shrugged.

'Fine, discover the world further, the Father loves the curious ones.'

'Really? Why?' Alex looked at the angel with interest.

'There's nothing unusual in that. Even Earthly people like it when their children are interested in the same things as they are,' Gretta shrugged. 'So does the Father...'

Such simple logic made Alex smile.

'Oh, I see,' he said and then looked at the angel more seriously. 'I've got some serious practical questions. Will you help me to sort them out?'

'Of course, my dear,' Gretta nodded, 'that's why I'm here'.

'Why are there so many different sources of thoughts on Earth? After all, people often don't even realize why they begin to think or act one way or the other.'

The angel went to a small sand dune and sat down. Alex sat down next to her.

'Look, Al, a person can't achieve anything at all in his life without physical or mental work. For example, if a person wants to have strong muscles, he goes to the gym. To have sustainable and correct thinking, a person should try to think the right way as often as possible. Two thousand years ago, Father gave people examples of the right way of thinking through His Son. Well, and it's not His fault that humanity has almost forgotten or lost them. Nowadays, people are well-educated, with good logic, they can draw the right conclusions from historical facts,' Gretta sighed and looked at the guy. 'However, if a person moves away from the thoughts recommended to him by God, he often becomes an unconscious toy in the hands of different mental forces on Earth. As a result, people often spend most of their lives thinking about the things that aren't really too important.'

'Yeah, I was really shocked at first,' Alex picked up a handful of sand and began to slowly spill it back. 'I've always considered myself as a fairly reasonable person but it turns out that I often was just a victim of various mental "smoke", as you figuratively described it last time. And this "smoke", by the way, once led me very deep underwater...'

Gretta smiled.

'But now you're working hard and trying to figure it all out, and everyone in heaven is very happy about it,' she said. 'Anyway, who said that cultivating a good and kind person is an easy thing to do? It is the toughest work in the world, Al.'

After a while, Alex asked another question.

'Gretta, can you tell me more about the origin of negative thoughts on Earth? I've already understood something about the thoughts from you and Father. But I want to learn more about other thoughts that come to me from different directions.'

'Of course, I can,' the angel nodded. 'There may be a variety of thoughts. For example, if someone is jealous of your car, the thoughts of "envy" are flying around him already. In shops, there are a lot of different thoughts of "desires" from many people, so they begin to "live" there by themselves. And so on.'

Gretta raised her head and looked at Alex.

'People began to feel something about this and introduced the term "energy of the place", but this is a very narrow view of this issue. When many people think the same way, then we're dealing with "collective thinking". It's much stronger and a person can easily fall under its influence,' the angel thought for a moment and then moved on. 'Well, there are also thoughts from various dark, and not very light, entities of the invisible world on earth. You already read about them.'

'Yes. So it's true?' Alex asked with eyes wide open.

'Only to some extent,' Gretta smiled. 'People tend to attribute to them powers they don't have. They're just invisible liars and seducers, and Father has complete control over them. However, sometimes, they can be useful for the evolutionary process. As you know, if people want to strengthen their muscles and become stronger, they lift weights. Similarly, by struggling with negative thoughts, we become stronger, and therefore, it's easier

for us to fight our way to good and right thoughts. As a result, after this work a person's soul becomes much stronger.'

The guy looked at the angel with his eyes wide open.

'That's really interesting,' he said. 'It seems that I know very little about the world's structure.'

'That's true,' Gretta smiled. 'However, you don't have to invent a car or know all its systems if you want to drive it. You just need to be a good driver and follow traffic laws. The same applies to a person: he should simply try to live according to the Lord's commandments. Only those who like it “dig” deeper.'

Alex burst out laughing.

'Well, it seems like I really like it.'

'That's good,' Gretta nodded. 'You can never have too much knowledge about it.'

Alex suddenly thought about his coffee in the thermos and looked at Gretta a little embarrassed.

'Don't worry and drink, my dear,' she said with a smile, reading his thoughts, 'coffee for people is great.'

'Don't you like coffee?' the guy asked with caution.

'No,' the angel laughed. 'We don't need any food or drinks in our world.'

'Don't you want to try it?'

Gretta cheerfully patted Alex on his head.

