

New
Updated
author's
Edition!

Vladimir Megre

ANASTA



Megre

Volume X
of *The Ringing Cedars of Russia* book series

A New Updated author's Edition!

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ANASTA

It was the year 2010 according to the Gregorian calendar. On the planet Earth, the first humans were awakening from a ten thousand-year sleep. What lay ahead of them was to see what had happened to the Earth while they slept, to understand the reasons for it, to engrave a record of what had happened into their memory as an anti-virus, so that nothing like this would ever happen again.

They engraved the many car accidents and wars. They engraved the stench in the air of the cities and the extensive pollution of the water. They engraved the numerous illnesses that had befallen humans' physical bodies while humanity was in this sleep state. They engraved...

But for the moment, they were unable to formulate the causes. But they will be able to. Of course they'll be able to! They'll return to the earth its primordial nature.

A small child is walking through a glade in the heart of the vibrant Siberian taiga, smiling. Nothing frightens him, no one attacks him. On the contrary, the beasts are ready to rush to his aid at the first sign of trouble. The small person walks like a royal successor walking through his kingdom. He finds it interesting to observe the lives of the bugs, the squirrels and the birds. To study flower blossoms and see how the blades of grass and the berries taste. He'll get a bit older, and then he'll perfect this beautiful world.

And where is your child at this moment in time? What kind of air is he breathing? What kind of water is he drinking? How will he occupy himself when he grows up?

But first things first.

THE BEGINNING

I decided to start this book by reminding the reader of the events that took place in Siberia more than fifteen years ago, so as to make the book easier to grasp for people who haven't read the earlier books in the "Ringing Cedars of Russia" series. I'll try to introduce some additional information about my first meeting with the unusual Siberian hermit Anastasia.

Anastasia lives in the heart of the Siberian taiga, in the same spot where her parents and her ancestors once lived. The distance from the spot where she lives to the nearest god-forsaken Siberian village is about twenty-five to twenty-seven kilometers. There are no roads and not even any paths. You'd have a very difficult time managing a trip like that without a guide. The actual glade where she lives doesn't differ much from all the other taiga glades. Except in that it looks somewhat cared for, and in the number of flowers. There are no structures in Anastasia's glade, no fire pits. But it's precisely this spot that Anastasia considers her family space.

The first time I met Anastasia, in 1994, she was twenty-six years old.

The Siberian woman Anastasia is a very beautiful woman, even extraordinarily beautiful. The words "extraordinarily beautiful" are not an exaggeration. Imagine a young woman, a bit more than a hundred seventy centimeters tall, with a good figure – not waiflike, like contemporary models – but genuinely well built, and lithe, as if she were a gymnast. She has regular facial features, gray-blue eyes, and hair the color of golden wheat spikes that cascades to her waist.

Perhaps you could see a woman anywhere who looks like her – on the outside. But I don't think you'd ever come across the other, special qualities deep inside her that make the taiga-dwelling Anastasia extraordinarily beautiful. Everything about her external appearance speaks of ideal health – it comes through in the fluidity and lightness of her gestures, in the springy way she walks, as if she were flying. You get the impression that her body contains within it some kind of other-worldly energy, whose abundance warms the surrounding space with invisible rays.

Your body warms up slightly when Anastasia looks at you, and by squinting at you with some kind of special gaze, she can heat up your body to such an extent at a distance, that your whole body begins to sweat, especially around the feet. Toxins leave the body, and afterwards, you feel significantly better.

In general, I surmise that Anastasia's knowledge of the properties of the taiga plants and some kind of internal energy enable her to cure a person of absolutely any illness. At least, she cured my ulcer with her gaze in the course of a few minutes.

However, she categorically refused to do any subsequent healing.

“Illness is a serious conversation between God and man,” says Anastasia. “Through this pain, which is both yours and His at the same time, He’s letting you know that you’re living in some unacceptable way. Change the way you live, and the pain will pass, the illness will recede.”

Anastasia has one extraordinary ability: when she’s telling a story about something, pictures of the events she’s narrating arise in the listener’s consciousness, or in actual space. And the images she shows are much more picture-perfect than any modern television picture. They’re three-dimensional, complete with the smells and sounds of the time she’s describing.

It’s quite possible that at one time many people possessed these capabilities. If you bear in mind that in our technocratic time, man hasn’t invented anything that wouldn’t have existed in nature, then it’s possible that something perfectly analogous to our modern television and telephone also existed in early human civilization.

Anastasia has shown me pictures from the lives of people of a variety of periods, starting from the very creation of the world. Pretty much all of the events she shows are connected with her ancestors.

If you were to try to characterize Anastasia’s capabilities in one phrase, here’s what you could say: the taiga-dweller Anastasia preserves the experiences and emotions of the members of her extended family – starting with the creation of the very first human – in her genetic memory, and she is able to call them up at will.

She can also model pictures from the lives of people in the future.

Anastasia’s life in the Siberian taiga differs significantly from the lives of people in modern cities. So that you’ll be able to understand the conditions in which she lives out her life, I have to say a few words about what the Siberian taiga is. It’s Russia’s largest expanse of open land, ancient and snow-covered. In European Russia, it extends for 800 kilometers, while in Western and Eastern Siberia, it stretches out for 2150 kilometers. As you can see, this is an impressive land mass. Today the taiga is considered the Earth’s lungs, and rightly so – it produces the majority of free oxygen.

You have to bear in mind that the taiga zones began forming even before the onset of the glaciers. So, by studying life in today’s taiga zone, we can learn about life on the planet Earth before the Ice Age.

Remains of a well-preserved baby mammoth, now kept in the Zoological Museum in Saint Petersburg, were discovered in the permafrost.

It’s hard for us to get a good idea of the animal world in taiga zones before the Ice Age. In today’s taiga, lynxes, wolverines, chipmunks, sables, squirrels, bears, foxes and wolves are numerous and widespread. The ungulates you’ll encounter include

noble and northern deer, elk and roe deer. There are numerous rodents: shrews and mice.

Among birds, woodgrouse, hazel-grouse, nutcrackers and crossbills are ubiquitous.

During the winter, the great majority of animals settle into anabiosis or hibernation. This state of living organisms has been little studied by scientists and is generating greater and greater interest among those who study outer space.

As far as the plant world is concerned, various types of bushes grow in the taiga: juniper, honeysuckle, currant and willow, and others. You find bilberries, cowberries, cranberry and cloudberries, all with marvelous vitamin content. Among grasses suitable for consumption, sour grass, wintergreen and ferns predominate.

You'll find majestic trees reaching forty meters in height: spruce, fir, larch, pine and a tree with unique qualities – the cedar, which scientists sometimes call cedar pine. I'll say right off that, in my opinion, they really shouldn't call it that at all. But what can you do? Let science focus on the pine they mistakenly call a cedar – I'm going to talk about the incomparable Siberian cedar. Why is it incomparable? Because the cedar gives unique fruits – cedar nuts – and deserves its own, separate name. The quality of the fruit of the Siberian cedar, these cedar nuts, greatly surpasses that of the nuts of cedars in other climate zones on the planet. Way back in 1792, the academic Pallas wrote about this in a letter to the Russian Empress Catherine the Great.

Cedar wood possesses special phytoncidal properties even once it's been cut, so a moth will never take up residence in a closet made of cedar.

And the Old Testament's King Solomon, who also seems to have known of cedar's mysterious properties, built a temple out of it, having given away several entire cities of his kingdom in exchange for certain specially chosen cedars.

But the priests were unable to perform services in the temple because a cloud formed inside it. (3rd Kings, 8:11.)

After having pored over a multitude of sources that talk about the Siberian cedar, I'm inclined to suggest (and not without basis) that the cedar is a representative of the Pre-Ice Age plant world, and that it may be an envoy to us from a different, more developed civilization (in the biological sense.)

How was it able to survive the planetary catastrophe and come to life anew in our world?

Cedar seeds can survive frost and are able to hold out for an extended period of time, so that they can come up during more favorable climatic conditions and adapt to a new environment. This adaptation continues up to the present day.

What is so unique about the fruit of the cedar? Why is it that today we can state

with certainty that they are the most ecologically pure and healing food product of our time?

The cedar nut kernel contains the entire necessary complex of vitamins. Scientists from the university in Tomsk who have studied the properties of cedar oil added it to the diet of people who had served as responders to the accident at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant and who were suffering from radiation poisoning. The results of the experiment showed that the test subjects' immunity began to increase.

There are no contraindications for the use of cedar oil – even pregnant women and nursing mothers can use it.

There's one other mysterious fact about the cedar nut kernel. During periods when cedars do not bear fruit, the females of certain fur-bearing animals don't allow males to come near them and don't conceive. It's still unclear how the cedars let the animals know that they won't bear fruit in a given year. After all, the animals mate in the spring, but cedar fruits ripen only in very late fall, and it's very difficult to tell, just by looking at a cedar tree, that it's not going to bear fruit.

There are a great many other plants in the taiga for the entire taiga animal world to feed on. Similar taiga-dwelling animals in Russia's central zone get along entirely without cedar nuts. So why do females who have fed on cedar nuts consider it impossible to conceive and bear young without this food?

It's been noted that the fur of taiga-dwelling animals, particularly those from regions where cedars grow, is of much higher quality than the fur of all other animals. No matter how scientists and specialists fine tune the diet of the animals they're raising on fur farms, they can't manage to achieve fur of anywhere near the same quality. The fur of the Siberian sable from the regions where cedars grow has always been the highest quality fur in the world.

It's well known that the condition of fur-bearing animals' fur reflects the condition of their organism as a whole. So, if their condition improves when they consume cedar nut kernels, then the same should be true for humans, especially pregnant women. Our women might not be getting enough high-quality food products to enable them to bear healthy fetuses, and this situation can't help but degrade society.

The fruit of the Siberian cedar disproves scientists' opinion that agriculture is the great achievement of humans, evidence of their development. I think that agriculture came into being because human civilization lost its knowledge of nature and because people's way of life changed. As a result, man began sweating in the fields to get his daily bread. You can draw your own conclusions.

Let's imagine that there are two fruit-bearing cedar trees growing on a parcel of land where a family of three people lives. You can be absolutely certain that the family that owns that parcel of land where the two cedars grow will never go hungry, even in the years with the worst harvests. And it isn't just that they won't go hungry, won't live

from hand to mouth – they will feed on the best, most refined food there is.

One cedar alone is capable of producing – in one year – up to a ton of cedar nut that can be used as food, once they're shelled. But that's not all, not by any means. You can extract cedar milk from the kernel of the cedar nut, which is not only suitable for human consumption, but which you can also successfully use to feed infants. You can get world-class cedar oil from the kernels, which you can add to salads and other dishes and also use medicinally.

After you express the oil from the cedar nut kernels, you're left with an oil-cake, which you can use to make excellent baked goods – bread, cookies, pastries, or crepes.

The cedar also gives us a sap that's recognized by official and folk medicine alike as a medicinal and prophylactic substance.

The Siberian cedar doesn't require any care at all by humans – you don't need to fertilize or till around it. You don't even need to plant it. Its seeds are planted in the earth by a little bird called the Eurasian nutcracker.

It starts to become clear why it is that our ancient ancestors knew nothing about agriculture. It's just because they knew much, much more.

Maybe someone will say, well, the cedar bears fruit only once in two years, and if the barren year comes along in the same year as a bad harvest, then how can the cedar remedy the situation? I'll tell you. It's true that cedars bear fruit once every two years, sometimes even less frequently, but its unique nuts can last from nine to eleven years if you don't remove them from the cone.

Of course, nothing is quite this simple today in our real life. The cedar has a hard time taking root near cities. It can't tolerate ecologically polluted zones. But there are also encouraging outcomes. Many sources indicate that the cedar responds to human emotions, that it can take in energy from humans and, having increased it, give it back. I had the chance to convince myself of this personally.

Seven years ago, twenty-five taiga cedar seedlings were sent to me. Together with the residents of the five-story building where my apartment is located, I planted these seedlings in the little wooded area bordering the building. I planted three of them along the edge of the plot of my country house. Before long, somebody dug up the cedars we'd planted in the wooded area. I wasn't too terribly upset by this – I figured that if somebody dug them up, that meant people knew about their properties and would most likely plant them somewhere else and take good care of them. But one seedling still remained there. It had been planted near the brick wall of the garages located in front of the building. The soil there was so, so far from fertile. For the most part, it was construction refuse covered over with a thin layer of fertile dirt. Nonetheless, the cedar took root and is still growing today. As far as its rate of growth and how smooth its trunk is, it's quite different from the cedars I planted at my country house. And it's about twice as tall. I got to thinking about why that would be, and I

began to notice that when the people in the city come out onto their balconies, they often look at the cedar, and sometimes they remark, “What a beautiful tree we have.” And I, too, when I walk or drive by, happily admire it. In this way, the cedar growing by the garages receives human attention and strives to be worthy of it.

Now, especially since the “Ringing Cedars of Russia” series of books started coming out, there are many companies that put out cedar products, including cedar oil.

I also asked my daughter and her husband to set up cedar oil production. I told them about the ancient technique I’d learned of from Anastasia.

Polina’s husband Sergei made every possible effort to work in accord with both ancient techniques and today’s requirements for producing food products. We arranged for the production to take place at a medications factory under the control of experienced specialists. The expression was carried out using the cold pressing method, which is supposed to preserve the greatest amount of the oil’s beneficial substances, and using wooden blocks. It was necessary to do this, because the cedar nut kernel and oil contain the entire periodic table, and certain elements can oxidize if they come in contact with metal. In addition, only glass containers were used during bottling. The oil we ended up with may also have been of better quality than if we’d produced it using other methods, such as hot pressing. However, it differed from the cedar oil I’d tried in the taiga. I got the impression that it contained less life force than the taiga cedar oil.

I won’t go into detail about our extensive attempts to find the reason for the differences. I’ll start by saying that we saw a change in quality as soon as we moved the whole production process – from nut storage up to the pressing of the oil and its packaging – to a village out in the taiga a hundred and twenty kilometers outside the city.

It turned out that you just can’t produce a high quality oil in an urban setting, even at a medications factory. At every stage of production, the kernel and oil come into contact with the air, and big city air is very different from air in the taiga, which is full of phytoncides.

As a result of moving production, the products of this small company, which was perhaps not very technically well-equipped according to today’s standards, were of higher quality than those produced by all other companies, not only in our country, I think, but in the world. I’m happy to have played even a small role in the appearance of this unique product – cedar oil. I think that this taiga company is really the only one that produces actual cedar oil, because the others produce the oil of the “cedar pine.”

A great many products in the world are marketed as “ecologically pure.” But I immediately ask myself where these products are from? Where were they grown? Can you really call any product ecologically pure at all if its raw materials are grown and produced in an area surrounded by highways or big and small cities? I don’t think any product produced in areas like that can be ecologically pure, even if no toxic chemicals,

pesticides or fertilizers are used to grow it.

The cedar grows deep in the Siberian taiga, hundreds and thousands of kilometers from large cities. There are no highways there, and you can only ship this unique product out by river. Of course, our civilization's filth can also end up there, but everything in the world is relative, and compared to giant cities, the air and water in the taiga really are immeasurably cleaner, and no one is pouring any poisons into the ground.

And so, I think that there is no more pure, beneficial or healing product in the world than the cedar nut kernel and the products made from it.

In telling about the Siberian taiga, I've given special attention to the cedar. But in the taiga region there are also many other food products that are of much higher quality than those we're already aware of. For example, cranberries, raspberries, cloudberries, currants and mushrooms. And to answer the question, what does Anastasia eat out there in the taiga, I can tell you that she eats world class ecologically pure food of a type that you can't possibly buy, not even for a million dollars.

Back in my first book I described how Anastasia lives out in the taiga and how astonished I was by her way of life. Now that so many years have passed since we first met, in thinking about her, I've come to the conclusion that the way people live in today's giant cities looks unnatural and absurd if you juxtapose it with Anastasia's life out in nature.

At first glance it seems extraordinary, the way the wild animals bring food to Anastasia when she gives them a certain signal. But even a hunting dog today will bring its prey to its master. And a falcon released to hunt also turns its prey over to its master. Goats and cows in a village farmyard are happy to feed their owners by giving them milk.

The wild animals inhabiting the area around the glade where Anastasia lives mark their territory, and within this territory they consider a person something like a pack leader. I think that over the generations, they were trained by Anastasia's forbears, and then they themselves trained their offspring.

Anastasia actually eats very little. She never makes a fetish out of food.

