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Chewing Dawns: Sugar Free

The sephiroth tree is shedding leaves – it's autumn. Disco balls reflect the light of the lost gods.

They went into a narrow street from the back door of the club. The buildings stood so close to each other that their balconies seemed to touch, only several inches separating them like lips ready for a kiss that didn't happen. Or like ships while naval boarding.

Miriam puffed the violet smoke upwards and waited to see where the wind would take it. The smoke drifted down the street towards the flickering neon lights.

'If you choose to hang out here, you've got to follow your own smoke trail,' Miriam explained to Detective Mistake. The latter directed his video gaze towards the neon lights. Several angels in huge overcoats stood at the corner of the building. Last year's commercials were screened on the soft evening sky.

Anti-gravitational pills for pregnant women, loss of consciousness, illegal neuro-prosthesis, summoning dead souls to boost the electors' numbers, electronic papyri where the letters become visible only in the moonlight, atomic micro bombs – a new trend in bonsai, the experience spanning from sheer pleasure to the deepest circles of hell, meteorite splinters that induce interplanetary visions when the black hole calls out your name – all of these could be bought in the narrow alleys of the Angels' ghetto.

Passions of the Christ, Paradise Lost, Cyber Allah, Shaitan's Dance, the Last Supper. Not only clubs bear these names but the drugs too, each exactly denoting the nature and character of the club or the substance they stand for. Neither the guard of the Synod nor the reincarnated police dare walk the depths of the ghetto, that's why the local Eden is called the Sharia Dead End. Here the only law is that of the Angels' unrestrained lawlessness.

The main thing is to know the relevant names and spells, correct routes and right moves, and more importantly, you've got to have cash or the favourite perfume of the Angels – a flacon with clean sky which here, amid radioactive stretches and speaking buildings, is worth more than pure gold.

The consciousness file that Detective Mistake needed was kept somewhere among the long-forgotten, dusty boxes of the Library of Digital Memories.

The disc labelled "Chuzhoi, outdated internet" was so small it fitted an open palm and was as soft as a sizeable blob of chewing gum. "The narrator: the owner of a digitalized consciousness; the narrative design: DJ Cherub; a true story that underwent slight editing."

'We need this,' Mistake pointed out to Miriam. She drew several flacons of clean sky from her pocket and placed them on the desk in front of an old librarian.

National Geographic: the Tbilisi Zoo

It turned out that we spent the whole week at the Sky Monitoring Service. Nothing special, no sweat: you stand at the window, smoking and watching the world outside. Those planes fly to warm countries and you try to read their traces like some middle aged ladies from posh quarters or provincial towns hardly visible on Google maps study their coffee cup dregs. Helicopters carry the immaculate corpses of saints above the faceless blocks of flats built in the Khrushchev era. From time to time a meteor rends the stratosphere, leaving scratches on the evening sky as if bullets sent from a Kalashnikov, and then falling down somewhere on the dull wastelands of Kakheti or Oklahoma. Without needing travel visas, birds leave the country. Occasionally a drone flies by, causing impish kids to compete in bringing it down with their slingshots. The pay is adequate, just enough to pay your bills and get by before new orders come in. The neighbour above often says we can buy a Mercedes if we managed things better. The idea is interesting, but why the fuck would we need a Mercedes?

‘Have you thought that the night sky needs to be listed in the Red Book?’

It’s the TV host who looks like Indiana Jones who says that the entire planet lit by our economy bulbs, outdoor lights and shimmering mega cities produces emissions that transform into clouds that stick to the optical screen like a cataract, eventually causing the loss of our starry sky, which is akin to losing our human nature.

‘They’re taking away our sky!’ The host’s voice reaches me from behind, directly into my brain.

Before Ramaziko came we drank two cups each of codeine. One was sprinkled with bits of medicine for Parkinson’s disease patients, the other had drugs meant to tranquilize raving wackos. Ziko and Anano chased the mixture with Ketamine but I refused: I don’t enjoy being unable to differentiate my arm from my leg. That’s the effect of dissociative drugs – you feel as pliable as plasticine, the surroundings become dreamlike and you can easily leave your body, so the astral trip gets as easy as a cheap Kutaisi-Berlin Wizzair flight.