'Do you want to taste this sand? Neither do I. Earthly food is already foreign to our bodies, we can't want it. Besides, we don't have any special organs to perceive it. However, people on Earth need it and it's pleasant for them. This is one of human programs.'

'Program? And how many programs does a person have?' Alex asked with curiosity.

'Hundreds,' Gretta replied. 'In fact, except the soul, the human body is a perfect bio-robot. A person can reduce the power of some programs, such as basic instinct or nutrition with the help of high morals or willpower. But he can never turn off the other programs, such as breathing or digestion.'

'A bio-robot?' the guy said with surprise.

'Well, yes, because he's made of the same particles as the world around him. After all, the human soul needs some shell to study in the school of life,' Gretta smiled cheerfully. 'People now believe that they have already achieved remarkable success in bio-engineering. However, any living flower in the field created by the Father is much more complex than all their achievements. Not to mention the human body. This is how it really looks, Al. And today's youth often thinks that God is outdated...'

Alex choked on his coffee.

'Well, Gretta, I used to think so too sometimes...' he said.

'I know,' the angel laughed. 'It's a common problem among people on earth: they overestimate themselves and

underestimate God. Well, let it be so. The main thing is to be kind and honest, they'll see everything over time.'

After that, the guy thought for a long time, silently looking at the sea.

* * *

Meanwhile, the Father was looking thoughtfully at His Earth. A lot has changed there over the past few decades. Many hundreds of satellites were now constantly orbiting the planet, making people's lives more comfortable. Thousands of airplanes were simultaneously flying above the earth in all directions, carrying passengers to different parts of the world. At night, people turned on the lights in the cities and there were so many, that all the continents even shone a little.

Father smiled sadly. He suddenly remembered the thoughts that He had while He was creating this very planet. Of course, He wanted to make it a very comfortable home for all of His children back then. Also, throughout this time, He helped people to evolve there.

However, this was not His main aim. First of all, the Father hoped that kind and loving people, beautiful from the inside, would grow on this planet. The honest and moral ones, with high thoughts and aspirations. For thousands of years, He helped them daily to become better and explained the rules of life to them, showed examples. However, today, the Father realized with sadness that people's desire for exterior comfort often exceeds their desire to become kinder and better.

Actually, His project called "Earth" turned out to be very successful. Over thousands of years, a lot of wonderful and kind people have come to His eternal home. They were precious to the Father and were worth the effort that He made when creating Earth. Nevertheless, the Father wanted to have as many people like that on earth as possible.

* * *

'You know, Gretta,' Alex said softly, 'lately, I've often felt as if I'd spent my entire life – thirty-one years already – living in a world of childish illusions. I'm so glad that there's not much left of it by now.'

He looked thoughtfully at the angel.

'You haven't lived in the world of illusions, my darling, you've just lived within what you knew and believed,' Gretta shrugged with a smile. 'Now you know more, therefore, your past world seems childish to you, just like how all adults think that their childhood was not serious. That's a pity, though, that very few people understand that their growing could be continued.'

'Thank you for pulling me up so hard and helping me to grow up,' Alex said warmly.

'You're welcome,' Gretta smiled. 'Keep on growing to everyone's joy. Maybe someday you can help others, too. Of course, only after you're settled in your right thoughts and deeds.'

'How long does it take?' Alex asked.

'It depends on who's trying and how hard he's trying,' Gretta shrugged. 'But it isn't quick, that's for sure. One should develop strong resistance to any darkness in one's soul. You should also recognize the passions well and avoid any sin in your life, that is, don't do anything wrong.'

'Sins and passions?' Alex looked at her with interest. 'Can you tell me more about it? Of course, I've read about it, but there's been a lot of different interpretations.'

'Actually, that's the subject I wanted you to study and work out on your own. It's extremely important,' the angel replied. 'But all right, I'll tell you something about it now so you'll understand the basis. Have some coffee and listen to me.'

Alex, who had long held the thermos in his hands, happily took the lid off.

'So, negativity. In this world, it can be of different quality and scale,' Gretta moved on. 'Any negativity on earth comes not from our world. Therefore, if a person follows it, then this negativity will definitely never lead him to us, in Paradise. Do you understand that logic? '

'Yes, I do,' Alex nodded.