Many people have been asking recently about how Anastasia makes it through the severe Siberian winter – when the temperature reaches thirty-five to forty degrees below zero – if she doesn't have any warm clothing or a heated dwelling. I'll start by saying that if the air temperature out in the open gets down to minus thirty, it's always significantly warmer in the taiga, and there can be up to a ten-degree difference in temperature.

Anastasia has dug-outs at various locations in the taiga. The main one, where I

myself have had occasion to pass the night more than once, consists of a spot hollowed out in the ground, about two and a half meters long, two meters wide and also about two meters high. The entrance to the dug-out is narrow, about sixty centimeters wide and a meter and a half high. The entrance is covered over with cedar branches. The walls and ceiling of the taiga bedroom are woven of vines with bunches of dried grasses and taiga flowers stuffed into them. The floor has been carpeted with dried hay.

It's very comfortable sleeping in that kind of bedroom in the summer. No sounds penetrate it, to say nothing of all those radio and electrical emissions that a person living in a multi-story building is subjected to.

In late fall, Anastasia fills the entire area of her bedroom with dry hay and enters into an extended sleep similar to the state scientists call anabiosis.

Anabiosis as modern science explains it, is a state in which all of a living being's vital processes, including metabolism, slow down to such an extent that there are no visible signs of life.

Scientists have been focusing on this unique biological phenomenon as they develop plans for extended space travel. What primarily attracts them is the fact that creatures in an anabiotic or hibernation state use much less oxygen and do not need food. It's been proven that their resistance to negative environmental factors increases. So, for example, it's been shown that infectious diseases don't develop in such animals, even when they're artificially infected, and that many poisons which would be fatal for their organism under normal circumstances are entirely harmless to them when they are hibernating or in an anabiotic state. It's even been proven that if you subject such animals to a fatal dose of ionizing radiation, they will still survive, since their metabolism has greatly decelerated, and that once they awaken, their vital functions resume entirely normally.

But here's what's interesting. If a person – who is a thinking being – falls into a deep sleep in the winter, then what happens to his Soul during this period? I haven't come across any hypotheses at all about this in scientific writings. But it is an extremely interesting question.

One day I, too, had occasion to partially experience the unusual state of anabiosis for myself. This happened when I was in the taiga in late fall. Where Anastasia lives, the days at that time of year are very short. When it began to get dark, Anastasia suggested I take a rest. I immediately agreed. The accumulated fatigue of city life and my taxing journey through the taiga were already driving me toward sleep.

This time the dug-out was full of more hay than usual. Since I knew you don't get cold sleeping in hay even when it's below zero, I stripped down to my underwear and lay down, putting my jacket beneath my head.

“It's already time for you to be waking up, Vladimir,” Anastasia said, waking me.

I felt her massaging my right hand, and I looked toward the entrance of the dug-out. Its opening was barely visible. That meant the sun hadn't yet come up.

“Why do I need to wake up? The dawn is just breaking.”

“It's the third dawn since you went to sleep that's breaking, Vladimir. Should you not wake up, your sleep might continue for several months and even years. Your Soul, since it won't need to worry about keeping your body safe, will want to have a rest and wander around other worlds in the Universe. No one would be able to bring it back until it decides on its own that it wants to come back.”

“So that means it wasn't with me while I was sleeping?”

“It *was* with you Vladimir, right alongside you. It was waiting for your sleep to become more even, and deeper, and then it would have been able to take its leave. But I decided to wake you.”

“But why doesn't your Soul leave when you fall into a deep sleep?”

“My Soul leave, too, but it always comes back right on time. After all, I don't torment it.”

“What do you mean? You mean I torment my soul?”

“Vladimir, every person who falls prey to harmful habits and thought patterns, and who consumes harmful food, brings torment first and foremost to his Soul.”

“What importance does food have for the Soul? What, does it also consume the food a person eats?”

“The Soul doesn't feed on material food, Vladimir, but it is able to see, hear and actualize itself only through your body. If the body is unhealthy, if, for example, a person is drunk and his body is helpless, then the Soul, as if it were bound, has no way of manifesting and actualizing itself. It can only feel, only weep over the helpless body that has been destroyed by the harmful drink. It can only attempt to warm damaged organ of the body, and it will expend a colossal amount of energy as it does so. When the Soul's energy is exhausted, it becomes powerless and leaves the human body. The body dies.”

“Yes, Anastasia. What you've said about the Soul is interesting and, it seems, accurate. Because there's a folk saying: when a person dies, they say that he 'gave up his Soul to God.' What we get in your interpretation is 'the Soul ran out of strength.' Hmm, I wonder – does my Soul still have strength left?”

“Since it came back, that means your Soul still has strength, Vladimir. But please, try not to torment it.”

“I will try. But wait, doesn't a person's Soul get a rest when he's sleeping?”

“The Soul is energy, Vladimir. A living energetic complex. Energy doesn’t need rest.”

“But what do you think, Anastasia, where does the Soul go off to during sleep?”

“It can go off to other dimensions, soar among the planets of the Universe. And if the person wishes it to do so, it can gather information he needs. For example, if the person wants to learn something about the past or future, he can ask his Soul as he falls asleep to visit the time and place that interests him, and the Soul will fulfill his wish. But if the person sleeps an ordinary sleep that isn’t sufficiently peaceful, and if the environment is not ideal, then the Soul can’t go off anywhere. It has to guard his body.”

“From whom?”

“From all manner of hostile influences. You sleep in your apartment, Vladimir, and its walls are filled to bursting with electrical wires, and the wires give off radiation that adversely affects people. Sounds of the artificial world force their way in through the glass. The air in the apartment is not entirely healthy to breathe. Your Soul cannot leave you alone. It has to be able to wake you in the case of a critical situation.”

“I get it, Anastasia. This dug-out I slept in is actually a great deal more comfortable than the most elegant bedrooms in today’s hotels and apartments. It’s like some kind of hypobaric chamber. The air here is ideal, and there are no harmful rays and noise, and the temperature is stable. And so I sleep much better in it than I do in my apartment. I understand that, and I’ve experienced it for myself. But I don’t get why it is, when you fall asleep for a long time, that it doesn’t bother your Soul that your body is resting in a dug-out where the entrance isn’t even shut up. And if there’s some danger – say there are some intruders – there won’t be anybody to wake it up.”

“Vladimir, any time anyone makes the slightest attempt to approach the glade we’re in, no matter what their intentions, the entire space within a radius of three kilometers is put on its guard. The animals, birds and plants begin sounding the alarm. Those who are approaching will be gripped by terror, and if they succeed in overcoming it and aren’t thrown off course, then the space – by means of the animals – will wake the body and call the Soul back.”

“What about in the winter, when everything’s asleep?”

“Not everything is asleep in the winter. Besides, in the winter, it is easier for those who are awake to keep watch over what goes on.”

I don’t understand everything Anastasia said about the Soul during her winter sleep period, but I have had occasion to see for myself the way the wild animals and birds bring Anastasia troubling or happy news.

Now that I’m familiar with the way Anastasia thinks of sleep, I can draw the following conclusion:

Modern man and mankind as a whole don't have any opportunity to get enough good sleep. Besides the fact that modern bedrooms can't measure up to the natural one, we have to add one more factor that's also of some importance: modern man is continually caught up in a whirlwind of everyday worldly concerns, and he often keeps on thinking about them as he falls asleep. And if that's the case, then the question arises of how man is using the energy of his Soul – his Soul, which is capable of learning about other worlds when a person is sleeping and bringing him information about them when he wakes. Perhaps we need to construct our bedrooms so that no random sounds will penetrate it and so there are no wires and telephones in it. It's possible for us to achieve this. It's more complicated to manage the necessary air quality.

And so, Anastasia, the hermit of the Siberian taiga, has become the heroine of the “*Ring of Cedars of Russia*” series of books. She has borne me a son and a daughter. She now lives in the taiga, in my heart, and in the image of the heroine of my books.

I don't think I've been able to do this amazing woman's beauty, her intelligence and her extraordinary capabilities justice in my descriptions. Really, it's probably not even possible to do this using ordinary language.

Even now, I only sometimes see Anastasia as someone who is close to me, as a loved one. More often I see her as unattainable and mysterious, as someone who possesses an inexplicable strength of spirit that she can use to create the future.

Her characterization of our modern day reality and her story – or more precisely, the image she has created of the beautiful future of Russia and of the whole earth – have given birth to a beautiful phenomenon in society. Without waiting for decrees to be handed down from on high, or for government financing, tens of thousands of people have independently set about turning this image created by Anastasia into actual reality. You can understand the main idea for building our future country by reading the books in order. But if I were to try to briefly – not in its entirety – present the idea that is helping these positive transformations take place, I could characterize it using the following words.

Anastasia thinks that every family should have its own plot of land that's no less than one hectare in size. The family needs to transform this plot, which the taiga hermit calls a family homestead, into a heavenly living oasis that can provide for all of man's material needs. The external appearance of the person's living creation and the way the creator himself lives on it are indicators of the person's spiritual makeup. She considers it unacceptable to bury family members in a cemetery. They must be buried only on the family homesteads. Then the souls of relatives who have passed on won't suffer because their bodies seem to have been tossed into some deep hole in a cemetery, far away from their loved ones. People who are buried on the family homestead will – with their spirit – help and protect those living on it.

Cemeteries analogous to our modern ones did exist back in antiquity, too, but they were intended for animals that dropped dead from disease, criminals with no

family, and warriors who died in a foreign land.

Anastasia has told us how to set up our own family homestead so that we can free ourselves from physical ailments with its help.

She has talked in relatively great detail about the ancient and very lovely rite of marriage that helped newlyweds – along with the power of their thought – create the design for their future family homestead, and about how at the moment of marriage, with the participation of the parents, relatives and friends, what they had conceived in thought would materialize in the space of several minutes. I think that this rite is one of the greatest discoveries of our millennium. After all, by using it, newlyweds even today can acquire a house, a garden and a family homestead right during their wedding.

Anastasia also asserts that for newlyweds who create their family homesteads in this way, love never fades, but actually grows stronger over the years. And she explains why this happens: “When a husband looks at his wife, he subconsciously associates her with his glorious homestead, too, and also with his child, who must also be born on the homestead.” And one can believe in this. After all, the very best place on earth for each person is always his small motherland. His child will always be the most beautiful and best of all children.

And Anastasia also asserts that if all people, or the majority of them, begin consciously creating their own family homesteads and turning them into heavenly oases, then the whole earth will be transformed. Natural disasters and wars will not occur on earth. Man’s inner spiritual world will change, and new knowledge and capabilities will open up to him. Man will be able to create beautiful worlds resembling the earthly world on other planets.

She considers today’s technocratic method of exploring space and other planets a dead end, harmful for the planet Earth and the people living on it. The sensible way to explore the planets is through psychoteleportation. But if people are to be able to do this, they first have to demonstrate their ability to develop the Earth and express their spirituality in their way of life, not in words.

Official critics might respond to the subjects of the books and to the taiga hermit’s statements in any of a number of ways, but their opinions aren’t really so very important. The people – the most important critics – have already expressed their approval in tens of thousands of letters and hundreds of thousands of emails. They’ve expressed it not only in words, but in concrete actions, too, and the hundreds of large and small settlements that have arisen and continue to arise throughout all of Russia are a confirmation of this.

Now, here’s where a riddle arises, one that’s as yet insoluble and cryptic: if a mass movement has been set in motion solely by the statements of a taiga hermit that have been introduced in books, then what kind of power lies behind her phrases? Perhaps they’re constructed in such a way that the letters combine into some kind of code. Perhaps, a certain rhythm of her phrases has significance.

Anastasia usually tries to adopt the speaking mannerisms of those she's talking with, to use his lexicon and way of constructing phrases, but at certain moments she'll suddenly be speaking in some different kind of language that's emphatic and flowing and rhythmical. She pronounces each letter of the phrases she utters very precisely, and you clearly sense an extraordinary energy behind each sound. And then you remember what she's said verbatim, as if there's some recorder at work in your brain. And that's not all. Living pictures appear before the listeners, and the subconscious grasps the meaning of what's been said. By way of example, I'll give you an excerpt from Anastasia's retelling of a conversation between God and the first man, from the book "Co-Creation": "Where is the edge of the Universe? What will I do when I come to it? When I have filled everything with myself, when I create that which I have thought?" a man of the wellspring people asks God. And he receives this answer: "My son, The Universe is thought. A dream was born of the thought, and it is partially visible as matter. When you come to the edge of everything, a new beginning and continuation shall your thought discover. Out of nothing will arise the new, beautiful birth of you, and of the aspiration, reflecting in itself your Soul and your dream. My son, you are endless, you are eternal, your creating dreams are within you."

There are several theories regarding Anastasia's abilities. I'll share mine with you, too.

Anastasia's abilities, which seem extraordinary at first glance, were actually inherent in all or the majority of the wellspring people. The effect the taiga hermit's statements have had on many people's actions is due not to some mystical force, but rather to people's very own ability to embrace them with their heart and Soul. You get the impression that some memory has been preserved in modern day people's genes, or in their subconscious: a memory of the way individual families and human society as a whole lived, starting back in the time of the wellspring people, when Man still understood how to communicate directly with God.

This way of life – the wellspring people's – is significantly more advanced than today's. Maybe it's from those times when people still knew what heaven was. But I don't think these people's actions were connected to any specific religion.

All the homesteads that readers of the books are building turn out differently from each other. The houses they put up don't just differ in their external appearance. Some are two-story wooden houses, while others are one-story wattle and daub affairs. And the gardens, living fences and ponds are also constructed differently.

It's common knowledge that religious ritual requires all its participants to strictly observe standardized ways of acting and speaking. But here, we clearly see each individual's personal creativity in the way they realize this beautiful idea.

If people are thankful to Anastasia for anything, it's probably for the fact that she has awakened within their Souls the aspirations of a human-creator.

THE LITTLE TAIGA DWELLER

More than fifteen years have passed since I met Anastasia, the hermit of the Siberian taiga. And when I learned that she was going to bear my son, I took great pains to move Anastasia to the city of Novosibirsk, even going so far as to try to intervene physically. Back then, it seemed unacceptable to me for her to give birth in the taiga, and impossible to raise a child outside social institutions.

At first, Anastasia's way of life in the taiga seemed strange to me, to put it mildly. But now the way people live in today's giant cities seems even stranger.

And when she was pregnant with our daughter and stayed in the taiga, as she'd done before with our son, my soul was joyous and calm. My views of life had changed radically in the course of ten years.

Had Anastasia wanted to give birth somewhere other than the taiga – even if she'd been in the best maternity ward in the capital – I'd have fallen into depression and despair. And I'd probably have worried constantly about our child's future if he'd ended up being raised and educated within today's societal institutions.

I'd rethought my priorities and my views of life had changed.

Anastasia gave birth to our daughter in her family glade in the Siberian taiga. I wasn't present for the birth, and there were no qualified doctors at her side, no modern medical equipment. But in my soul I was calm. I knew that she was giving birth in one of the most perfect maternity wards on earth – in her family space.

When Anastasia gave birth to our daughter, she asked what I would like to name the newborn. Without thinking, I answered – Anastasia. And it wasn't because Anastasia had named our son Vladimir. It's just that by the time our daughter was born, I'd come to see Anastasia as a wise, brave and very kind woman. Her name had become synonymous for me with these qualities, and I wanted our daughter to inherit them. I couldn't imagine anyone other than Anastasia raising our daughter. Even though at many points her approach to childrearing looks like a total lack of a conscious approach to childrearing, that's far from the case. For example, here's what happened one time with our little daughter in the taiga.

This time when Anastasia met me, she was in a jolly mood, even playful, it seemed to me. She appeared suddenly when I was approaching the familiar glade where the three of them were now living. Wearing a light dress reminiscent of a Roman tunic, she stood on my path and smiled. I wondered where she'd gotten that dress. I

stopped, delighting in the unusual vision.

“It’s really something,” I thought. “So much time has passed, and she’s given birth to two children, but she looks just as young and extraordinarily beautiful as before. Look at me – I’ve grown old and gray, but she doesn’t age a bit.”

I recalled how, waking up early in the morning, she’d take joy in the coming day and set off racing against the she-wolf, performing elaborate somersaults. Would she be able to do that now?

As if she’d heard my silent question, Anastasia performed a double somersault with almost no running start at all, and then there she was again, right next to me.

Her voice rang out. “Hello, Vladimir.”

I wasn’t able to answer right away. A captivating aroma and extraordinary warmth radiated from Anastasia’s body. I shyly touched her on the shoulder. For some reason I hesitated to embrace her. And I responded lamely:

“And hello to you, Anastasia.”