When high on codeine syrup, there’s nothing better than watching the National Geographic channel: alpha apes on their hard evolutionary way screw each other, gay lions chase each other against the backdrop of artificial rainbows, polar bears on the verge of extinction cling to the last tiny ice floes. The Aztec jaguars chew DMT leaves, visualizing gods from Disney animation films. Apparently little dolphins scream “Shark! Mum help, sharks!” in their nightmares. The smog over Shanghai is so dense that the sunrise is projected on the billboards attached to tall buildings, Indiana Jones appears and vanishes in the smog. The sun rises on the video billboards as if it’s livestream, but who knows, it might be yesterday’s recording while the sun has already left the system forever. The next programme delves into the life of insects. The camera shows an ant whose brain is penetrated by a Luciferous parasite. It impels the poor working creature to leave its natal city where its ancestors had tolled for thousands of years and climb up a leafy stem only to be eaten by a cow. The ant sees its adventure as a rebellion against the system, while in truth the whole thing is planned by the parasite living in its brain. When the parasite moves into the cow’s body, the sky together with its moon and stars is closed for the ant, just like curtains are drawn after the performance, or when a heavy lid

drops on a chest. Or, say, when in the middle of the most interesting programme someone unrelentingly flicks the channel to watch something else.

Ramaziko switched off the TV or rather changed the channel to watch a cartoon. The old German TV usually needed herculean effort to adjust to a simple change. It seemed to tense inwardly and blinked a lot. That's exactly what Anano's grandpa does when once a week we take bananas and some suboxone to him. I've never seen a junkie as old as him in my life. I suppose he should also be recorded in the Red Book of Endangered Species as a separate entry, right after the starry sky.

The suddenly blackened screen rudely interrupted the National Geographic, the source of my trip. His imposing Ramaz King Kong body cast a shadow on us, still snuggling in the bed. He stood with his hands akimbo, just like an ogre or a dragon over a village spring, about to announce his demands for human sacrifice. I immediately regretted not sleeping like the others, with gaping mouths and tongues sticking out. I knew all too well that his posture was a sign that some urgent task was imminent that usually demanded instant obedience.

'Get up, you scum. It's getting dark,' the ogre yelled for the whole slumbering village to hear. I had no time to close my eyes, so I froze pretending I was sleeping with my eyes wide open. Sadly, Ramaziko's piercing gaze focused on me.

'Hey you, the great pretender, move your ass! Lying there like Lenin!' the ogre bellowed and stabbed my sole with the tip of his brogue.

If our King Kong reverts to the Brezhnev era jokes and rough physical contact, it means there's no point in pretending anymore. He can get right into your soul and turn the tip of his brogue shoe clockwise, exactly like a samurai performing a hara-kiri or like elderly women in bandanas stirring huge bowls of boiling beans in the villages yet unreached by our stuff. Besides, my eyes began to ache from staring into the void, so I decided it was time to unfreeze and blink.

'For your info, bro, Lenin's head is directed westward,' I muttered, hardly hearing myself. I sat up, scratched the sole of my foot and rubbed my eyes. Similar useless hubbub stirred the bed behind me.

'The bio brigadiers shake off the cheap sleep, coming out of a coma. It's only fair to say that not a single boss on the face of the earth has ever had such synthetic and gentle brigadiers as us.'

'Move it! Enough of slumping like shit!' This time Ramaziko ruefully shook his head. At the same time he dialed a number on his mobile, put it to his ear and snorted the amphetamine line neatly laid out on top of the old TV set. The line that would be enough for three people to gallop non-stop for three days was like a cup of morning coffee for Ramaziko. Just enough to wake him up properly through his singed nose.

He looked like an animal driven by a voracious desire to set a strict hierarchy. Such an unconscious drive was accompanied by antics of an alpha orangutan, just like the ones shown on the National Geographic channel. These were taken as particularly inadequate beastly frolics by us, a bunch of softie, angelic and innocent psychonauts slouching together on Gala's bed: Ziko from Batumi, Anano the whore and me.

'Tomorrow morning Gala will be here to get the rent for several months. And we need to clean up. Plus we've got shitload of orders. People wish to have fun – it's Friday tomorrow.'

'Gala's coming tomorrow?' Anano peeped from the K-Hole and slipped on her jeans under the blanket as if we hadn't seen her faded pink panties. Ziko did the same.