'Very well, then we will continue,' the angel said. 'If a person is resistant to negative thoughts, they either go away from him or burn out, and the topic ends at this point. However, if a person is interested in a negative thought and begins to think about it, then it gradually grows in him and transforms into a passion. We could even say that it becomes his part, actually, like a liana twined around a tree. Well, and if this passion

eventually makes a person think negatively or do something bad, then we're already talking about a sin. Sin is a voluntary ill act committed by a person.'

'Voluntary?'

'Of course,' Gretta nodded. 'After all, a person always has freedom of choice. Moreover, we always tell him what the right choice is through his conscience, intuition, various external sources and the advice of his loved ones. So, if a person eventually chooses sin, he's always responsible for that.'

'Can a person somehow correct the consequences of his wrong decision?'

'Only sincere repentance will help in this case. Besides, a person should also try to fix all the bad things that he's done,' the angel said. 'If one turns to God with deep and true repentance, He forgives the sinner because only such person will try not to repeat this mistake again. Without repentance, people tend to make the mistakes over and over.'

'Yeah, fighting the negativity in our soul is no easy task.'

'Absolutely, this is the most difficult task for a person. It's very hard to change yourself for the better. However, it's necessary because no other path will lead people to the Father's world,' Gretta said with a sad smile. 'The sad thing is that people have known about this for two thousand years already but, for some reason, they always forget it...'

Alex picked up a stick and began to draw in the sand.

'I'll try really hard to move forward,' he said at last.

'Good. Do your best and try hard, my dear,' the angel replied with a warm smile. 'Well, I've got to go now. I've told you all that I could.'

'I don't want to say goodbye to you, Gretta,' the guy sighed. 'It's very amusing and useful to be with you. I don't have a lot of really interesting conversations in this world...'

'I know,' the angel nodded. 'I can just advise you to get the hang of all these things faster and harder. And then the time comes, we'll be together forever.'

'Forever?!'

'Haven't you read about it?' Gretta looked at him in surprise.

'Of course, I have. But it's hard to comprehend this on earth,' the guy smiled, but then suddenly blushed and looked at the angel. 'Gretta, can I ask you something? How old are you?'

The angel burst out laughing.

'Oh, Al! Your manners are really something,' she said a few seconds later with a smile. 'I'm old, by earthly standards, very old, my dear. And you're not the first person I'm helping on Earth. But let's not talk about it anymore. You'll find out when you get to our world.'

Alex smiled, a little embarrassed.

'To be next to such a beautiful angel in the future is a great incentive for me,' he said softly.

Gretta looked at him intently and her green eyes suddenly funny twinkled. After that, she came closer to the guy and hugged him warmly.

'Well, my dear, I have to go now,' she said. 'And remember the main thing: always take care of your soul.'

After that, Gretta headed for the sea. When she reached the water's edge, she suddenly moved on, not along the bottom, but on the surface. Alex watched his angel step over the small waves with his mouth wide open. After a few steps, Gretta suddenly vanished into the air.

'Wow...' was the only thing he could utter.

'Not bad, huh?' he heard a cheerful thought from the angel in his heart.

Alex laughed.

'Thank you for everything, Gretta!' he said warmly.

After that, he took off his shirt and ran into the azure water of the lagoon. The sea, too, was his good old friend.

Epilogue

That morning, Alex was sitting at a cozy little table in a café, drinking a fragrant cappuccino. There were many people around him sitting at their tables. Someone was surfing the web,

someone else was thinking about something and some people were talking to each other. Alex liked being around people lately. They were lively and full of possibilities.

'Hello, my dear,' the guy suddenly heard in his heart.

'Gretta!' Alex whispered happily. 'Hello, Gretta!'

'I'm so glad to see that your manners are getting better and better every time,' he heard a cheerful reply.

Alex smiled widely.

'I had good teachers,' he thought warmly.

'Thank you,' he heard the reply. 'You know, Al, it's a little strange that you haven't asked to see me again in a while.'

'But you're always next to me,' the guy thought. 'It seems that I've now begun to understand how things work, so disturbing an angel for no reason is not a good idea. Besides, to be honest, it's always very sad to say goodbye to you at the end.'

'Well, and what if someone in the sky sometimes just wants to pat you on the head?' he suddenly heard a real angel's voice next to him and felt a hand on his head.