She snuggled up against me, hugged me and whispered:

“Our darling little daughter is such a smart and beautiful little thing.”

Then Anastasia walked ahead of me barefoot through the grass. She stepped, putting one foot in front of the other, the way a model does on a runway. This wasn’t the first time she’d done this, but every time she does it, her gait looks hilarious, and it raises my spirits.

As we usually did, we headed straight to the lake to bathe after my trip. I already knew the purpose of this swim wasn’t just so I could freshen up after traveling. The main point of it was to wash away all the smells that weren’t native to this taiga glade. To do this, once I’d taken my first dip, Anastasia helped me give myself a brisk rub down with a paste she’d made of various herbs. Rubbing me all over, she joked:

“You’re having less and less good food and your tummy’s a little distended.”

“It’s dysbacteriosis. That’s what the doctors say. Practically ninety percent of the population has it,” I replied.

Anastasia laughed. “Or maybe the whole problem is that the tummies don’t have enough will power? You yourself say that ten percent of the population doesn’t have this dysbacteriosis.”

I had to walk around for a while with my body and even my hair coated with this green paste and then dive back into the water and splash myself with water. After I came out of the water and my body had dried off a bit, Anastasia removed her

tunic-like dress and held it out to me.

“It would be good for you to put this shirt on now.”

Anastasia stood before me, her breasts exposed. They were a bit larger than they’d been before. A tiny drop of milk appeared on one nipple.

“You’re still nursing our daughter?” I asked.

“I’m supplementing with milk,” Anastasia answered brightly. She squeezed her breast with both hands and splashed me in the face with a stream of milk, then laughed and wiped the milk over my face.

“If you put this on and belt it, it will look like a shirt on you. I’ve been wearing this shirt continually since I gave birth to our daughter. Sometimes she would sleep wrapped in it. She’s grown accustomed to its smell and to the way it looks. If you do what I tell you to do, it will be easy for our little girl to get used to you.”

“But what will you wear now?”

“Well, I have two very similar ones, and I’ve alternated wearing them. The one I’m offering you – that one I wore more. And I’d often fasten my hair with a little braid made of grass. Now I’ll go braid one like it for you, too, and meanwhile you can go observe our little girl a bit.”

“Just observe her a bit? You mean I’m not allowed to touch her or have contact with her?”

“Of course you’re allowed, Vladimir. Even so, it’s better just to observe her at first. Even though she’s little, she already an independent being, so it’s better if you just observe her first, without pestering her. You can acquaint yourself with her habits and try to get a sense of her world.”

“I know that when our son was born, I just observed him at first, too. Tell me, Anastasia, how long before I can pick her up?”

“You will feel when the time is right. Your heart will let you know.”

It seemed to me that Anastasia wanted me to observe our little daughter on my own and try to figure something out, and that’s why she’d come up with some urgent tasks of her own. And I wasn’t against this way of doing things, either. I really did need to find some way to study how our child behaves, because to my daughter, I was just some “uncle” she didn’t know. And then this strange uncle suddenly goes and picks the child up for no reason at all and starts with his sloppy sentimentality, squeezing her and cooing to her to make himself happy. But maybe the child hates being cooed at, not just by strange uncles, but in general, no matter who’s doing it. I asked:

“Anastasia, so where is our daughter now? If you go off to do your braiding, you

know, to braid the tie, how will I find her?”

“She’s somewhere around here, not far away,” Anastasia told me calmly. “Try to find her yourself. Let your heart tell you where she’s to be found.”

It seemed to me that I’d begun to understand a lot about life in the taiga glade. But each time something new would still amaze me.

How can you allow a child who hasn’t even turned two yet to walk or crawl wherever she wants through the taiga and not even keep an eye on her while she does? And this is the taiga, where there are no people. In the taiga, where there are a great many wild animals.

In the past I’d observed my newborn son and had seen him fall asleep against a she-bear’s belly, while the she-bear lay motionless, waiting for him to get a good sleep. I saw how the wolves would guard the infant and how the nimble squirrels would play with him. It was clear to me that the beasts living here in the glade or nearby it were like pets. Within the territories they’d marked, they didn’t fight and didn’t attack each other. A dog that lives in the same household with a cat might not touch the cat or might even become friends with it, but he might still attack a cat from outside the family. So it makes sense that here, too, the animals don’t attack each other within their defined territory, and they certainly won’t attack the human’s offspring.

They revere the human living on their territory, so naturally they’ll protect the human child and consider it an honor to look after him. All the same, this kind of situation was a little unfamiliar. For example, what might happen if the child were to go outside the marked territory? Other wild animals wouldn’t treat him the way his own do. Basically, in spite of the logic of it all, some unfamiliar feelings arose in me.

“But what if I come across some wild animal while I’m looking for our daughter?” I asked Anastasia as she was walking off. “I’m still not used to them and they’re not used to me, either.”

“They won’t do anything bad to you, Vladimir – you’re wearing the shirt, after all. You can walk around with complete confidence and not torment yourself with fearful thoughts.” Anastasia ran off to her little earthen home.

After I came out into the glade and didn’t find anyone there, I set off through the forest surrounding the glade, since I figured our daughter might be close by. I decided that if I walked in circles, gradually increasing the diameter, then I’d be sure to catch sight of her.

And I saw her before I’d even completed my first loop. Little Anastasia was standing alone between some currant bushes. She was holding onto one of the branches and examining some bug and smiling. I hid behind another bush and began observing her.

The little girl was dressed in a short shirt-like dress, her hair bound with a tie woven from the strands of some kind of grass.

Once she'd satisfied her curiosity about what was going on on the branch, she set off barefoot across the grass in the direction of the glade. Then her foot must have caught on a branch or in the grass, and she fell down. The little girl fell flat on her face on the grass, but she didn't cry. Without a word, she braced her little hands against the ground and sat up. Then she crawled a meter or two on hands and knees and then got to her feet once more and, stepping slowly, continued along her path.

Trying to remain unnoticed, I followed my daughter very cautiously. And suddenly, right before my very eyes, Nastenka¹ disappeared. At first, shocked, I just stopped and stood stock still for a bit. Then I quickly ran up to the spot where she'd just been walking and began looking all around, but she was nowhere to be seen – not behind the tree near where she'd disappeared, and not behind the bush. The little girl couldn't yet run fast enough to disappear from sight so swiftly.

I began circling around the tree near where she'd disappeared, increasing the diameter of the circle with each round, but I still couldn't see her. I stood for some time, trying to decide what to do, then I ran to the little earthen house where I figured Anastasia would be.

She was sitting calmly at the entrance, braiding a headband out of grass strands, and quietly singing. Not far away, a silver fox was rubbing herself against the tree trunk like an affectionate cat.

“Anastasia, our daughter's disappeared,” I blurted out. “I was walking a few meters behind her, not taking my eyes off her. Then suddenly she up and ... it was like she dissolved into thin air. She's nowhere to be found.”

Anastasia reacted with surprising calm – she didn't even stop her braiding as she answered:

“Don't worry, Vladimir. I think she's probably in the old fox den now.”

“Who told you that?”

“Do you see the lazy way the fox is rubbing against the tree?”

“Yes, I see.”

“That's her way of letting me know the child is in her den.”

“But maybe she's trying to tell you something else?”

¹ **Translator's note:**

Nastenka (in Russian “Настенька”, transliterated “Nasten'ka” and pronounced “NAH-steen-kuh”) is a diminutive form of the name Anastasia (in Russian “Анастасия”, transliterated “Anastasiya” and pronounced “Ah-nuh-stah-SEE-yuh”), used affectionately as a nickname.

“If she was telling me about something bad, then she’d be showing her agitation. She’d run off a bit, then come running back and try to get me to follow her to help.”

“All the same, you can’t be a hundred percent certain where our daughter is, especially since there’s no den at all in the spot where she disappeared – I looked around everywhere.”

“All right, Vladimir, then let’s go and have a look together and see where our clever little one has hidden.”

When we arrived at the spot where the little girl had seemed to dissolve, Anastasia pushed aside some grass, and I immediately glimpsed the den. Its entrance was partially collapsed, and a little hole had formed. I glanced inside it and saw Nastenka sleeping peacefully, curled up on the bottom.

“There! You see? She’s fallen asleep on the damp ground. And I don’t think she’ll be able to get out of there on her own.”

“The grass on the bottom is dry, Vladimir. And when our little daughter wakes up, she’ll be able to solve the problem of how to get out of her shelter all on her own.”

“How will she figure that out?”

“If you want, Vladimir, you just watch, and I’ll head back and finish what I was working on.”

I stayed put. After about thirty minutes, I heard a rustling sound in the hole. The little girl had awakened, but she was having a hard time scrambling out of the hollow on her own. But she wasn’t actually even trying very hard to do so. After making her first attempt and testing her own powers, she let out a sound, summoning someone: Yoo-hoo! Hey! Not a cry, but an actual summons. And right away, the vixen that had been hanging around Anastasia earlier appeared. First she stood at the edge of her former den; she looked in, sniffed, and then, turning her back to the den, lowered her tail into it. The vixen tensed her muscles and slowly pulled the little child who’d grabbed onto her tail out of the den. The little girl trailed along behind the fox for about half a meter. After that she let go of the tail, got up onto her hands and knees, and then stood up on her own two feet. Little Nastenka took a look around, smiled, as if recalling something, and then, stepping slowly, she set off, smiling, in the direction of the lake. I continued to follow her, unnoticed.

There were no wild animals around, and it seemed that no one in the taiga besides me was watching the little one. But a bit later on I realized I was wrong about that. It turned out that she and I were both being watched closely, and before long, I for the first time saw a conflict between my daughter and a wild animal in the taiga.

When Nastenka had made her way out from amongst the raspberry bushes, she stood where she was for some time and gazed at the mirror-like surface of the lake.

Then she took off her short little shirt and, stepping carefully with her bare feet, headed toward the lake. She was about five to six meters from the water when a tough-looking she-wolf suddenly sprang out of the bushes and, with several powerful leaps, put herself between the shore of the lake and Nastenka. The little girl slapped the beast on the back with her tiny hands, tugged at its fur and touched its snout. By way of reply, the she-wolf licked the child's foot, but that's where the mutual signs of attention or affection ended. Playing with the she-wolf evidently didn't enter into Nastenka's plans. She wanted to get to the water, which she first tried to do by taking three steps to the side and walking around the she-wolf that was standing at that spot. But as soon as the little girl tried to move ahead, the she-wolf once again blocked her path. Nastenka pushed against the beast's side with her hands, attempting to remove the obstacle, but the she-wolf didn't obey the child and stood there, as if rooted to the spot. Then Nastenka sat down on the grass, thought a bit and made an attempt to crawl under the she-wolf's belly. But this attempt did not meet with success, either – the she-wolf pressed herself to the ground.

Evidently Nastenka understood that the beast was not letting her get to the water and that she could not remove the obstacle using force. She sat on the grass for some time, pondering something, then started to crawl and even move away from the she-wolf and the lake.

Before long she stood up, a small twig in her hands. She walked up to the she-wolf's snout, ran the twig along it and threw it in the direction of the forest. The twig only flew about a meter and a half. The she-wolf jumped for the twig and grabbed it with her teeth. As this was going on, Nastenka set off running toward the shore of the lake, her legs pumping away. The she-wolf understood she'd been outsmarted, and with two headlong jumps, she caught up to the child at the water's edge and knocked her off her feet.

Nastenka fell onto her back, and her head touched the water. Pushing against the sand with her little legs, she tried to push herself further out, into the lake. The she-wolf grabbed the child's foot with her teeth. She was probably trying not to cause the child any pain – her grip was light.

Nastenka pushed her second leg into the she-wolf's nose, pulled the sole of her foot from the she-wolf's maw and, in high spirits, crawled off into the water. The shore in that spot dropped off sharply to the depth of almost a meter, and the little tot was submerged in the water up to her head, but right then she dove out. Working her little arms and legs, she kept herself on the surface of the water.

I didn't think our daughter could swim well. I ran out of my hiding place, intending to jump into the water, but when I got to the shore, I saw the she-wolf swimming up to the child. Splashing about in the water, the little girl nestled against the wolf's side and took hold of the fur with her little hands, and they swam along the shore in the shallows. Nastenka let go of the she-wolf as soon as she felt the lake bed beneath her feet.

The wet she-wolf came out onto the shore and shook herself, the splashing spray glinting in the sun. She didn't run away, but remained on the shore, attentively watching the child out of the corner of her eye and also – as it seemed to me – warily glancing at me.

And Nastenka, standing in the water up to her waist, smiled and eagerly kept calling the she-wolf to come over to her. She'd slap her little hands on the water, and beckon her with a wave, but the she-wolf didn't go to her. It's possible that the beast didn't like this watery business, or that the games in the lake seemed dangerous.

Nastenka suddenly turned her little head in my direction and froze. For the first time I felt my little daughter's gaze fixed on me, and I stood there beneath her gaze, powerless to move a muscle. I understood that she perceived me as some kind of baffling creature that had suddenly appeared in the territory she inhabited.

She looked me over for some time, then turned away and came out of the water onto the shore, taking her time, and walked up to the she-wolf lying on the grass. The she-wolf picked up the little dress in her teeth and gave it to the little girl. But Nastenka didn't want to put it on her damp body. She took the clothing and set off in the direction of the dug-out at the edge of the glade. I continued observing her path through the taiga and thinking.

A tiny child is walking, smiling, through a glade deep in the Siberian taiga, and nothing frightens her, no one attacks her. Quite the contrary – the wild animals are prepared to rush to her aid at a moment's notice. A tiny person is walking along, the way a royal heir walks through her kingdom. It's interesting for her to observe how the bugs and squirrels and birds live. To examine the flowers and test the blades of grass and berries to see how they taste.

But at this same time, some other little girl of the very same age finds herself in a space bounded by four walls, and within it, she's confined within four little playpen walls like some kind of little wild animal, and it doesn't matter that the walls are pretty. And her kind parents buy up all sorts of plastic toys for her, and she tests them to see how they taste.

Millions of little girls and boys in our world grow up in apartment-cages, like little wild animals. And then we want them to grow up into intelligent, free, and noble people.

Well, these individuals can't even imagine... freedom first of all means free thought, knowledge, and perception of the living universe.

A child will be told about this living universe in school when he grows up a bit. Of course he'll receive certain information about the great world of living nature, about the universe created by the great Creator, but he'll never be able to perceive it through his own experience. You can't replace the perceptions a person can receive in the first years of his life while living in harmony with the great world of the Creator, not

through exerting effort or straining himself, but conversely, through playing. There are no school lessons or university lectures at all that can replace this.

I'm not encouraging anyone to head out to the taiga with children. That would be idiotic. Even so, we have to do *something*.

WHO DOES OUR DAUGHTER LOOK LIKE?

In the evening, Anastasia was nursing Nastenka at the entrance to the little dug-out where the little girl sometimes slept on her own. I was sitting quietly alongside them, watching this interesting process.

I got the impression that the feeding as such, as a means of satiating the child's organism with mother's milk, was not the main point of it at all. Grabbing Anastasia's breast with her little hands, Nastenka smacked her lips and nursed for a bit, but then she came off the nipple and looked at her mother's face. And Anastasia didn't take her eyes off her child, either. She paid no attention to me or to her surroundings.

It seemed to me that it was as if mother and child became one during the feeding and communicated with each other non-verbally.

This went on for about twenty minutes, after which time Nastenka fell asleep.

Anastasia put our little daughter down in the dug-out on bedding made of hay and covered with fabric. She covered the sleeping child with the fabric's loose edges and created a cozy little nest by mounding up hay from the sides. Then, she knelt there by the entrance for a short while, looking at her sleeping daughter. When Anastasia stood up and finally turned her attention to me, I asked her:

“What do you think, Anastasia, who does our daughter look more like, you or me?”

“Like all parents, of course you'd like it if she looked more like you, wouldn't you, Vladimir?”

“Ah, you guessed wrong. Sure, I want my daughter to have something of me in her, too. But she's a little girl – she needs to be beautiful, and that means, she should look more like you.”

“Does that mean you consider me beautiful compared to yourself, Vladimir?”

“I consider you beautiful compared not just with myself, Anastasia. I think you're the most beautiful person I've ever seen, even in international beauty contests. I've watched them on television. The contestants' beauty pales by comparison with yours. You're better than all of them.”

“Thank you, Vladimir. What you said – is that a compliment? Or just an

explanation?”

“I’m complimenting you and explaining, too, and also marveling.”