'She's coming tomorrow and you can stay to chat with her if you wish. The bookshelves are covered in ketamine, her plants are all withered though she asked to take good care of them, and there's sperm on the pillows!'

'I won't touch no sperm! You do that!' I protested and switched back to the National Geographic channel. The programme was about a tribe of fantastic people with dog heads. Some of them were even canonized as Christian saints. But the programme failed to penetrate the screen of my brain where Gala had unexpectedly surfaced.

A polka dot dressing gown, short dark brown hair and a huge ass shaped along the best Soviet and ancient Greek standards. Suddenly it grew so big an entire police squad could easily fit inside, as if it were a Trojan Horse. My vision: early in the morning, after a night of non-stop smoking and pill gulping, Gala stands over us, screaming and ranting. After the phrase: "I'll show you were to get off, you good-for-nothing whores and junkies!" she strains her stomach muscles and her enormous Trojan Horse ass lets out pot-bellied policemen who chase us relentlessly, mercilessly hitting us with black dildo truncheons.

That's how cough syrup takes you to the uncharted territory of your imagination.

'Anyway, Ziko and I clean up, Chuzhoi and Anano will take care of business,' Ramaziko finalized and indicated to Ziko to flutter his butterfly ass out of the bed.

Ramaziko King Kong was my favourite drug mate. If there's anything like the Georgian Dream, Ramaziko was a complete opposite of the notion: he was a Georgian nightmare – an Armenian, drug dealer and gay. Plus he was a former Sonderkommando.

In short, a brilliant and extremely pleasant person.

At moments of particularly memorable kick-ins and dysphoric comedowns she used to murmur, somewhat sadly, with self-irony (but we weren't sure about the exact emotion): "The last drug dealers of Tbilisi". I was pretty sure he saw the same scene in his mind's eye as me:

Flooded by laser lights, Ramaziko, our King Kong, is standing on the stage of the Philharmonic Hall, holding a statuette in the form of crystals and reefers, shaped after the Oscar, wholeheartedly welcomed by admirers clapping and copiously shedding tears.

'The last drug dealer of our city!' the emcee Temur Tsiklauri wearing an eagle costume announces and his words are drowned in ovation.

'The last drug dealer of our city,' the audience whispers in awe.

'The last... the last...' echoes along the shiny walls of the Philharmonic Hall. Ramaz King Kong steps forward to deliver his acceptance speech but we are too high for it. The entire situation – the stage, lights, middle-aged ladies in fox fur coats, celebrity wives with cancer as a result of overdosing on solarium tan and who get fucked by our hungry buddies on weekends, owl-headed public figures, the tsunami of deafening applause – was so overwhelming that we, Ramaziko King Kong's whole psycho Squad drop from our seats. Once on the floor, we attempt to crawl back to our seats.

'The last... the last...' proud and muscle-tensed, I still hear in my head.

'Whenever a GPS navigator is activated, in any place round the world there are at least four satellites ready for transmission. Soon we'll bring them all down,' in his typical unhurried way, the sober Andrei transmits his propaganda over a little radio for all teenagers to hear across entire Eurasia, reaching big and small, forgotten towns: from Abasha to Sakhalin, from Kolding to Mumbai suburb and then down to trance parties on Goa.

'Fuck you, Andrei', I murmur sweetly and fall down to the Philharmonic floor again – like an autumn leaf, a snowflake or a hand grenade dropped from the top of a high-rise construction site.

Once he worked in the city council of Batumi supervising cultural projects. It was there that he met Ziko when the latter asked for money to open a punk-rock cafe. His project was poorly written but was signed by the punks of the city – ten in all. "Punk-rock will surely assist further cultural development of our city," the project claimed. Later Andrei was sent to prison for taking a bribe. As a teenager he had a rock band Horizon and tried playing psychedelic progressive music on his uncle's Yamaha. As far as I knew, now he worked in Fly High Travel, but due to his vibrant nature he found it hard to stay within the limits of a tour company. So, in his free time, together with the rest of us he supplied half of the city with chemicals. A long list of dubious personalities he'd met during his hectic life was extremely helpful in running our business.

Ziko was throwing his clothes into an ugly Adidas bag. The TV showed the same cow that had already eaten my ant and now itself became a carrier of the Luciferous parasite. Kali Yuga complete, the cycle will start all over again.

Anano's ketamine-affected ashen face was lit by the digital iciness of her iPhone. She combined the functions of an operator and a call centre manager of our micro-organization.