Alex turned around in amazement. A beautiful and stylishly dressed girl was standing next to him. Alex barely recognized her as his angel.

'Gretta!' he gasped. 'Gretta...'

He kept his eyes peeled for her.

'Are you going to invite the girl to sit down at your table or not?' the angel said with a smile after a few seconds. 'By the way, I just recently praised your manners...'

'Oh, I'm sorry,' the guy jumped and pulled the chair for Gretta.

She sat down and warmly looked at Alex.

'So, how have you been doing all this time, my dear?' Gretta looked into Alex's eyes.

He thought for a moment.

'It's hard to say, actually,' he finally replied. 'In short, it's been very hard. Fighting the darkness inside oneself is the hardest thing. However, at the same time, it's been incredibly interesting to me. I didn't doubt for a second that I was doing a very important job. And I would never trade my life now for anything else.'

The angel warmly looked at the guy.

'Everything is right, my dear Al, everything is right.'

'Thank you and the Father so much for giving me a chance to touch this all and for helping me in any situation,' Alex added.

Gretta smiled.

'I think you can already guess that we are happy with your success as much as you are.'

'I can imagine,' the guy nodded with a warm smile. 'It's great that everything can be so high in life. But, in another way - this is already not that ...'

The angel held out her hand and affectionately patted him on his head.

'But remember, my dear, you should always be attentive to yourself.'

The guy nodded and sipped some coffee from a cup.

'Do you know what day it is?' Gretta suddenly asked him.

'The tenth of August, I think,' the guy shrugged.

'Right. And exactly three years ago, Al, I met you underwater for the first time,' the angel said and cheerfully looked into his eyes.

'Oh, wow!' Alex smiled broadly. 'So, today is some kind of an anniversary?'

'I think so. And the Father thinks so, too. That's why we want to give you a small present,' Gretta narrowed her eyes with a smile.

'You've already done too much for me...' the guy said, a little embarrassed. 'I don't need anything else...'

'Giving presents, Al, is actually the favorite thing of the residents of Heaven. Don't rob us of this joy,' the angel looked at the guy with a smile.

He obediently bowed his head.

'Wait for me here for a bit, I'll be back soon,' Gretta said, stood up and headed somewhere in the center of café.

Soon, she was out of sight and Alex switched to his coffee. In a minute, he saw Gretta again walking back to their table. It was strange but this time it seemed that she didn't even notice him and began to pass by.

'Gretta, I'm here,' Alex said.

Gretta stopped and looked at the guy in confusion.

'Do we know each other?' she asked uncertainly, looking at him with her green eyes.

Alex felt something unusual and nodded with caution.

'I don't remember you at all for some reason. But you know my name, so that means that you know me,' the girl kept thinking aloud. 'You must be working at our university?'

The guy stared at her and didn't say a word.

'It's strange that I don't remember you,' the girl said, looking carefully at him.

Alex began to suspect something.

'Gretta, where are you now?' he thought.

'In Heaven, of course,' he heard a cheerful answer in his heart. 'How do you like our present? This girl, Gretta, is very nice. After all, you always hated to say goodbye to me, Al. So, now you may not have to say goodbye, if you want. She and I have the same character. The Father did it.'

'To be honest, I'm so forgetful, it's no wonder why I don't remember you,' the new Gretta spoke to him more trustingly.

'Now, for example, I'm going back to my car because I forgot to take my purse. Just came for coffee here and realized that I have neither purse nor money. So, it's very possible that I might have forgotten you, too.'

Alex was in mixed feelings. However, he found the right words on time.

'You know, Gretta, I love coffee more than anything,' the guy stood up. 'If you don't mind me saying, let me buy you a cup of coffee. I just want to relieve you of this boring walk to your car. By the way, let me remind you of my name again: I'm Alex.'

The girl's green eyes looked at the guy in a more fun manner.

'No, I would have definitely remembered a man with such fine manners,' Gretta said thoughtfully and sat down at his table without a doubt. 'All right, Alex, I'll let you buy me a cup of coffee.'

'Manners! I've always told you about the importance of manners!' he heard a laughing voice inside him.

'Thank you and the Father from the bottom of my heart!' Alex thought with gratitude.

A moment later, he was chatting with his new beautiful companion with joy and curiosity.

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