“Thank you. That means it won’t sadden you then, Vladimir, if I tell you that in her external appearance, Nastenka’s little face looks a tiny bit like you, but her little eyes and eyelashes and her figure are mine, and she’ll also have hair like mine.

“When people resemble each other physically this also indicates that they resemble each other in their abilities, habits and in the affinity of their Souls. That means she’ll possess certain abilities and habits of yours. And certain ones of mine. But three components are always present in a newborn’s soul, Vladimir.”

“Three? But who’s the third one from?”

“The third component is a particle of the Soul that resided in the person’s body in his previous life – perhaps a hundred years ago, perhaps a thousand or a million years ago. In a harmonious person, this third component does not disintegrate into particles, but waits for its chance, for the instant when it acquires a new body, through whose eyes it can see the surrounding world and through whose ears it can hear the sounds of this world, touch it with its hands, and utilize its gifts.”

“But if our Souls have united into one whole in their new life, then does that mean they must know about all of each other’s lives?”

“Of course, they must. And they do. Otherwise it would be impossible for them to unite. They wouldn’t be able to become one united Soul.”

“Then it would follow that my Soul can see our daughter’s past life?”

“Of course, it can, but you will perceive and see this only if you are able to abide in harmony with your own Soul and if your thought isn’t thrown off by all manner of distortions of the surrounding world, if it is able to concentrate.”

“If you take me, then everything’s totally clear: I and people like me can’t see the past. But if you take you, Anastasia – it’s clear that you can find something out about our daughter’s past life through that particle of her Soul.”

“I’ve been trying to glimpse and understand our daughter’s past life, Vladimir, and I’m seeing it as strange in some way. Our daughter’s life in her body was very short, no more than seven years long, and she lived many thousands of years ago.”

“Well, if the child lived such a short life, there’s not much to learn about the past.”

“Yes, not much, but it sometimes happens that even in the course of a very short life, a person carries out an act that can affect events that occur in subsequent millennia.”

“I wonder, how can it happen that a child could carry out some act that could affect people’s lives for millennia? Can you tell me about it, Anastasia, or better yet, can you play back some pictures from our daughter’s past life?”

“Yes, I can, Vladimir.”

“Go ahead and play them back, then.”

And Anastasia began the extraordinary tale of our daughter’s past life. Or, rather, the tale of the little girl, a particle of whose Soul now resides in little Nastenka.

INTO A DIFFERENT DIMENSION

“As you know, Vladimir, some time ago on Earth there began an ice age. In those regions into which the glaciers advanced, the climate changed. The cooling made it impossible for many types of plants to grow. Areas that had previously been rich in forests, orchards and lush grasses interspersed with flowers, gradually turned into valleys covered with only scant vegetation.

“The people who were living at that time in one of the valleys in the foothills decided that it was impossible to continue living the way they had been living under such cold conditions. They decided to leave their homes and head out in search of places with a more hospitable climate.

“The men headed out and took the lead. Following their tracks, the head of the family line, Wood², was leading the children, women and old folks out of the settlement.

“The gray-haired, hundred-and-twenty-year-old elder walked at the head of the caravan of eleven mammoths laden with wicker baskets. The children were seated in one of them, and the others held food stores – after all, they didn’t know how long they would be traveling.

“Along both sides of the caravan of mammoths, the people of his family line and all the livestock who had resided in the family homestead settlement were on the move, on horseback and on foot. It seemed that all the living beings understood that it was essential for them to set off for new climes, and they followed the person. Only the plants had remained in the settlement – they had no way to move. Plants, doomed to die.

“Wood was thinking things over, trying to answer the questions he’d posed to himself:

“Why had the undesirable changes in nature occurred? Why had the cooling begun?

“Whose will had set this disaster in motion?

“Might it not become a disaster for all of Earth?

“Did man possess the power to do something to head it off?

² **Translator’s note:**

The name used here in the original is “Вуд” (transliterated “Vud” and pronounced “Wood”). The origin of this name is unknown.

“Might disasters result from man’s actions?”

“Wood understood that if the answers weren’t found, then a sad fate would await his children and grandchildren and his entire family line. He could see that all the adults who were now walking along in the caravan were viewing the changes in the natural world as a tragedy – their faces were sad and thoughtful. Even the children had grown quiet and were on their guard. Only his little favorite, his six-year-old great-granddaughter Anasta³, was frolicking – she’d started up a game at the head of the caravan with the lead mammoth.

“Wood observed his great-granddaughter’s game with the mammoth leader, glancing at them out of the corner of his eye. She plopped the tip of the giant, seven-ton mammoth’s trunk onto her little shoulder and made believe she was dragging the huge animal. And he, the mammoth, was playing along with her. Of course, he was carrying the whole weight of the trunk himself, touching the child’s shoulder only lightly with it. From time to time Anasta would stop, as if catching her breath, wipe the nonexistent sweat from her brow and say, ‘Oh, my, how big you are. You’re heavy and lazy.’”

“The mammoth would nod his head, as if in agreement, flap his ears, and wipe his own brow with his trunk. Then he’d lay the tip of it on the little girl’s shoulder once more, as if he couldn’t move from the spot without her help. The game was funny and harmless. But the other game his great-granddaughter started up next, Wood didn’t like that one. Here’s what it consisted of.

“Anasta would scramble up the mammoth’s trunk, up to his head, and he would help her, curving his huge trunk and pushing the child higher with its tip. After getting herself settled atop the moving mammoth’s head, Anasta would sit there for a while, then suddenly utter a frightened ‘Oh!’ and swiftly slide down the trunk. The mammoth had to be very dexterous to manage to catch the child right above the ground and prevent her from hitting the ground or ending up beneath his massive feet.

“Wood was thinking over the past, trying to discover in it the reason for the disaster that had forced his people to leave their native valley, but his reflections were constantly being interrupted by recollection-pictures from the life of his great-granddaughter Anasta. He didn’t push these pictures away. He liked them, and they distracted him from sorrowful thoughts about what had happened.

“At one point Wood even smiled, recalling the way Anasta had registered her objection to an opinion that had been posited during one of their lessons. He saw the whole picture, down to the smallest detail.

“Wood was giving the lesson at that point. Children of various ages and three adults were sitting in front of him in a circle, beneath a spreading oak tree. Wood started off the lesson with the following words.”

³ **Translator’s note:**

The name Anasta (in Russian “Анаста”, transliterated “Anasta” and pronounced “Ah-NAH-stuh”) is meant to echo the name Anastasia.

SNAKE GO-BETWEENS

“Many people know that our ancestors strived to determine the life’s purpose of all creatures living on Earth. Once they’d done so, they would teach the animals how they could become as useful as possible to people. The animals would then teach this to their offspring, and in this way our generation, just like any that came before it, has received a great gift from our forbears. And we, in turn, need to not just make use of it, but also perfect the abilities of all earthly creatures living around us. It’s our generation’s task to determine the life’s purpose of those creatures for whom our ancestors didn’t do so.” Having said this, Wood pulled a grass snake out from under his shirt and continued: “For example, we need to determine for what purpose reptiles were created and how they might serve man.”

Those who were present looked at the grass snake that had wrapped itself around Wood’s hand, and said nothing. The first to raise his hand and ask to speak was a red-haired little boy about five years of age. Wood permitted him to speak.

“I’ve seen that snake,” the little boy began, “or one just like it, crawl up to our nanny goat and suck milk out of its udder. The goat stood right where she was. That means she agreed to give it her milk.”

“Yes, grass snakes and other reptiles can suck milk from cows or goats. You’re correct in noting that, Izor⁴. But at the moment,” Wood reminded those who had gathered, “we’re trying to solve the question of what benefit the existence of these creatures should bring to man.”

“Yes, I haven’t forgotten about our question,” the red-haired boy went on. “I remembered the way he was drinking the milk, and I thought we should make a little hole in this creature at the opposite end from his head. He can drink the milk and lower his tail with the little hole into a pitcher so it fills up with milk. Then mama won’t have to milk the goat.”

A disorderly choir of children’s voices could be heard from all sides:

“You can’t put a little hole in...”

“You shouldn’t put a hole in – it’ll be painful for the creature!”

“The milk won’t run out of the hole if the creature itself doesn’t want it to.”

⁴ **Translator’s note:**

The Russian original is “Изор” (transliterated “Izor” and pronounced “Ee-zore”). This name’s origin is unknown.

“The main argument against the hole is the pain the grass snake will experience,” Wood said, summarizing. “And man shouldn’t cause earthly creatures pain. Your suggestion is not accepted, Izor.”

Wood wanted to move onto the next question, but the red-haired boy wasn’t giving up.

“If we can’t put a little hole in his tail, then we can do it some other way,” he announced. “When that creature was sucking the milk from the goat, it got fatter and fatter. That happened because there was a lot of milk in it. We need to train the creature to crawl into the house with its milk and pour it out, into a pitcher. Then people won’t have to go out to the pasture with a pitcher to fetch the milk, and the dairy animals won’t have to leave the pasture and come to the houses to be milked. Many different creatures will crawl to the house, and when they see that the pitcher is empty, they’ll fill it with milk.”

The children liked the red-haired boy’s idea, and they vied to outdo each other with their own additions to it.

“And you could also get milk from them far away from home, if you feel like eating and your house is a long ways away.”

“We need to train them to crawl up to a person with milk when they hear a certain sound. So we don’t have to go searching for them in the grass. You clap your hands, say, or whistle, and they’d race to crawl right over to the person.”

“Well, I don’t feel like drinking milk that’s been pumped out of a snake – they might add some snake thing of their own to it,” one little girl noted timidly. But the others immediately started arguing with her.

“Well, with a cow the milk was inside, too, and everyone drinks that.”

“If they add some snake thing of their own, then it’ll be even better. I mean, they, these creatures, are always clean, even though they crawl along the ground.”

“Yes, exactly, they’re always nice and clean. I never saw a filthy snake.”

Izor listened as the children discussed his proposal, and he even blushed from pride.

“Your second suggestion is worthy of attention, Izor,” Wood said, praising the boy, and then he added: “We’ll discuss your second suggestion next time, and before then, everyone will think and give their opinion or propose their own suggestion for how to make use of creatures that crawl. And now I want to ask you what life’s purposes have been determined for the animals you know. Who’s ready...”

Wood didn’t finish what he was saying. He saw Anasta’s little raised hand, her palm facing in his direction. This gesture indicated that the little girl disagreed with

something and intended to lay her objections out to those present.

“Tell us your objections, Anasta,” Wood said, giving his permission.

“I’m against having creepy crawlers deliver milk to homes.”

One after another, the children began challenging Anasta:

“But why?”

“We don’t have to say no to conveniences!”

“The creatures aren’t doing anything for man at the moment, and this way they’ll have something to do.”

“People will have more time to do something nice instead of milking cows.”

The little girl calmly heard out the objections and went on:

“If the creepy crawlers start bringing man milk from the cow, then man himself will turn into a cow.”

One of the adults who was present at the lesson couldn’t restrain himself:

“What are you talking about, little girl? Explain what you mean.”

And Anasta went on:

“When a person receives milk from a cow or a goat or a camel or some other animal, he gives the animal his attention and feelings in return. If he doesn’t take the milk from the cow himself, and if she doesn’t feel his attention, then the milk won’t be as good. The person will give his feelings of gratitude to the crawling creature when he gets the snake milk from it. The snake will come between the cow and the person. It will be a go-between between all creations and the person. It will lure the person in with its enticing service and will milk him, sucking out of him the beneficial feelings that were intended for all the earthly creatures.”

Everyone remained silent for some time, lost in thought.

All at once a picture arose in Wood’s imagination: a spreading apple tree, studded with ripe fruit. Before it were standing a man and a woman. The woman was saying:

“Look, my love – one apple has already ripened. It’s very pretty. The apple tree wants to give it to us. Reach up to the branch and bend it down and pick the ripe apple.”

The man tried to reach the branch, but couldn’t. He wanted to jump up and grab hold of the branch with the ripe apple, but right then a snake appeared on the branch. It pulled off the apple, took hold of the branch with its tail and obligingly hung there,

offering the fruit to Man.

“Thank you, crawling one,” Man said and stroked the snake.

The man and the woman moved away from the tree without thanking it. They gave the beneficial energy of their feelings to the snake. The apple tree shuddered, and half of its fruit, still unripe, fell to the ground.

And Wood broke the silence that had fallen:

“Your protest is also worthy of attention, Anastochka⁵, and we accept it in part. We must all think carefully about replacing man’s direct connection to all that grows and lives on Earth with a go-between. We need to think about what that might lead to in the future. I propose that we return to this topic in our future lessons. But now,” he said, glancing at all those who had gathered there, “as we agreed to do earlier, please tell me the life’s purposes of the animals you know.”

⁵ **Translator’s note:**

Anastochka (in Russian “Анасточка”, transliterated “Anastochka” and pronounced “Ah-NAH-stuhch-kuh”) is a diminutive form of the name Anasta, used affectionately as a nickname.

THE MOST IMPORTANT INSTRUMENT FOR BUILDING A HOUSE

“Me! Me!” the impatient children’s voices poured out.

“All right, all right,” Wood said, nodding, “Tell me one at a time, and each of you name no more than two animals’ life’s purposes.”

One at a time, the children jumped up from their spots and spoke quickly:

“Cows and goats give milk. They eat grass, and every day they come to a person so he’ll take the milk from them.”

“Donkeys and horsies are meant to haul a person when he doesn’t want to walk on his own two legs.”

“Chickens and ducks walk around somewhere and fly around somewhere, but nearly every day they come back and lay eggs so a person can come get them.”

“We need a mammoth to lift heavy things and move or carry them to the place a person shows him.”

The children were already going around the circle for the third time, striving to recall the life’s purposes of all the animals they knew. Finally Wood posed a new question.

“Who can tell me under what circumstances animals work together and in what way a person directs them?”

The very same red-haired little boy addressed those present, saying, “Can I tell?” And, hearing no objections, he looked at Wood. The latter nodded in assent. “Animals start working together when a person wants to build himself a home⁶. Now, the person uses a fife to direct the animals. First he plays a calling tune, and various wild animals come to him, and birds fly over. When they come, they sit down not far from him and wait – that’s the way our forbears taught them. When he finishes playing the calling tune, the person looks affectionately at all the animals and bows to them. And all the animals that have little tails all wag them joyfully when the person looks at them affectionately. And the ones that can’t wag little tails express their joy in some other

⁶ **Translator’s note:**

The Russian word used here is “дом” (transliterated “dom” and pronounced “dome”). Throughout *Anasta*, this word both refers to the physical structure in which one lives and also carries the sense of a place where one can feel “at home.” I have translated this word as “home” throughout the book, so as to preserve both of these connotations and also the sound of the Russian original.

way, because the nicest thing for all animals is when a person looks at them affectionately. Then the person makes a different sound on his fife. Right away the bears run out from the group of wild animals and start digging a pit in the ground, right on the spot the person has marked with twigs. When the person thinks the pit doesn't need to be dug any bigger, he makes a different sound on his fife, and the bears go back to their spots. When the new sound is played, the mammoths place stones in the pit the bears dug. This whole time, a whole lot of swallows are circling about the chosen spot, very impatiently waiting to hear their tune. And as soon as the person begins playing their pretty tune on his fife, the swallows race off every which way and come back again and again: they bring tiny little bits of dirt, straw and fluff in their little beaks – everything they use to build nests for themselves, and they lay what they've brought on top of the stones until they've got a wall of the home."

The little boy stopped speaking, and Wood saw that Anasta had once again gotten up from her spot and raised her hand with the palm facing him. Wood gave Anasta permission to speak.

"Teacher Wood, I want to ask you whether the building of a home is considered pleasant and interesting work."

"Yes, of course," Wood answered. "It is the very pleasant and creative act of a thinking person."

"Teacher Wood, but then why are children categorically forbidden to engage in this pleasant and creative act?"

Wood knew of Anasta's obsession with the idea of building her own little home. At home she'd brought up this topic with Wood many times, but he would always patiently explain to her why children weren't allowed to build homes. Now she'd posed her question to Wood in front of the children and adults alike. Clearly she had a reason for asking. "She's thought of something," Wood concluded, and he began to answer:

"If children, especially those who haven't fully grasped the essence of the universe, pick up a fife and begin playing it, they might unwittingly distort the tune, and the animal builders will get confused and not know what to do."

"Teacher Wood, may I show you something?" Anasta asked.

"Yes, you may, if it's related to your question."

"It's related," Anasta replied, and she began to sing. She began singing ever so quietly. She offered up various tunes in her thin little voice, the very same tunes that adults would play during building.