'Hello, Anano the dealer speaking. How can I help?'

'We'd like two grams of MD and two Hofmann blotters.'

'Hofmann shipment won't reach us till next week but I can offer a somewhat lower quality, synthetic substitute called NBOME. It's more lethal.'

Orders came through Viber or Skype. After a short conversation we knew which drug a customer needed and then waited for the money transfer. As soon as the sum reached us, Anano and I would drop our deliveries in parks and buildings: hide them behind electricity meters, our drones dropped them on the roofs of the houses where the client lived, or planted them in a litter bin at Vake Park. Then we would return home and message the exact location to the customer. The scheme is simple enough, plenty of money and trips. Similar to marketing the main thing is to follow two essential principles:

1. The customer is the "king", which means that they must receive the product of the highest quality; never cheat about the weight even in milligrams. This was closely adhered to;
2. Notorious BIG said: 'Never get high on your own supply.' We wonderfully did the opposite: used it like mad.

'Are you going to stay here?'

Anano straightened a cushion all slobbered over and drew a joint rolled in a piece of crumpled paper. The bed was already made, the sperm-stained pillows were in the washing-machine, linen hung out to dry.

'Nobody stays behind. The city's ready for a party and the police are getting agitated,' our ogre said and rattled keys in his clumsy hand as if they were steel snakes that seemed to slither across the stuffy bedsit towards the visions of the scorching sun of the tropics.

02. Synchronization

The sea has movable borders. It comes and goes.

After a series of strained bowel movements the house pushed me outside into the light, into the world of total control. The sun – a lamp in an interrogation room. Like social network avatars, the faces are hiding their sinful souls and fantasies under a social makeup. The urban atmosphere of Tbilisi perfectly expresses the souls of its inhabitants: the renovated facades of buildings that screen the ruins behind them. One day, when future archaeologists dig through the sodden soil, they'll find syringes, cheap condoms and crystalized shit of the homeless.

'Sober!' I whisper in disgust, straighten my junk-filled backpack and walk along the street. On the way I crawl over Mercedeses, Opels and Jeeps and other slave robots parked right on the pavement. They've taken over the entire city, poisoned the air and now, as I heard in the morning, are about to snatch the sky from us.

'I'd like to have a terminator instead of this drone,' Anano says.

Her eyes are as blue as Windows 10 and the autumn sky, which you either want to reboot or come down pelting on you.

The thing I value most in Anano is that she's come up with a perfect classification of robots. She believes there are police robots, patriot robots and the illuminated robots. Once she told me we were robots too, but asked me not to blab about it. She has no respect for any of them. She only respects angel-like terminators though they will shroud the sky in impenetrable darkness and tramp the earth under their two-ton feet, crushing our hearts and heads that are as fragile as egg shells. I'm not surprised at her fascination with the idea of a mechanic destruction of mankind considering the category of synthetic stuff she takes in abundance. In any case it's your own biochemistry that determines the apocalyptic scenario you have. The apocalypse of boozers differs from what psychonauts imagine just like Bidzina Ivanishvili's world views differ from those of Kant. But are they so different? Sometimes I can't help thinking they are surprised by the same things: the starry sky and their own ethics.

In my trips, the terminators roam the Garden of Eden, without any rhyme or reason. Left without an obvious target, they unintentionally trample the footsteps left by God and Adam since the creation. Thank god we don't argue whose trip is more 'correct' – it's done by the humanity every day as it is. Take Tbilisi, for instance. Looking at the city, you'd surely wish a couple of terminators, at least deep down in your heart. Anano's right, that's why I love her, though in her version of the future there's no place for us, the humans.

Light dizziness, pale schemes on the sky, radio voices in my head – these are the signals that the dope is about to take effect. Neo and Trinity – the two of us walk down the street, with the awakening pills in our knapsacks. And all the while, Ramaziko, our version of Morpheus, most probably high on pot is watching gay porn at home, caressing his loaded belly with a scalp massager.

'I turn here, bye.'

'Take care. And let's party tonight, as usual, to celebrate the end of yet another hard week.'

'Sure, but I'll choose the menu.'

Today Anano is supplying the Saburtalo district: she ties 5-gram packets to the drone and drops them on the roofs of the houses where the clients live. I head for the suburbs which are my lot for today for delivery. Long ago the Disciples were allocated various territories to spread the Word. Once a week we divide the city into sections to deliver the heavenly chemicals instead.

But who's there to appreciate it?

It kicks in.

Shall I get a cup of cold coffee?

When a dealer goes out, a whiff of burning is carried down the streets. Dogs sense it, intensifying their sniffing instincts. The shamans of the block of flats smile and start checking the lunar calendars, smart girls read their fortune by going through their changed PMS cycle, junkies become impatient, unable to stay put. Slight irritation and great expectations are observed.

Such unsettling fluctuations of course affect the whole city life: suddenly mums take their toddlers into their arms, local eccentrics circle their blocks quite unconsciously, just to check the safety of their boundaries, lonely grannies start looking for their relatives' phone numbers written on faded paper, but a mischievous imp has hidden the pieces or they're eaten by bookworms, just like black holes devour the cosmos. The Prime Minister is gripped by an unreasonable urge to call the Internal Affairs Minister. Driven by the same inexplicable impulse, the latter starts to phone, so they can't connect for some time – both phones are engaged.

'Where the hell is he!' the PM rants. He has already decided to hold a press conference and is impatient, having a gut feeling that it's paramount though he has no idea whatsoever what he's going to talk about. But that's not a problem. Being at the top of the food chain has its advantages: microbes and bloodsuckers, sheep and goats are your subordinates. A second-rate copywriter like myself can think of something useful if he survives the day.

Every decent junkie knows that a city is a living creature and, just like other animated beings and computer programmes, has its own instincts. Its programme of "Identifying Citizens and Guiding them along the Right Ways" works 24/7 so that route mini-buses take you straight home, or in worse-case scenario, makes sure your house doesn't suddenly decide to change location so that you see a black hole instead. For this reason, the city and the dealer do not cross paths by definition. The city finds it hard to identify someone who fails to identify oneself in one dimension.

My aura is so alien to the city that it is left with two options: a) strain its bowels like my house did and push me out of its structures, disintegrate me into molecules and annihilate me because there is a realistic threat that the city can burn out due to such alienation; b) reboot its system so that I as a new algorithm don't damage the installation code of the city, which is already full of viruses, bureaucrats and marked with a slow, unnaturally prolonged process of death. It is well aware that my intervention into its space cannot last for long, but still:

Until the city makes a final decision I'm as unsafe as a newborn while our synchronization isn't complete. Police sirens, change of green and red traffic lights, tremor felt under your feet where the underground tunnels are – the city thinks. You also think but have no ideas, only visuals. Your inner clock is set to fifteen minutes – that's how long it takes for the next substance to kick in. If your inner alarm clock starts to buzz in fifteen minutes, it means that the synchronization is complete, the city has re-programmed its routes and allowed me to waft the primeval chaos into its titanic, inflexible body.

Now the whole city is me, my body embracing all its streets and movements. If a car hits a tree somewhere, or if rusty old Soviet carriages bring in new products disguised as scrap metal, I feel it inside, in my body. Together with the cigarette smoke I exhale the poisoned air and exhaust fumes, crude oil and petrol flow in my veins. I store the banners with the mayoral candidates in my nightmare folder. The melting August asphalt and fountains where gypsies and drunken pricks splash are the neurons of my brain.

Increasing arrhythmia is a sure sign that my heart is beating in time with the city. My blood clots make a long line of thrombus. The satellite signal transmits the SMSs sent from one to another person passing through my brain first. Thousands of muffled orgasm sounds coming from the high-rise blocks around me choke me like Yahweh's wrath.

I throw the coffee cup into a bin. In order to regulate the uncontrollable trips I need a little diazepam. A bit of Xanax won't hurt either.

A little tramadol to line it up nicely, useful just like magnetite on the Ureki beach.

The city dust reflects the sunshine that shines like pearls whirling in a light breeze as if in the Andromeda nebula.

I inhale it.

'It's the city where everyone eats, drinks and fucks, bro, if you wanna know,' the taxi driver spits out.

How did I get here? Where am I going?

'They keep saying Kazantip, Kazantip, but isn't Tbilisi the same sinful place? It reeks of khinkali, which they eat, then shit and finish by screwing each other. Do you get the scope?' the driver rages. I notice that I smile and nod. Is that the right policy? Can he be testing my allegiance?