"She didn't make a single mistake," one of the elders who was present remarked quietly.

“That’s right, she didn’t make any mistakes,” agreed another.

“But you know, she’s only heard that tune once,” stressed the elder who was sitting on a fallen tree in the last row. “The little girl has a good memory,” he added.

When she was done singing, Anasta asked Wood:

“Teacher Wood, did I make even a single mistake in even a single tune?”

“You did not distort the tunes, Anasta. You reproduced them with total accuracy.”

“Then I’ve removed the first obstacle?”

“Let’s say you’ve removed it,” Wood admitted. “But there are also other conditions. One of the children may be allowed to build a home, as an exceptional case. This can happen if that individual – in this case one of you – tells about the design they’ve conceived and the elders pronounce this design innovative. Then they may permit the home to be built as an exceptional case, as a model.”

Sensing that an extremely favorable situation had arisen, and that he could stimulate the creative thought of the children who were present, Wood said:

“I propose that all of you who wish to do so present your designs in two moons’ time. First we’ll discuss all the designs and will pick the best one, and then we’ll propose to the elders that they examine it and hand down a decision.”

Wood hadn’t been mistaken: both the tiniest children and those who were a bit older felt a burning desire to present their own unique designs. They all began whispering amongst themselves, evidently discussing what innovations they might introduce into the methods of building a home that had been worked out over the centuries. Understanding that there was no point in continuing class any longer, since the children were occupied with trying to solve the task that had been set for them and it was unlikely he’d succeed in shifting their thought, which was fired-up by its creative search, he stopped the lessons and dismissed those who were present.

Two moons later, the day the children had long been waiting for arrived. Many up them came to class a bit early and, without waiting for the older ones, began telling each other what they’d thought up. By the appointed time, many parents had gathered at the lesson, too. When class began, each of the children, excited, took turns telling of his design.

According to established rules, Anasta was to present her design last. Out of the designs presented before her presentation, the best design turned out to be the one presented by a little boy named Alan⁷. He was a good-looking boy, eight years older

⁷ **Translator’s note:**

The Russian original is “Алан” (transliterated “Alan” and pronounced “Ah-LAHN”).

than Anasta, a good singer whom all the domestic animals happily obeyed just the way they would a grown-up. Many of the girls in the settlement liked this boy, including Anasta. Therefore, if he were to win, she wouldn't be terribly upset. "Better him than anyone else," Anasta thought.

Finally it was her turn to present her design. Trying not to show her excitement, she began to tell about it:

"On the surface, my design doesn't differ much from already existing ones. My innovation is in the wall. In the southern-facing wall. I'll situate a beehive log on it. When the bees start bringing back flower pollen and the sun begins to warm the log hive, the bees will have to fan it with their little wings. Now, the log hive will be connected to the house by means of a small opening, and the air from the hive will fill the person's room, along with the scent of the flowers."

The grown-ups began talking amongst themselves, discussing Anasta's innovation. Finally Wood made a decision that everyone agreed with. It was decided to present two designs to the elders for consideration: Alan's and Anasta's. Anasta wasn't pleased – she didn't particularly feel like being rival to the boy she liked.

The elders came together the next day to consider the designs, right at the next lesson, which a great many people had also come to attend. Anasta's design was deemed best. The solemn announcement was made by a gray-haired, stern-looking elder. But he did note:

"Anasta, we have deemed your design worthy of attention. It really does contain an interesting innovation, but we cannot allow you to build the home. We can't turn the building of a home into a child's game. Only a man and woman who have decided to create a family may build a home. That is the inviolable rule. Do you agree with this rule?"

Anasta said nothing. The lump that had risen in her throat prevented her from speaking. She had worked on her design with extraordinary inspiration. She had imagined and even sensed her little home. In her thoughts she was already living in it, sleeping on her soft sleeping spot, looking out the window at the beautiful flower beds through the curtain woven by a little spider, and breathing in the subtle scents of the flowers the bees had brought back... Right then Alan rose from his spot.

"Might you allow me to say a word about the inviolable rule?" He glanced questioningly at the elders and then continued. "Of course it's fair, and it can't be changed, but there's a way to do things so that the rule won't apply to Anasta."

The people and the children were looking at Alan in disbelief.

A voice rang out. "And just how could that be done?"

"Allow me to demonstrate," Alan said.

An elder consented. "Go on, then, show us."

Alan walked up to Anasta and stood opposite her. Then he removed the family pendant from his neck and placed it around Anasta's neck:

"Will you marry me, Anasta?" he asked.

Those present gasped. Anasta was struck dumb. Only her eyes shone and looked over the youth before her, from toe to head.

"Do you say yes, Anasta?" Alan asked.

Anasta nodded energetically, then quickly took her own family pendant off her neck and held it out to Alan. But he didn't take it. Instead, he knelt down before the little girl so that she could place her beautiful pendant on him herself.

The people watched what was happening in astonishment. Then Alan took Anasta's little hand and addressed the gray-haired elder, saying:

"Now there's no obstacle for Anasta, and the inviolable rule does not apply to her."

"All right," the elder began, a bit unsure, somehow, "but people come together in order to raise a family. Anasta's still too little. She can't bear children."

"Yes," Alan agreed. "She's little. But she will mature with each day and each year. And the day will come when she will be a fully mature beauty. I am sure that I will see that day and that I will not go back on my decision."

After conferring with each other, the elders gave Anasta permission to build the small home, under the condition that it would be disassembled after eleven days, since it wasn't permissible for the home to be unoccupied, and Anasta wasn't yet allowed to live apart from her parents, due to her age.

On the appointed day, nearly all the residents of the family homestead settlement came together on a hillock. Anasta stood beside her flower bed. Beforehand, she'd marked out the border of her little home with sticks and twigs. She was very nervous – after all, so many people would be watching her actions, but she was especially nervous because among these people was Alan. Some unique feelings toward this young man had been born within her after his proposal that they join their lives together. The village head walked up to Anasta and opened a pretty case before her. Inside it there lay a fife – the most important instrument for building a house. With trembling hands, the little girl took up the fife, covered several little holes with her small fingers and brought the fife to her lips. But no tune issued forth – Anasta felt that before beginning, she needed to calm herself somehow. She pressed the fife to her chest and, gazing at the people standing on the hillock, she thought, fast as lightning, about what she could do to calm herself down. But her nervousness was only growing.

Then a youth came out of the group of people and headed toward Anasta. It was Alan. He walked up to the little girl and said:

“I know this tune, too, and I can play it. You’ve laid out where the house will be located and how big it will be. You were victorious in our competition. That means this will be your home. All I’ll do is play the tune.”

With eyes shining with tears, the little girl looked at the stately youth and whispered with lips trembling with excitement:

“I want to do it myself, Alan. Thank you, but I need to do it myself, I definitely need to.”

“Then listen to me carefully, Anasta. Breathe in some air and hold your breath. Hold it for as long as you can and then exhale, but not all at once, but in three steps. Exhale the last time so that as little air as possible remains in you. After that, begin to breathe evenly. From your very first breath, you should think only about your breathing. Forget about everything around you, and as soon as your breathing settles in normally, begin playing. I’ll stand behind your back and look at the people on the hillock. I won’t let their glances and thoughts through, won’t allow them to touch you, and you, calm and confident, will build your little fairy tale home.”

Anasta did everything just the way Alan had instructed her. She brought the fife to her now-calmed lips and... the calling tune filled the space.

After a bit the wild animals began gathering from the forest and the pastures. When enough of them had gathered, Anasta brought the calling tune to an end, went and stood in the middle of the oval that marked the walls of her future little home, and began playing once more, a different tune now.

Three bears immediately came out from the group of animals and hopping, ran up to the oval Anasta had drawn, walked around it in a circle, sniffing, and started digging a pit alongside the twigs Anasta had laid out.

They were trying, trying very hard. Suddenly two little bear cubs just couldn’t hold back and jumped into the pit that their mother was digging. Thrown off, Anasta stopped playing. Everyone froze in place. Then the she-bear grabbed one of the cubs by the shoulder and, giving it a slap, set it down outside the pit. It rolled off, head over heels, and she went through the same procedure with the second cub. Then she roared at them, as a warning, looked at the little girl holding the fife and waved a paw in her direction like a conductor. And Anasta began playing the fife once more.

When the pit had been dug, Anasta changed tunes – there rang out low, sedate and rhythmical sounds. And one after another, mammoths walked out toward the pit, each carrying a stone with its trunk. The mammoths placed the stones and continued their work until they had filled the entire pit with them. Now the fife’s low, rhythmical tones were replaced by modulations resembling the twittering of birds. The swallows

that had been circling above the building site suddenly disappeared, as if on cue, but reappeared before long. They landed on the stones, first here, then there, laying down something from their beaks.

The little feathered builders were able to bring just a tiny bit of building material in their beaks, but there were a great many of them, and they carried out their actions unusually swiftly and in unison. And so, the walls of the home grew before everyone's very eyes, accompanied by the fife's melodious modulations.

DON'T GET AHEAD OF YOURSELF

Wood's recollections of his great-granddaughter Anasta's life just wouldn't leave him alone, and he even chuckled a bit, recalling one particular instance.

It was getting toward evening. Wood had washed his feet off in the stream and was getting ready to go to sleep when he suddenly heard a child crying, or not even crying, but sobbing. He turned around and saw Anasta running toward him. She looked unusual: her face was all smeared with something black, and hay was sticking out of the opening of her dress. She ran up to Wood, limping a bit, sat down on the earthen mound outside and, taking her head in her hands, began lamenting her sad state.

“Oh, woe is me, Granddad! My life is just coming to an end.”

Now that Alan had proposed to her, the little girl wanted to grow up as soon as possible, and when she'd wake up in the morning, instead of running off to the stream pool to get washed, she'd take a straight pole, stand it up against the wall of the house and score it, to mark her height. And then at the stream pool, before taking a dip in the water, she'd look at her reflection and wonder how long it would be before she'd get breasts like the ones grown-up women have – the kind of breasts they nurse little children with.

“Have a drink of water, Anastochka and calm down. Tell me what's happened.”

Anasta swallowed some water from the pitcher and, through her sobs, began telling Wood the tale of her woe.

“I knew it, Granddad, I knew it... They are all crazy about Alan because he's the handsomest and the smartest. I've been worried that in the time it takes me to grow up, one of the grown-up maidens will make my Alan fall in love with her. She'll make him love her. And today, when it was just getting towards evening, I saw them, these maidens, walking to the glade, toward the mountain, and they were talking about my Alan. And I realized I can't wait any more, can't wait 'til I grow up. I have to take action now. That's what I decided, and I started to take action.

“I took a little piece of coal and made up my eyes, the way the grown-up maidens do it. Then I took a beet and painted my cheeks and my lips. And I even covered over my birthmark with clay. The birthmark that's right here, on my forehead.” Anasta pulled aside her bangs and showed Wood the birthmark on her forehead that resembled a tiny star.

“Why in the world did you try to paint over the birthmark, Anastochka? After

all, you can't see it – your beautiful hair covers it,” asked Wood, concealing his smile.

“Sure, it covers it. But the wind blows, and it comes uncovered.”

“Let it come uncovered. I, for example, like your birthmark very much. It resembles a little star.”

“Agh-h-h,” Anasta said, wailing again. “You like it, Granddad, but I don't like it one bit. It's like I'm marked somehow. Mama doesn't have a little star on her forehead, and neither does Papa, and you don't have one, either, Granddad Wood. Who drew it on my forehead? Who was it who mutilated me? Agh-h-h...”

“No one mutilated you, Anastochka. Quite the opposite – they adorned you. If you start doing kind deeds for people, they'll start saying that this act, say, was done by the little girl with the little star on her forehead. And if you do bad deeds, people might say, that was done by the little girl with the spot on her forehead. People see any person's appearance as beautiful if his deeds are beautiful.” Wood stroked his great-granddaughter's head and then asked, “Anasta, tell me: why is there some hay peeking out of your dress?”

“I made two little wads of hay and tied them to my chest with a ribbon, so my chest would be the same as the grown-up maidens'. And I put hay in my shoes under my heels, too, so I'd be a little taller. And then, all grown up, like a maiden, I went out to the glade where they get together with the young fellows. I got there and I saw Alan standing there along with the young guys, and the maidens had gathered together a little ways away from them and were talking amongst themselves, sneaking glances at Alan. And Alan himself was glancing at the maidens.” And once again Anasta got all worked up and started crying again, and then went on, through her tears. “I saw him, Granddad, he was sneaking glances, sneaking glances. I knew that before long they'd get into a circle and take each other's hands and they'd do a circle dance and sing and look at each other. And so I'd be able to get into the circle, too, I went up and stood next to the maidens.

“One of them was just staring at me. She looks and looks and then she up and starts roaring with laughter and all the rest of them too, when they see me, they start roaring with laughter. And all the guys standing with Alan, they were laughing, too. Oh, woe is me! Woe is me, Granddad Wood. I was standing there alone, and they were all laughing and laughing. Looking at me and laughing. One guy fell right over onto the grass – he was rolling around and laughing.”

Wood looked down, trying to hide his smile, and asked:

“Was Alan laughing at you, too, Anastochka?”

“Alan wasn't laughing at me, Granddad Wood, not at all. Alan hit me.”

Wood was astonished. “He hit you? What do you mean, he hit you?”

“Just what I said, Granddad Wood. He hit me. First he walked up and picked me up. Picked me up the way you’d pick up a little child,” she told him, blubbing. “And I... I so wanted to be a grown-up... But he... he picked up me up like a little kid and took me behind the bushes. There he set me down on the path and said, ‘Go along home, Anasta. Wash up and don’t be such a dummy any more.’ And I... I said I wouldn’t go, and so it would be convincing, I stomped my foot a few times. Then he took me by the hand and spanked me. Like this and like that,” Anasta said, slapping herself on the hip with her palm, all the while lamenting, “Now I’m all beaten up and unhappy and abandoned and unmarried.”

“What, did he take back his pendant from you?” Wood asked.

“No, he didn’t take it back.”

“Well, that means you’re still married,” Wood said, reasoning with her.

“All the same, even if I’m married, I’m still beaten up and wretched.”

“Did it really hurt so much when Alan spanked you?” Wood asked.

“I don’t know, Granddad. I don’t know. I didn’t feel any pain, but the bitter insult was stronger than any pain.”

“Calm down, Anastochka. I can see that Alan spanked you out of love, so you wouldn’t do things people would laugh at you for. That means he was shielding you from taunting in the future.”

“Out of love? Do people really spank you like that when they love you?”

“Well, of course, that’s not the best method, but perhaps at that moment Alan couldn’t think of anything better. And you know, Anastochka,” Wood went on, untying the bundles and taking the little wads of hay off her chest, “don’t try so hard to be grown up. You’ll grow up without making any effort at all. And at the moment you need to be thinking about other things, my dear little girl.”

“About what, Granddad? About what?”

“You lie down on my lap, Anastochka, and I’ll sing you your favorite song, the one with no words.”

Anasta laid her head on Wood’s lap, blubbed another time or two and, at the very first notes of the familiar tune, drifted off to sleep.

The next day Anasta ran up to Wood, joyful and excited. Before she’d even stopped running, she announced to Wood:

“He came by my little home. He came by. At first I wanted to hide when I saw

him through the window, but then I just sat there, quiet as a mouse, so he'd think there wasn't anyone in the home. Alan walks up to the little home and takes a seat next to the entrance. He takes a seat, Granddad Wood, and he says, 'I know you're home, Anasta. You're a very smart little girl, a quick study, and I'll wait until you become a beautiful girl. Believe me, I'll wait, but don't you get ahead of yourself any more.' And I sat there and didn't say a thing, and I wasn't at all mad at him any more. I felt like running out and hugging him and even kissing him, like a grown-up, on the cheek, but I didn't do that. I sat there, quiet as a mouse, so as not to get ahead of myself.

"Alan sat there a while longer near the entrance to my little home, then he got up and left. And I ran to see you, Granddad Wood, to tell you about it. And you know what else, Granddad? You know, Alan, when he was sitting there at my place, he drew three little flowers on the wall of my little home – one bigger one, another a bit smaller, and a third, tiny-tiny one. I saw them when I ran out. They're very pretty."

Wood hugged Anasta and said:

"Does that mean you're not wretched any more and woe is no longer you?"

"Now I'm joyful, and I feel like making something unusual and pretty, so everyone will look at it and be happy and say, 'Very pretty, great, good,' and so Alan will hear that and be proud of me."

"That's a very correct decision that's come to you, Anastochka. Create beautiful creations in a burst of inspiration. Only in that way can we win the love of humans."