Where are we going? What scope are we talking about?

On the whole it's not bad when you don't hear what people tell you. You can just let it in one ear and out the other. Otherwise, if you listen to everyone who chooses to talk to you, the hard drive of your brain will fill up with their voices and there won't be anything left of you. In short, it will fuck you up. But there are moments when you have to at least find out if a particular talk poses an immediate threat to you. Anyway, the animals on the National Geographic channel do exactly that.

'I'm telling you, the whole fucking nation went bonkers. It's fucked up! The other day that whore says...'

'Who?'

'Who else – Thea Tsulukiani... Fucking cunt!' The driver puts three fingers together as if about to cross himself but instead he twists them at his temple. 'Firstly, when a woman thinks she can say anything... Screw the bitch!'

His spittle hits the windscreen, glittering like the water in a video game. It's hot. Outwardly I smile but inwardly I'm trying to get my priorities right: Who's that Thea? What did she say? No, wait, that's not important... Important? Such an important word...

First I'd like to have a good look at the driver.

I glance furtively at him. Short, about 50, west Georgian accent, blue eyes, bald, but with bushy sideburns and three fingers at his temple. I spot an icon glued to the dashboard, but I can't make out which saint it is.

I look out of the window: the Avlabari underground station, crowds sheltered under a leafy tree, flames erupting from the sun.

What the fuck are we doing in Avlabari?

'I'm telling you, bro... I don't give a shit which side you're on, but the Georgian Dream Party... Fuck them all! The other day someone on TV said we should make Shevardnadze a saint. Can you imagine? What fucking saint? Have they lived on Mars or what?'

Little by little I detect a bit of logic: The Martians intend to canonize Eduard Shevardnadze; Tbilisi is Kazantip; Avlabari is burning.

My knapsack is here. Shall I check if it's okay inside? No. He might think I'm not listening and get even more furious.

'They eat and shit...'

'And screw each other,' I finish for him.

The sun hurts my eyes like the time when an oculist checked my eyesight. I went to the clinic once when I thought I was going blind. I paid 65 laris just to have my head put in some kind of contraption. The oculist said there was nothing wrong with me and asked for some Bio to smoke. I go back to the taxi in my thoughts.

The most interesting part of walking in the streets when you're loaded is that occasionally you vanish, somehow get detached from The fabric of reality. Your body seems to be here and now, moving about like everyone else, but your mind is not attached to that body, it's elsewhere. Your body is just an avatar – a social android roaming the streets, which you can wind up, give it a flag to wave and let it move on its own like a clockwork toy. It'll keep moving till it's fucked up.

You've got to give it a simple task though, for instance, to call you when it's at a zebra crossing. And while the android is completing the task, you can fly away in your thoughts, at least for a while. Actually, you as a conscious mind don't get from A to B. It's not a journey as such because your android body appeals to your mind when it needs further instructions. And all the while, you remain in the reality as film frames, and only temporarily, to issue instructions.

Sometimes it happens that you get too far away so that the android's call reaches you with a considerable delay and after you return from your trip it takes quite some time to synchronize with your android. I light a fag.

'Can I smoke?'

'Of course. How often must you ask?' the driver laughs.

What a pleasant smile has been hiding behind a sting of obscenities! A rare one, agreeable and natural. And sincere. That's the kind they say radiates. It makes me happy. I haven't been so happy for a long time. I don't want to get out, just wish to pick a couple of pals and drive on, cover hundreds of miles till the Black Sea splashes over the tyres.

There won't be any Martians at the sea, neither someone called Thea Tsulukiani, nor the Avlabari underground station. There will only be us sitting in an old car with a heavy fog around us. The driver and I will exchange looks. With the same smile he will tell me the fare of eternity and time will stand still.

'Five laris, bro,' the driver's voice brings me back when MANDY just hitting.. We are parked at a club. I remember: it's Friday and everyone who bought the dope from us will be here this evening. As a gesture of goodwill, they will offer us some of it, unaware we sold it to them in the first place. It's part of our ritual to be here. For some reason our mini-organization enjoys observing how people die and revive, just like gods in prehistoric religions. This time the whole thing is accompanied by a techno beat rather than that of hand-made tom-toms. Sometimes it happens in toilets lit by red bulbs, at times right right in front of DJ, but always with the help of the stuff they bought from us.