WE HAVE TO THINK

Putting an end to his reminiscing, Wood turned to his great-granddaughter, who had thought up a new game to play with the mammoth walking at the head of the caravan. He said:

“Anasta, you’re keeping the mammoth in a state of great tension with your playing. Is it really right to treat an inoffensive, kind animal that way?”

“Actually, Granddad Wood, I’m keeping him in a state of pleasant tension. I’m distracting him from sad thoughts. And see, Granddad Wood, I distracted you from your gloomy thinking,” Anasta said, jabbering away.

“Yes... Many people’s thoughts are gloomy right now. There’s a reason they’ve come up. But what about you, Anastochka, can it be that you don’t have any sad thoughts?”

“I don’t, Granddad Wood.”

“Does that mean you don’t understand why the adults of our family line are gloomy?”

“I do understand, Granddad Wood. They’re gloomy because the cold glacier is advancing. Many plants are dying from the cold. The people from various settlements have had to leave their family spaces⁸. And no one knows where they’ll have to go and how long they’ll have to walk.”

“That’s correct...” Wood said pensively. And, somewhat astonished, he asked his great-granddaughter, “But, what, aren’t you sad to take leave of our family space, Anastochka?”

“I’m not sad, Granddad Wood. As soon as that sad, leave-taking thought came up, I immediately rejected it, and now I don’t have it in me any more,” Anasta said, jabbering away again light-heartedly and bobbing up and down on the mammoth’s trunk. It was as if the mammoth walking alongside Wood understood he needed to carry the little girl alongside her great-grandfather and give them the chance to spend

⁸ **Translator’s note:**

The Russian phrase here is “родное пространство” (transliterated “rodnoe prostranstvo” and pronounced “rahd-NOH-yuh prah-STRAHNST-vuh”). The first word has the same root as the first word in the phrase “родовое поместье” (transliterated “rodovoe pomest’ye” and pronounced “ruhd-ah-VOH-yuh pah-MYEST-yeh”), which I have translated throughout as “family homestead,” and the second word, meaning “space” or “area,” occurs throughout the “Ringing Cedars of Russia” series in the phrase “пространство любви” (transliterated “prostranstvo lyubvi” and pronounced “prah-STRAHNST-vuh lyoob-VEE”) which means “space of love.” As such, the phrase “family space” brings together the two ideas of the family homestead and the space of love.

time with each other.

Wood was both astonished and intrigued by his great-granddaughter's answer. What mysterious method she had managed to use to cope with the sad thoughts? And he asked:

“Anastochka, can you tell me how you managed to reject the sad thoughts, what method you used?”

“A very simple method, Granddad Wood. I decided to remain with my family space.”

“Remain? You decided to? But you didn't remain. After all, you're leaving it behind, along with everyone, Anastochka.”

“For the moment, I happen to be leaving it behind. I'm accompanying everyone on their journey to a far-off land. But as soon as we come up onto that rise, the one you can see in the distance, it will be noon, and I'll need to be heading off back. I'll be back on my motherland by evening. The morning will dawn and it will rejoice at seeing me. I'm already rejoicing right now myself. I can just imagine how much my motherland will rejoice at seeing me.”

Wood didn't respond to his great-granddaughter's words with alarm. He figured she had been joking or was just imagining going back in order to drive the sad thoughts off. Deciding to play along with the nimble-witted little girl, he said:

“Yes, the entire space will rejoice at seeing you, but what will you do there all alone?”

“First of all, I'll make up a hill of dirt and grass around my flower bed,” Anasta replied, jabbering away, “and the little hill won't allow the cold glacier wind to blow on my beloved little flower. I need to be right alongside that little flower when it blossoms. If nobody's there next to it, the little flower will get very sad.

“‘What did I bloom for?’ it will think. ‘What for, if no one is going to rejoice at my beauty?’ But I'll be right there and I'll rejoice.”

“The little flower will stop blooming, Anastochka and there will cold spells, the like of which we've never before seen. Many plants won't be able to bloom in the cold. A huge glacier is advancing upon our family space,” Wood said, as if musing to himself as he ascended the rise Anasta had mentioned. “Yes, a glacier is advancing.”

“I'll stop the glacier, Granddad Wood,” the little girl suddenly blurted out, jumping off the mammoth's trunk and enthusiastically jabbering on. “I still don't know how, but I'll definitely stop it. Something there, on my motherland, will give me a hint about how to stop it. I feel it. I feel it ever so strongly. Something will give me a hint, and I'll be able to do it.

“There’s a hint, there, on my motherland. It’s there, but everyone has left. No one thought of the hint. And no there’s no one the hint can hint to. Everyone thought about how to leave, where to go to get away from the cold. But no one wanted to give it some thought together with the hint and think about how to push the glacier aside. And you yourself said it so often at our gatherings, Granddad Wood, that we have to think.”

Wood froze in his tracks. The caravan leader stood still, too, and the others who had been following behind the mammoth also stopped.

The gray-haired head of the family line looked intently at his great-granddaughter, saying nothing.

What Wood did a minute later – he was never able to explain that later, not to himself, and certainly not to the others. He signaled to the people who were walking along the sides of the mammoth caravan to keep moving forward. But to Anasta he said:

“The last one in the caravan is a mammoth that’s limping, the son of the caravan leader. You know him, and he obeys you better than all the others. Take him with you, Anasta, and when it gets very cold, you can follow in our tracks on him and catch up to us.”

“Thank you, Granddad Wood,” the little girl cried joyfully. She grabbed him around the legs, snuggling up against him. “Thank you!”

“How am I supposed to tell your mama and papa, your parents, what you’re up to?”

“I’ll let them know myself once I get back home. There’s no need to say anything right now. Goodbye, Granddad Wood.”

Anasta skipped along off to the last mammoth at the end of the caravan, and Wood followed his great-granddaughter’s receding figure with his glance, as if what was happening hadn’t quite sunk in yet. He continued on his path, and for some time there were no thoughts at all in his head. Only a few hours later did Wood ask himself, “Why did I give my consent? ‘We have to think.’ ‘No one thought about how to stop it.’ No one. She was the only one. Then he said, out loud now, “I did the right thing.”

DUN THE MAMMOTH

The huge mammoth Dun⁹ was walking at the end of the caravan, limping slightly. In his build and his strength, He resembled his father, the leader of the mammoths.

When he was still just a young little mammoth, a boulder fell from the mountain and fractured his leg. The people tied sticks to the animal's leg with ropes so the bone would knit properly. Dun had to spend many days lying on his own. It was at that point that a touching friendship started up between the mammoth, three-year-old Anasta and the kitten the little girl would bring along with her.

Little Anasta would often visit the mammoth as he lay there with the bandaged leg and bring him treats and talk to him tenderly. She'd taught the kitten to chase annoying bugs and flies away from the mammoth lying on the grass, and she'd place the kitten on his hip.

But the main thing she did was to talk to the two of them and instruct them, the way grown-ups instruct their children.

After she'd seated the kitten atop the mammoth, Anasta would stand before them and point at the sky with her finger, direct her gaze upward and utter the words "sky," "clouds" and "sun," and then she'd kneel down and stroke the grass with her hand and tenderly utter the words "the nice green grass" and "the little flower has a scent."

The mammoth and the kitten would intently watch what the little girl did, and after a few days, during which she would regularly repeat her lessons, something astonishing happened. When Anasta uttered the words "sky" and "clouds," the baby mammoth – and then the kitten, too – directed their eyes toward the sky. Upon hearing the word "grass," they glanced at the grass. And upon hearing the words "the little flower has a scent," the kitten hopped to the ground and began sniffing the little flower, the way the little girl had done.

Anasta continued her lessons with the animals even after the mammoth had recovered. The little girl liked telling her four-legged friends about the meaning of each new word she learned from the grown-ups. And the young mammoth and the kitten liked the attention the kind little girl gave them. Like well-disciplined pupils, they would come to Anasta's flower bed at noon. The little girl would usually show up at

⁹ **Translator's note:**

The Russian original is "Дан" (transliterated "Dan" and pronounced "Dahn"). This name, although similar to the Russian name Daniil, also has other layers of meaning, including the root expressing the meaning of something given or granted.

that time, too, and she'd give her charges their next lesson. If she didn't show up for some reason, the four-legged pupils would sit waiting for their friend and teacher for hours at a time or else head off to look for her.

When Anasta turned six, Dun the mammoth, who'd also gotten bigger, was pretty much the same as the grown-ups on the outside, but his behavior differed noticeably from the other mammoths'.

Wood, Anasta's great-grandfather and the head of the family line, was the first to notice that Dun the mammoth could understand human speech. It was the following event that preceded his conclusion.

Wood was sitting in the shade of a broad tree and weaving a wicker basket for berries. Anasta would often spend time with her great-grandfather. She liked to listen to his stories and be part of all he did, and so she was right alongside him this time, too. His chatty great-granddaughter was quickly and animatedly telling him her thoughts on collecting berries, and she told him he had to make the basket pretty, because then the berries collected in it would be tasty.

Right then Wood noticed that Dun the mammoth, who was standing ten steps away from them, was looking intently at Anasta and listening to what she was saying, as if he understood the meaning of the words and the sense of his great-granddaughter's speech. "He must like the intonation of the little girl's voice and the energy coming from her," Wood thought. Noticing that there was almost no water left in the trough where the twigs for weaving the basket were soaking, Wood asked Anasta to fetch a little water from the nearby spring. But his ever-obedient and diligent great-granddaughter didn't rush to fulfill Wood's request. She just turned in the mammoth's direction and quickly told him, "Dun, fetch a little water from the spring." And then, as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened, she continued her animated story about the berries and the basket.

The mammoth slowly turned around and steadily took one step and then another in the direction of the spring. Then Anasta said one more phrase. "Get a move on, Dun." And the huge mammoth began to run.

Wood understood that unlike the other mammoths, Dun wasn't simply carrying out certain commands. Rather, he could understand human speech far better than the other animals – he understood the meaning of the words and, what's more, he understood the meaning of whole sentences.

The mammoth brought a little water in his trunk and, at the little girl's direction, emptied it into the trough with the twigs.

"Thank you," Anasta said, praising the mammoth, and she added, "Don't forget to water our flower garden this evening. But for now, go to the woods and have some lunch. You can see I'm busy." The mammoth answered the little girl with a nod of his head and headed for the woods.

“What are the limits of the animal kingdom’s ability to serve man?” Wood thought. “To what extent can man direct it? Now, people thought up the wheel and everyone was so delighted by the invention and began looking for different ways of using it. But living creatures, who have already been thought up and are far more advanced than the wheel – we’ve stopped studying them entirely. Is our race doing the right thing? Where might man’s ignorance of the capabilities and life’s purpose of the varied nature around him lead?”

That’s what Wood was reflecting on, and these thoughts made his heart uneasy.

DON'T SURRENDER, MOTHERLAND! I'M WITH YOU!

Seeing Anasta running toward him, Dun joyfully bobbed his head, flapped his ears and halted. The huge mammoth stretched his trunk out toward the little girl and lightly touched the little girl's shoulder with its tip. She took hold of the tip of the trunk, pressed her cheek to it and tenderly stroked it. Then she gave the order, "Follow me!" and ran hopping off back in the direction of the family space they had left.

The mammoth hastily turned around and ran after Anasta. When Anasta grew tired, she gestured to the mammoth to stop and scrambled up his trunk and onto his head. When she'd made her way up onto Dan's back, she saw the kitten there, too. He had long since grown into an adult cat, but had still retained his nickname of "Kitten." He started rubbing against the little girl's leg and purring, expressing his joy and devotion.

The three of them made their way to the abandoned family space by late evening. Anasta sent Dun off to pasture, went into her little clay house, made her way in the darkness to her sleeping spot with the aromatic hay, lay down on it and immediately fell asleep.

Anasta was up with the dawn. She ran out of her little home and, blinking and spreading her arms wide, she offered her body up to the tender, warm rays. After taking this sunbath, the little girl ran to the stream and, taking a running jump, went with a splash into the little creek with its clear water.

The cold spring water burned Anasta's body, but she splashed and laughed in delight. Then, after making her way out of the water, hopping and spinning around on the shore, as if she had no idea where to go and how to use the unusual energy that had filled her, she ran up onto a small hill.

A cold wind was blowing. The little girl tied her shawl around her waist and threw its free end over her shoulder. She looked silently at the land where her family line had lived so very recently.

The family space, where once the sounds of the voices of a great many birds and the chirping and buzzing of insects had unceasingly been heard, was now keeping some kind of fateful silence. Here and there the grass shone white from the chill of the night. The trees and bushes in the gardens weren't blooming. Their little leaves were curled, as if in despair.

And the family space, shrouded in the oppressive silence, with its withering but

still living natural diversity, attended to the little girl with incomprehension. And all of a sudden, everything all around shuddered, when... A cry of desperate and confident joy pierced the oppressive silence like a warm ray of light:

“He-e-ey! He-e-e-ey!” Anasta shouted, in defiance of the oppressive silence. “Don’t surrender, Motherland! I am Anasta, Motherland. I am with you.”

She ran down from the hill and dashed to her flower bed, touching the tree trunks with her hands as she ran and stroking the little leaves of the bushes.

“He-e-ey!” she cried out once more, running around the trunk of a big, old apple tree with shriveled leaves.

The little girl’s thin, high and joyful little voice was conquering the silence that had been oppressing the family space. And suddenly another voice joined hers, a powerful, low bass – Dun the mammoth was running from the pasture at Anasta’s cry. Running and trumpeting for all he was worth as he went.

And next to the little girl you could also hear a loud, incessant “Meow, meow” – it was the cat with the nickname “Kitten,” meowing in support of Anasta.

Anasta stopped at the flower bed that she herself tended, the way all the children in the settlement each tended their own flower beds.

The grass on one edge of the flower bed had turned gray, and the flowers had dropped, and only one still unopened bud remained on the little girl’s favorite flower. It was drooping toward the ground as if it had thought the better of blooming. But the sight of the drooping bud didn’t make the little girl sad. She was looking at it and smiling. She wasn’t sad, because she was imagining her favorite flower not drooping, but abloom in all its beauty.

Squatting down before the flower that had been getting ready to wilt, she quietly and tenderly called out to it:

“Hey, little flower, I’m here. Wake up.”

Then she held her index finger in her mouth, then raised it, to determine from which side the cold wind was blowing on the flower. Having determined the direction of the flow of glacial air, she lay down on her side on that side of the flower, in an attempt to block the path of the cold air with her own body. Even so, the cold currents still enveloped the flower’s small body and stung its little leaves, preventing them from straightening up. Suddenly the cold streams of air stopped and Anasta felt the opposite – she felt warmth on her back. She turned – Dun the mammoth had flopped down on his side and shielded Anasta and her entire flower bed from the cold with his own body.

“Good for you, Dun! You smart thing!” Anasta exclaimed.

Latching onto his fur, she scrambled up onto the mammoth's back and, turning to face the wind that was blowing from the direction of the glacier, she joyfully and victoriously shouted out her "He-e-ey!" The cold wind blew even more strongly. Then, after thinking a bit, the little girl turned in the opposite direction and shouted out a summons and waved her arms, as if inviting someone invisible to come. The mammoth raised his trunk up high and trumpeted a summons, too. Kitten began meowing, calling.

The cold wind quieted down, but some time later it started up again, only now it was blowing from the other side, and it was caressing the flower and the mammoth and the little girl and the cat standing on his back with warm currents.

The singing of the few remaining birds greeted the life-giving streams of air.

For several days, Anasta fought against the cold wind blowing from the direction of the glacier; again and again, she would run to her flower as soon as the wind started up. And each time, the mammoth would lie down next to the flower bed, as had become his habit, blocking the cold's path.

Then the day came when the rejuvenated flower bloomed. Running up to the mound of earth, Anasta got down on her knees before the flower and kissed the orangey-red petals, touching them lightly with her lips. Then she took two steps to the side and admired the beautiful miracle and the extraordinary, beautiful creation – her flower.

Since she couldn't stay standing in one spot, due to the exuberant energy that had surged up from somewhere inside her, Anasta at first hopped up and down in place, and then her hops morphed into an unusual, improvised and rousing dance. Even Dun the mammoth was trying to dance along, shifting from one leg to another. Kitten was spinning around, now flopping down on his back, now jumping up again. And the living flower was waving its orangey-red petals at them in the warm breeze.

And then Anasta stopped. She'd caught sight of two youths standing on the mountain.

THE BROTHERS OPPOSITE

Both youths were of the same height and athletic build. In outward appearance, they looked a great deal like each other, differing only in the color of their hair and eyes. One was Light-haired and Blue-eyed, the other Black-eyed and Dark-haired.

The youths stayed where they were for a while, as if giving Anasta the chance to get used to their unexpected appearance. Then, at a leisurely pace, they approached the little girl.

“Hello, little girl!” Dark-haired said, addressing her. “You need to act more quickly, little girl. You sensed intuitively that you will be able to stop the glacier, that you have within you powers capable of changing God’s program. Now, that’s impossible, of course. But you will continue seeking these powers within you. And I will learn more about Man than I currently know. I’m prepared to tell you about the world order and answer any question you might have, little girl. Only you need to act as fast as you can.”

Anasta had no time to answer: the second youth began to speak:

“Hello, Anasta. You’re pretty and sharp, you’re splendid, just like many other marvelous creations on the great planet Earth. My brother knows much about the world order, but you should, I think, listen to yourself above all others.”

Anasta finally managed to greet the youths: “A good day and good, light thoughts to you.”

“Hold on,” Dark-haired said, interrupting Anasta. “That’s just the way it always is. It even makes me sick to hear those idiotic, thoughtless memorized words. There are two of us here. I’m dark, so why do people wish me light thoughts?”

“I’m dark, and my thoughts are dark and hostile. That’s the way I am, and that’s my life’s purpose within God’s program!” Dark-haired was growing more and more angry. “If I’m some kind of light little sniveling fool, a light thinker, then I won’t be me. Poof— and there won’t be anything left of me. You get it, little girl? All that will be left in front of you is one light little simpleton. There are two of us! You get it, little girl? And you shouldn’t only speak about what’s light. Take your thoughts back, if that’s what was behind your words, if your words weren’t just memorized parrot sounds.”

“If my greeting has offended you, then I will change it and will say to you a simple, ‘Hello,’” Anasta replied.

“Now, that’s more like it. ‘Cause otherwise, you and your light...”

“Who are you?” Anasta inquired. “What family line are you from? I’ve never seen you before.”

“Of course, you haven’t. No one has ever seen us. But our manifestations are present in all human doings, in every moment,” the dark youth told her quickly. “Yes, in each and every one. Now, of course, there are more of my manifestations – they are awesome. Almost all of humanity lives from disaster to disaster, dominated by my energies.”

“Stop, my dark and talented brother,” said the light-haired one. “After all, we didn’t even introduce ourselves.” And, turning to the little girl, he went on: “Anastochka, try to understand what I say. Between the two of us, my brother and I make up the two complexes of Universal energies. The entire immense space of the Universe is filled with energy entities. When God created Man, He took an equal amount of energy from each of the entities, brought them into inner balance in some unknown way, and gave them to the person He had created. Out of everything, He created a person with inner balance.

“When this happened, we all understood that Man must emerge as the strongest entity in the Universe. That’s why he’s not called an entity, but Man. But where his strength lies, what his capabilities are and whether they are limited – that is unknown. And *when* it, this strength, will fully manifest – this has, up to the present day, been known to no one in the entire Universe. Not even to us, despite the fact that we and our separate energies are present everywhere. We are always invisible. We always fill up space. We’re present in the water, and in every living wild animal and every little worm. And the energies of the Universe – each and every one of them – exist within each person.”

“You say you’re invisible,” Anasta said, astonished, “but you know, I can see you!”

“Yes, you see us, because we solidified the air, solidified it so as to exhibit the kind of bodies you’re used to. The clouds up there in the sky, for example – you know they’re solidified air vapors, too. You get whimsical shapes when they solidify: sometimes you get ones that look like wild animals, sometimes ones that look like a human face or body. And in many ways the human body is made up of water that’s been solidified to different degrees. It must be the case that the Creator alone knows the meaning and ratios of the various solidifications of the human body. Our bodies resemble human bodies only on the outside. My dark-haired brother represents all the dark entities, while I represent all the light ones.”

“But why did you exhibit this solidification in the form of the human body?” Anasta asked.

“So you wouldn’t be frightened when you heard our voices, so you wouldn’t

expend the energy of your thoughts on trying to guess where the sound was coming from,” Light-haired answered.

“But what did you want to talk with me for?”

“You set out in defiance of the elements, or, to be more precise, in opposition to a planetary disaster. You set out on your own, confident that you’d be able to prevent it. We are certain that this is impossible to do. God’s program includes provisions for a disaster, should mankind follow a ruinous path. That has happened, more than once. And we wouldn’t have paid any attention to your efforts. It’s just that all the Universal entities shuddered when the flower on your mound of earth bloomed. It bloomed, even though according to the Creator’s program, it should have died. But it bloomed.”

“The flower bloomed thanks to the mammoth who shielded it from the cold breeze.”

“The mammoth is but one link in the chain of events that you constructed.”

“I didn’t construct anything.”

“Your thought did the constructing, Anastochka.”

“So does that mean your particles are inside me, too?” Anasta asked thoughtfully. “But I can’t feel them at all.”

“A person doesn’t feel us, especially when he manages to balance our particles within him. When they are in balance, a third energy appears. And this third is found solely in the Universal entity that is Man. It appears when *we* are in complete balance and it, this new energy, is all-powerful. It’s capable of creating new worlds. No secrets exist for it. This kind of person becomes a master of the Universe, a creator, and no one can even imagine his creations. They can be magnificent and unfathomable.”

“Your particles are probably not at all balanced in me, since I can’t stop the glacier,” Anasta said with a sigh. “The flower bloomed, but everything around it in our family space is withering and dying.”

“Anastochka, you are on the path to unity. You can attain it in the next moment or in three millennia. It’s for this reason that the Universal energies will strive to help you, so that they can learn Man’s great secret and their own future fate as well.”

“What you said about the extraordinary power hidden in the unity of the opposites is so interesting. But if you know about this extraordinary power, why don’t the two of you just agree to unite?”

The two brothers exchanged glances and cast their gaze over Anasta’s family space. Then they began looking in different directions. They were slow to answer, as if at that moment they themselves were looking for the right words to explain it. The little girl waited patiently.

Finally Light-haired answered.

WHAT IS YOUR LIFE'S PROGRAM?

“That’s impossible. My brother and I have different tasks,” Light-haired said. “Everybody has his own program. And nonetheless, only in Man can we, by each carrying out our personal program, also work on the overall plan and become particles of the new energy that’s found only in Man.”

“But how in the world can you each work on something different, something opposite, and at the same time contribute to the overall good?” Anasta inquired incredulously.

“We can, by continually outpacing each other by just a little bit. When you start walking, Anastushka, one of your little legs shoots out ahead, leaving the other behind. Then the one that’s lagged behind suddenly shoots out ahead. It’s like the legs are competing against each other. And in the end, together, by complying with the body’s thoughts, they move it forward.”

Dark-haired entered the conversation: “Now that’s some example you gave. You even cracked me up,” he said, interrupting his brother. “If you’re going to imagine us as two little legs, then you’re a really short one, and I’m super long. I take a step, and the body goes right up over mountains, but you just loaf around, pretending to move. I’m leading mankind to a planetary disaster for the fifth time now, as part of carrying out my own program. And if the Creator’s thought regenerates it all over again, it doesn’t matter – Bam! I’ll hit it all over again with a planetary disaster, so it won’t get out of line.”

“Yes, you’re talented, my dear brother. You really have led the life of the whole planet to the brink of a global disaster. But your disasters don’t bring you any discoveries, any new knowledge, and they don’t add to your powers. But they do always give Man new knowledge. And mankind regenerates all over again.”

“But before they do, they perish in hellish agony, along with all their knowledge.”

“You and I, Brother, we don’t know the Creator’s program. Perhaps one day it will happen that mankind will prevent a disaster – an instant before it happens – and at that point an aspiration unknown to you and me will illuminate its thought.”

“I’m sick of your light little dreamiekinses, my light little snotty-nosed brother. You listen to me, little girl, not him,” the dark-haired youth said, addressing Anasta. “I, little girl, will show you all my power in a form you can understand. My light little one there got a thing or two right. Human thought really is a huge energy, equal to mine in

size, and way bigger than his. Each person, if he makes use of this energy properly, really is capable of making the world different.

“But there’s another unseen energy-thought, too – collective thought. That’s when a great many of separate people’s thoughts come together into a unified whole. If all mankind’s thoughts came together into a unified whole and you got a mankind-wide thought – my brother and I would be like ants compared to it.

“But I’ve learned how to prevent collective thought from arising. I’m the one who tosses various philosophical lines of reasoning and concepts out to mankind. And what you end up with is one billion people collectively thinking one way, and another billion thinking a different way, and that way they repudiate the first group. I, little girl, am the incarnation of all the dark powers of the Universe, and if you join forces with me, we will become a force second to none. I have a secret plan. You’ll get what it’s all about, and you’ll help me.

“Together we’ll turn all people into our playthings. We’ll play with their minds. I’ll make you mankind’s mistress, and one day you will tell me...”

“I don’t like that plan,” Anasta replied, and added, “I will never take part in it, and I don’t think any other people would agree, either.”

“You won’t take part? You, little girl, just don’t know yet, what an amusing game it is – making people think what you want them to.

“And don’t be so quick to say that people won’t follow my program. The wheel has already been invented – it’s primitive, so far, but then people will put two wooden wheels together with a pole, and that’s in line with my plan, my ingenious program.”

“But what’s so bad about a wheel? When we had to haul food to the injured mammoth Dun, a little wheeled cart helped us do that.”

“It’s all good, little girl. Just great, even. This wheel will be perfected. A great many wheels will be made. And people will see that it’s difficult to roll a wheel over the natural terrain, across hillocks and pot holes, through tall grass. And then they’ll cover a huge portion of the earth over with a stone shell, so the wheels will be able to roll along it unobstructed.

“And, growing more and more numerous, they will roll along over the groaning earth, carrying some people atop them and ruthlessly crushing others beneath them.

“You, little girl – try to find an answer yourself: what can be more powerful than the power which can send people to their ruin? But you won’t be able to find an answer within you, so go ahead and acknowledge my greatness.”

Anasta pondered the question, but couldn’t find an answer within her. She looked once more at the light-haired youth. In response to the little girl’s silent question, Light-haired replied:

“Anastochka, my brother has painted a sad picture for you. That’s his task, and he’s carrying it out in good conscience. I can see the question in your eyes: do I have a program, too? I do, and I also want to appeal to you to take part in my program.”

“So what does your program want?”

“To try to comprehend the Creator’s great creation: Man. To understand the greatness of His future achievements.”

“But hasn’t everything on Earth already been created?” Anasta asked, astonished.

“The fact of the matter is, Anastochka... You see before you a beautiful blooming flower. Each plant or animal is perfected in and of itself, but at the same time they are all interconnected, too. It seems that the Creator has created a miraculous, harmonious and perfected earthly world. But that doesn’t mean that this world can’t be perfected even more.

“We can view the Creator’s creations as simply the rough material for a more perfected creation: for creating a beautiful and perfected way of life never before seen or imagined by anyone.”

“But who can be more perfect than perfection itself?” Anasta asked in amazement.

“Those who issue forth from it: the Great parent’s son and daughter. For example, you, Anastochka.”

“Me? But I can’t imagine how you could possibly alter what’s already been created. I, for example, have no desire whatsoever to alter the little flower that bloomed in my flower bed, even the tiniest bit. I even think that we *shouldn’t* alter it, not under any circumstances, so that we don’t spoil its perfection. And why alter Kitten? Or how could you perfect, say, Dun the mammoth? By altering his trunk, or his ears? By altering it how? And what for?”

“But see here, Anastochka, you altered Dun the mammoth.”

“No, I never altered him,” she objected in amazement.

“It’s true – you didn’t alter him on the outside, but your mammoth Dun carries out far more human instructions than all the other mammoths who have ever lived on Earth, and Dun’s understanding of what he’s instructed to do is qualitatively different. You’ll see that immediately if you compare him with your other mammoths, the ones that look similar.”

“Yes, now I get it. I think he’s smarter than all the other ones. It’s just that before, I somehow didn’t give it any thought.”

“There, you see? Not only the external form and build are significant. What’s inside and the life’s purpose are more important. And you were the very one who created and determined what’s inside of Dun, and a life’s purpose for him. And Dun the mammoth, who on the outside doesn’t look at all different from other mammoths created by the great Creator, is different nonetheless. Now he is a joint creation – the Creator’s and yours. And we don’t know who he belongs more to. After all, it isn’t only that Dun the mammoth can carry out a larger number of commands that are essential in every day human life. He’s grown more intelligent, loyal and responsive. Do you recall how one day you fell asleep on the dry grass beneath a tall, tall tree, and when you woke up, you saw Dun the mammoth standing above you, not moving a muscle? You got angry – there was some really unpleasant smell coming from him, as if he’d gotten smeared with some foul thing and had come on purpose to disturb your sleep with this unpleasant smell. You got up and set off walking toward your home across the wet grass, but before you did, you said to Dun the mammoth in a dissatisfied tone, ‘Dun, you’re forever straggling off from the herd. Now you’ve started coming here of your own accord, even when no one’s calling you. Go on off to your pasture, to your brothers.’

“You went away, walking barefoot through the wet grass, without looking back even once. Anastochka, do you remember that the grass was wet?”

“Yes.”

“And do you know why Dun the mammoth smelled so unpleasant?”

“No.”

“When you fell asleep, a thunderstorm began. Not only people, but animals, too, know that lightning most often strikes tall trees. Dun saw you fall asleep, and when the thunderstorm began, he got all agitated and came over to you, leaving his herd. He didn’t wake you up. He just stood over you, shielding you from the rain. Some lightning hit the tree you were sleeping under. One branch caught fire and began to fall. It would have fallen on you, but Dun the mammoth managed to cast it aside with his trunk. Then a second branch caught fire, and Dun cast that one off, too, but not before the fire had scorched the fur on the mammoth’s head, and it began to smolder, giving off an unpleasant smell. The scorched spot was unbearably painful, but Dun stood above you without moving a muscle, while you slept. And when you left after rebuking him for being a pest, he couldn’t even bring himself to take offense, and he forgot about the pain. He was overjoyed that you hadn’t been harmed, and later, when tending to his burn, he thought of you with tenderness.”

Anasta jumped to her feet and ran to the mammoth, who was standing a short distance away. He nodded joyfully. Anasta took hold of the tip of his trunk, patted it with her hand, pressed her cheek to it then kissed it. The mammoth froze. He kept standing that way, motionlessly, his eyes scrunched up, even after the little girl had walked away from him and gone back to the light-haired youth.

“I get it,” Anasta said to Light-haired. “Dun the mammoth has been remodeled. Maybe it happened all on its own, or maybe I helped him in some way. He *does* differ from the mammoths who were just created by the Creator.

“Does that mean Man’s been given that right – the right to remodel?”

“Yes, he’s been given that,” Light-haired answered. “So now think about this: in accordance with which program?”

“In accordance with the good one.”

“So go ahead and define it. Choose. Create.”

“Do you mean that the One who created everything on Earth didn’t create any one program that Man has to live by?”

“I think that He presented Man with a great many options to choose from, but that He himself dreamt only of one thing.”

“What?”

“Only Man can find an answer to that.”

“But where should we look for it?”

“Inside you. By mentally imagining, analyzing and comparing various options for arranging life on Earth.”

“Do you mean people live on Earth, but know nothing of the Creator’s program?”

“People have been given great knowledge about using biological resources for development, but people possess various types of freedom, including the freedom to replace biological resources with technocratic ones. It’s up to them to decide whether to use their inner resources deep down inside them – those, say, of a living tree that grows and senses biological rhythms and, by adjusting to them, regulates its own state depending on the surrounding conditions – or the exterior, superficial resources of a dead tree. When people step onto the technocratic path of development, they use the superficial resources – they fashion this or that implement out of wood and use it for fuel or for building material.

“For some reason, people always choose the technocratic path. But it inevitably leads them to disaster. That’s happened more than once. After all, all planetary disasters are created by people’s thoughts. Thoughts that are followed by actions.”

“But the glacier that forced my family line to leave its home – no people created that.”

“Your family line, Anastochka, has already set foot on the technocratic path.

And in accordance with the program of life, the glacier will overtake it and bring it to ruin. But life will rise anew. A new hope for human intelligence will appear. If someone stops the glacier, and only a person can do that, your family line will live in a technocratic world. And sooner or later the technocratic path will all the same lead it to disaster. True, if a person finds a way to stop the glacier – meaning, a way to avert one disaster – then in all likelihood, he'll be able to avert the one after it, too. A short while before the next one, he'll be able to illuminate people's souls with an understanding of where they went wrong in their choices, and avert the disaster. Then mankind will be able to choose a new path and gradually and carefully dismantle his lethal inventions. But illuminating the souls of people of the technocratic world is an uphill battle.