'I wonder how many deaths DJs have seen.'

'They haven't. They stare at their mixers,' Ramaziko says.

'Depends on the DJ.'

For Anano the main purpose of our business it to make enough money for her to open her own PR agency. She firmly believes she can dupe anyone because she knows people perfectly well.

Any whore thinks the same. She might be right. Ziko is still on the way to find himself: he wants to open a punk bar in Batumi and treat his dad for impotence so that his mum falls for him again.

Ramaziko calls it wild digital capitalism, getting his kicks from his invisible power. And all the while I draw inspiration from adverts for shampoos, tampons and supermarkets, which I work on twice a week because many years ago my granny convinced me I would make a good writer one day. Gullibly, I believed her.

'They eat, shit and fuck...' I hear the driver's voice and I shake my head to drive it out of my head.

'Three lines?' Ramaziko asks.

'Yeah, the usual.'

03. In the darkness her fag glows like distant Mars – the planet of our children

In the beginning there was panic. A body wriggling in survival convulsions; a murky bog behind, a blindingly painful light ahead.

A genetic casino, the roulette spins. 'No more bets,' the croupier with four Shiva arms announces. Electromagnetic allergy that our ancestors picked on the Eden outskirts is passed down the generations due to unhealthy diet and soiled amphetamine. As a result, the dawns look like cartoons.

Doctors wrap a towel around the woman in labour and pull hard.

'Come out! Come out!' I hear them.

'I won't. Leave me alone,' I think stubbornly but they're stronger. That's how I was born for the first time, but in truth, junkies and ordinary people are born differently. For a junkie the nine months in a womb are dens, overdoses and divine visions. According to Ramaziko, only after three deaths you can consider being born properly. I've still got one more ahead as I've diligently gone through two deaths already.

The wind from the AM radio brings overpowering dread and pleasure mixed with the blunt taste of the approaching death in your cotton mouth.

'Get the water.'

Somewhere dream-like frames flicker: a battle cry, tattooed bodies, the echo of a jaguar's growl in the jungle. A huge scarlet moon covers half of the sky. Police sirens on the faces of non-accidental passers-by, reflected like a cheap hotel sign or the aurora borealis. A camera directed at a reporter, the remote control with the crumbs of a double cheeseburger and fries among its soft buttons.

'God is with us! Let's start!' TV announces and leaves the room in a rather demonstrative manner.

'Do you believe me?' the ambulance woman asks me.

The room is so dark it's like being in a coffin.

Comfortably buried alive. No one is going to get you here.

A simple conspiracy trick so that an uninvited visitor might think you're out while actually you're in bed with a girl. The bed – a little boat on big waves.

'It hurts,' Lana says but as soon as I slow down, she plants her fingernails into my ass and arms, indicating I should go on. The blanket falls down, the vibration nears the apex of pleasure, the body wriggles in convulsions. Lana's fingernails on my back. I feel pain when my skin breaks and blood streaks down my spine towards the lower chakras.

I slap her across the face and immediately hear a groan of pleasure mixed with slight indignation.

'Spit at me,' she says moments before coming.

Her body twists like ivy. A muffled roar. Tasty sweat.

Panic was always there.

The world was conceived in it. The Big Bang is an affected condition. The world lives with such panic. The sounds of nature that holidaymakers enjoy so much in the mountains are nothing other than the noise of the planetary panic: the cry of insects and bacteria of their survival, battles and death.

On the orgasm orbit the sleepless brain loses control and spins in a kaleidoscope of random past frames: there's a child hit by a blind AKM bullet, his head exploding; I still have his blood splashes on my face. Pregnant Mum in the kitchen, with a TT pistol tied to her belt, waiting to see who it is knocking on the door as Dad goes to open it. A Soviet iron kettle boils and shrieks, sounding like a soundtrack for a local scene in a seaside town where they sleep lightly.

A list of familiar names on the Arabic patent Nokia screen. The finger scrolls down the list in search of someone who can help. A high pitched buzz of a mosquito near the ear. Snowflakes in the bedroom? Yes, I do remember. The coziness of a living room at a seaside resort where bored people rest without thinking about death. Mostly they sleep. A stray cat eating its newborn kittens. Crosses drawn with methoxetamine powder. An anchor telling about yesterday's incidents in the sterile rhythm of TV linguistics. The news coverage always resembles nightmares. A three-day corpse swings in the draft from the wall cracks. I think his name is Sasha. The arm-thick rope screeches like this bed. The three lines of last night turned into three tsunamis. Kissing below the waist, in the forbidden areas. Waves of ecstasy rebound from the walls. Someone passes out in a toilet. The door is brought down. Convulsive dances till morning.

Unsettling coming down began when I was still in the taxi. Now I'm at home with cheap Lana, the blonde known for her beauty...

Her vagina quivers at the penis convulsions. I let out a cry in someone else's voice. I come. The pleasure flows through my body like morphine and I fall on Lana. The feeling of panic disappears, but only temporarily. I hear 'I love you' whispered in my ear. 'Me too,' I reply to the trembling voice. Confused thoughts fill my brain like the dope fog when you feel love but also know it's such a cheap trick to love someone when in reality you're coming down. It's a trick to dodge the panic of solitude, to stick to someone like a tick. It must be the same unconscious fear of solitude that makes Lana say she loves me so simply and earnestly...

The phone.

'Ola, amigo!'

'Chuzhoi, where's the new Mister Rex?'

It's my boss from the advertising company, Mr Zura You-Know-Better.

'What? Oh, I've emailed it.'

'Are you shitting me? I'll be damned if I got anything. Anyway, get here at 3. We've got a meeting, remember?'

I didn't. But a copywriter should remember even better than a chronicler because the advertising industry is suffering from amnesia.

Ramaziko's call.

'Where the fuck are you? It's my ninth call.'

'I've come home. I feel like shit. I'm dying.'

'Stop moaning. Bring your ass to Moscow Avenue. Things look real bad.'

I light a fag. Still misty, Lana is smiling from the bed.

In the darkness her fag glows like distant Mars – the planet of our children.

'What's up? I've got to finish a text for the meeting in two hours. Remember I told you about Mister Rex, the insurance...'

'They took down Margo.'

'What? Seriously?'

'I'm telling you, she's down! Forget about the fucking text!'

'What about Basa?'

'He's wounded. In Andrei's garage...'

Cold sweat covers me. I'm not sure my brain could take such a lot of physical and mental strain considering how burnt out I was. Anger swipes through me. I don't know who to attack with my ire. I utter through my gritted teeth:

'Haven't you heard that phones are bugged?'

'They can suck my dick! Do you hear me? Fuck yourselves you copper mother fuckers!'

Ramaziko addresses hypothetical listeners. 'Anyway, Ziko and Anano are already here, so get your ass into a taxi and move it here!'

'I can go if you want,' Lana says, cleaning her beautiful flowerlike vagina with a tissue. The room is lit by the flickering monitor. I stare at her flower. I think about her husband. I imagine how he wakes up every morning, proudly puts on the police uniform, checks the belt on his young belly and goes to defend his country. Basically, it means picking up random citizens to detect even the smallest trace of our stuff in their urine, which would, ultimately, bring our country closer to Europe, order and splendor.

In the meantime, his wife sleeps with other officers, dealers or blows her Turkish language teacher in his study. Ramaziko claims that her neighbour the priest also screws her, but I've never asked Lana about it. I'm more worried about her husband. What will he say when he finds out I supply her with weed?

Why do I keep calling Lana when I know it's dangerous? Am I in love with her or do I unconsciously believe I fuck the entire system by screwing her, which I find highly satisfying?

'You can't crawl out of this swamp, Chuzhoi. No chance. You're screwed up,' a strange voice says at the back of my mind. When my brain is blazed, my trip is always the same: I seem to be part of a cheap reality show where an operator adds laughter after every idiotic joke, but I also hear the comments from the audience.

'Right. You'd better leave. I've got urgent things to do.'

As I smoke and think it would have been wonderful to be born as a robot in Japan, Lana puts on her skinny denim shorts, unhurriedly searches for her bra around the bed. 'I love you,' she whispers stretching over me to reach it. I get so aroused at her words that the next ten minutes Lana spends on her knees giving me a blow job with her wet, slightly sand-papery tongue. I fall back on

the bed, open-mouthed like an agonizing man whose brain produces natural DMT, transforming the final frames into fractals.

She keeps frantically repeating 'I love you', this time in a muffled voice, with my dick in her mouth.

No police officer deserves blow job like this. Not a single one.