“During a technocratic period of life, people cease to be intelligent beings. It's necessary to appeal not to their minds, but to their feelings and, through their feelings, to inform them about the essence of the Divine program, and in order to do this, one has to sense and comprehend it for oneself.”

“But haven't you already comprehended it?”

“Not entirely. Really, I think it's impossible to completely grasp it in the way that one can completely comprehend my brother's programs. It's impossible to completely comprehend it. Completion is cessation of motion. In addition, I see no limit to how much you can perfect, say, your mammoth.”

“What about other wild animals?”

“Others, too. You know full well, Anastochka, that all animal offspring adopt their parents' habits and skills. That means that each new generation will be a bit more perfected than the previous one, and if Man correctly determines all wild animals' life purposes, if each subsequent generation continues perfecting the animal world around it – a world that will free man from all every day concerns – then in the very same way, human thought will be freed up for more important achievements.”

“That probably is what can happen, if you're speaking about wild animals. But now, I wouldn't ever take it into my head to try to perfect the little flower – it's very, very perfected.”

“I think so, too, Anastochka. Even so, your beautiful little flower is but the paint that the Creator has presented to his daughter for her future creations.”

“But why paint? After all, the little flower is a living thing.”

“Yes, certainly, it's a living thing and self-contained, and at the same time it can be no more than a tiny particle of the living picture that is great in its beauty.

“Take a look at your flower bed. What looks most beautiful in it is your favorite flower. But if you plant two or three more of the very same flower in it, the way the flower bed looks will change. Then you can plant other pretty flowers, ones that don't

look like these, and the way the flower bed looks will change once again.

“Then you can perfect the living picture by arranging the various flowers in a different order. There’s no limit to the perfection. It is in accordance with the Creator’s program to move toward it.”

“Does that mean that Man was created in order to make everything around him lovelier and lovelier? In order to perfect the world the Creator gave him? Is that Man’s main life’s purpose?”

“To create glorious living pictures, to comprehend and perfect the animal world – of course, that is an important life’s purpose for Man. But I see the main one as something different.”

“As what?”

“As Man perfects the Divine world order, he himself will necessarily become more and more perfected, and there is no limit to be seen to this phenomenon. Great resources will open up before him.”

“But why will he be more perfected? I mean, no one’s going to be instructing Man while all this is going on.”

“You, Anastochka, created a lovely flower bed and your experience helped you understand how to do that. You’ll try to make your creation next year even better. And you’ll do so, using your previous experience and feelings. That means that by creating the first time, you gained experience, knowledge and sensations that enable you to create something more perfected. And that means that your creation itself is instructing you.

“Creation in divine, living nature perfects the creator.

“And there is no end in sight to the heights such great creation can reach– there is eternity.”

“I really want to live in a marvelous world like that, where everything can be perfected eternally, where the creator will perfect his creations and the creations will perfect their creator. I want my papa and mama, my brothers and Grandfather Wood and our entire family line to live in that world.” Anasta smiled, and her eyes shone. “I must stop the glacier. How do I do it? How?”

“Human thought is the most powerful energy of the Universe. There is no limit to its potential. It’s important to learn to use it properly. But how to do this, using what means – that is unknown. Only Man has the power to make this great discovery.”

“Most likely, my thought is still quite small and not powerful,” Anasta said sadly, sighing. “I want the glacier to stop, but it’s coming closer and closer, and it’s growing colder and colder every day. That means my thought is small.

“If Dun the mammoth knew how to think about the glacier... He has a big head, and that means the thought in it might be big and powerful.”

Anasta ran up to the mammoth and, slapping her palm against the trunk he extended to her in greeting, she said, excited:

“You’re so big, Dun, and you have a big head. That means it might contain a big thought. Think your thought, Dun. Stop the glacier. Because otherwise all you do is listen and listen. At the very least, take a walk over to the pasture, Dun – there’s less and less food for you all the time there.”

Dun the mammoth stroked the little girl’s cheek and hair with the tip of his trunk, slowly turned around and began walking off. The cat nicknamed Kitten took a running start, sprang onto the mammoth’s leg and, latching onto his fur, scrambled up onto his back.

“Anastochka, it’s time for you and your charges to flee this place,” the light-haired youth said, addressing the little girl. “There’s already ice on the other side of that mountain there. That isn’t even the main glacier yet, but even it can move the mountain that covers the valley, and carry away the gardens and homes where your family line lived. And it’s causing the temperature to fall with every day. The main glacier will press against this ice and the mountain will slowly begin moving. This will happen a few days from now.”

“I will not flee this place. I have to see it, this ice, and understand why it’s advancing onto our Land. I have to think up a way to stop the glacier. Tomorrow morning I’ll go up on that mountain and I’ll see it.”

Bowing to the little girl and taking his leave of her, the light-haired youth said, “I wish you auspicious and sharp thoughts, Anastochka.” And he addressed his brother, saying, “Let us go, Brother, and remove ourselves from the little girl’s sight. Let’s not bother her. Perhaps she’ll be able to understand and will learn how to control her thought.”

“Come on then, let’s go. Of the two of us, you’re the main hindrance. You got all carried away here, philosophizing and going on and on.”

“Oh, wait! Please wait!” Anasta suddenly said, starting. “Each of you told about his program. That means I must also have a program, but I’ve never ever thought about it. Could it be I don’t have one in me?”

“We’re getting out of your sight, little girl. You get busy thinking. Don’t slack off. You’ve hardly got any time at all left, only two sunrises,” said Dark-haired, without answering the question.

And the youths left.

WHO CONTROLS OUR THOUGHTS?

Anasta was left totally alone. Slowly, she set off walking along the wilted grass of the valley where her family line had so very recently lived, and in the absolute silence that had fallen, she tried to comprehend how she could control her own thought.

If thought was the strongest energy, the little girl reflected, then what could possibly control it, this strongest thing? If this energy-thought exists within me, then what within me could be stronger than it? And why did the most wise elders teach us everything at the gatherings, but say nothing about how you can control your thought? Perhaps they didn't know anything about this either?

The strongest energy remains uncontrolled. First it heads off in one direction, then in another. Even though it's inside me, all the same it's also not mine, if I don't control it in any way. And maybe someone will manage to lure it over to them and play with it, and since it's inside me, then they're playing some kind of game with me, too, but I won't even know about it.

All the way up until dusk, Anasta made efforts to reflect on the power of thought. And when she lay down to sleep, she made an intense effort to think about it.

When she woke up in the morning, Anasta did not see Dun the mammoth next to her little home the way she usually did. He used to always be right there as soon as she woke up, but now he wasn't there. Dun still hadn't shown up by the time Anasta had bathed in the creek, either. She began calling him, shouting in the direction of the pasture, "Dun! Dun!" But, just as before, he didn't show up. Kitten hadn't been next to her that night, either, and he also didn't show up in the morning.

Anasta realized they had left. A mammoth needs a lot of vegetation to eat, and there was less and less of it all the time. That meant Dun had left so he wouldn't die a senseless death, from starvation. And Kitten had gone off with him, too. "But I won't leave," Anasta thought. Tossing a coverlet woven from grass bast around her little shoulders, she resolutely set off for the mountain beyond which the glacier was advancing on the world. Wending her way up the path toward the mountaintop, Anasta once again made an intense effort to comprehend how this strongest energy – human thought – worked. What did she need to do in order to stop the glacier?

When she'd reached the mountaintop, she stood on its peak, wrapping herself in her shawl in the wind. Harsh, bitterly cold air currents tousled her hair, now uncovering the star-shaped birthmark on her forehead, now covering it over again. But the little girl didn't notice the cold air currents. She was taking in what was going on down below, on the far side of the mountain, whose foothills no longer sported any verdure. From

horizon to horizon, as far as the eye could see, there lay ice.

Blocks of ice were heading for the mountain. They were huge, and this wasn't even the main glacier, but merely the first ice cakes that the more powerful ones were pushing along. That meant the mountain didn't stand a chance against the giant masses, Anasta was thinking.

One side of the mountain had already grown cold, and there was no vegetation on it, and the second one would grow cold as well. As if confirming her words, the sound of cracking ice was heard, and a stream of water mixed with ice chips rushed out from beneath the ice, and the ice blocks traveled along the slush, coming closer and closer to the mountain, plowing up the earth before them and pushing along the felled trees.

Anasta directed her gaze to the tallest block of ice and started at what she saw. There stood Dun the mammoth, his head pressed against this giant mountain of ice. Alongside the giant mass of ice, he no longer seemed so big.

Anasta instantly recalled how attentively Dun had listened to her words about the power of thought that is capable of a great deal. She recalled telling him that probably there must be big and powerful thoughts in his big head. And he had understood all of that in his own way. He'd figured that if he were to put his big head with its big thought up against the ice block, then he'd be able to stop it from moving.

Anasta raced from her spot and ran headlong along the path to the foothill of the mountain, to the spot where Dun the mammoth was standing.

The wind, with its biting snowflakes, tore off the little girl's scarf in a violent gust, but she didn't pick it up. She jumped forward onto a rock, stumbled and rolled down, head over heels. And then she got up once more and set off running.

When she'd gotten to Dun's legs, she saw... A small depression had formed in the ice, beneath the mammoth's head. The ice there had melted a tiny bit, and water was running down the mammoth's trunk in thin streams.

The mammoth was trembling from the cold. And down below, at his feet, Anasta saw that Kitten was trembling from the cold. He, his head pressed against the ice like Dun, was attempting to hold back the glacier's movement.

"He-e-ey," Anasta shouted. "He-e-ey!"

But neither the mammoth nor the cat responded to her shout. The little girl scooped up Kitten, who was trembling from the cold, and, cuddling him, began rubbing his little body. When he'd gotten warmed up a little, Anasta made him scramble up on the mammoth's back. Kitten tried with all his strength to do it, but he fell. He was only able to make it up on top on his second attempt.

Anasta stood up on the rock so she'd be as close as possible to the mammoth's

ear, and she whispered to him:

“Dun! My faithful Dun. You are very smart and loyal. You are kind. You know how to think – maybe not entirely correctly, but we’ll fix that. Thought isn’t just in the head – it’s everywhere. Dun, you should go to the other side of the mountain.” The mammoth stood there without moving. Only now and then a shudder would run through his body. And Anasta began whispering once more: “I am Anasta! Do you hear me, Dun? I am Anasta. I won’t leave here without you. Turn and look at me, Dun.”

Dun the mammoth slowly pulled his head back from the block and turned it to the little girl. The thick fur on his forehead was wet, and he had a hard time raising his eyelids and looking at the little girl. Then, he made an effort and raised his trunk and touched its tip to Anasta’s shoulder. His trunk was totally cold. Anasta took it in her hands began rubbing it and blowing on it, as if by doing so she could warm the mammoth’s huge body. And she did actually warm it, not only with the warmth of her breath, but with something warmer and more meaningful as well. And the mammoth obeyed and followed Anasta, who led him by his trunk, as if she were leading him by the hand. Barely putting one foot in front of the other, Dun ascended to the mountaintop. There the exhausted little girl sat down on the trunk of a fallen tree and, pointing to a slope that still remained green, ordered the mammoth to make his way down.

“Dun, go down there. Go to your pasture. You’ll rest up there and get your strength back. And you’ll find some food for yourself there, too.” And she added, sternly, “Go, Dun, go down there.”

The mammoth obeyed and began slowly making his way down along the path to the still green valley. When he’d taken ten or so steps, he turned to Anasta, extended his trunk upward and trumpeted out a summons, the way he’d done when Anasta had run through the valley, asking her Motherland not to give in to the glacier, when she had shouted out her “He-e-ey!” and conquered the silence.

And just like she’d done then, Anasta summoned her strength and shouted out, “He-e-ey!” and waved to Dun as a sendoff for him on his downhill path. And Dun the mammoth made his way slowly down off the mountain, carrying out his mistress’ order. But she...

After a brief rest, Anasta stood up atop the rock and once again cast her gaze over the giant ice masses that had filled the space before her as far as the eye could see, and quietly, but confidently, she uttered the words:

“I am a person! My thought is powerful. I am directing my thought against you, glacier. You must stop and crawl back where you came from. With my thought I command you to do so.”

Down below, the sound of a crack was heard once more, and the ice moved a tiny bit closer to the mountain. A gust of cold air hit the little girl in the chest, as if

trying to knock her off her feet.

“Go back, ice! I command you! Back!” Once again a crack, and once again the glacier advanced toward the little girl.

Anasta said nothing for a short time, gazing at the advancing glacier, and suddenly she smiled.

“I get it. You are feeding on my thought, glacier. I get it. But now you will cease to exist.”

Anasta turned her back on the glacier, sat down on a tree trunk and began looking at her still green valley. But Anasta did not see flowers and grasses that were withering from the cold. Rather, she was imagining the meadows blooming in vibrant color, imagining that snow-white and pink flowers were coming out on the trees, that birds were singing and grasshoppers were chirring in the grass. Imagining Great-grandfather Wood returning to the valley and the entire family line returning along with him. And Anasta was running toward him barefoot through the grass. More and more quickly all the time...

Anasta's thought was speeding up more and more. She had enough time! In the space of a moment, she tenderly stroked a billion blades of grass. And she was able to imagine each one separately, from its root up to its little stem. She was able to send a little ray of sun to each one. Give each one a little drop of rain to drink and caress it with a breeze.

Anasta fell asleep on the rocks near the trunk of a fallen tree. A cold wind blew against her back. But even as the little girl was falling asleep, her thought was at work and speeding up more and more.

Hurling lightning bolts coming from her thought touched everything in the space. Creation awoke. And the new was born in the space, as if Anasta's entire Motherland had risen from a deep sleep. The thought kept working, even when the little girl Anasta fell into a sleep that would last thousands of years.

Her thought – the great human energy – lingered above the valley, caressing the bugs and the blades of grass, Kitten and Dun the mammoth.

The ice blocks shuddered and cracked, but they could move forward any further, not even a millimeter. They were melting. Streams of melted ice skirted the valley and flowed into rivers and lakes.

The glacier was melting, powerless to overcome human thought, the strongest energy of the Universe.

WHAT WILL THESE PEOPLE COME TO?

Torrents of water from the melting glacier formed a large river. Its raging current swept up rocks and fallen trees as it went. It washed off and carried away the fertile topsoil, along with the vegetation and everything living in it. But the family valley that people had been forced to abandon was left untouched by the fearsome stream.

The foliage on the trees in the valley yellowed and fell off, and there was no singing of birds to be heard. But some number of the plants continued fighting for their lives, adapting to the cooling that was unusual for these parts. And, amazingly enough, Anasta's favorite flower still remained in her once very lovely flower bed.

The valley was shielded by the ridge of mountains, atop one of which the little girl Anasta had fallen into a sleep that would last thousands of years.

Two athletic youths, one light-haired and one dark-haired, stood at the foot of the mountain. They were looking at a huge block of granite that extended out over the ground. Drops of water were forcing their way along both sides.

The dark-haired youth spoke with joyful Schadenfreude:

“That's what they get, these people who've lost their sense. Little by little, some time in the next two days, the water will gradually wash away the support around the rock, and it will collapse, opening up a path for the death-dealing torrent to make its way into the valley. The water will rush like a powerful waterfall, tearing off and carrying the mountain rocks away with it, and little by little it will erode the entire mountain and carry it away. Once the torrent that's coming in on the right of the mountain has thrown this giant rock aside, it will rush into the crevice that forms, making it larger and larger, and it will change direction.”

“Yes, if this block collapses in the next two days, before the torrent reaches the sloping lands beyond the valley and floods it, thereby lessening the water pressure, then it will rush with all its strength into Anastochka's family valley,” the light-haired youth agreed. And he added, “Now I regret having taken form in a human body. Right now we need an animal with a powerful body, to prop up this block.”

“Ha, ha, he regrets he's not a powerful animal! Sure, you could have adopted its appearance, but then you would have had to resemble it, too. You wouldn't have been able to speak like a human and realize that the block will soon be carried away by the torrent.

“Yep, what are you jabbering on and on about, with your 'family valley' and

your ‘Anastochka’ ... It’s all the same to her now. Her Soul is soaring in the immense Universe.”

“Soaring. Yes...” Light-haired said, thoughtfully and tenderly. “The thought has been carefully preserved in it, and the dream. Awareness, great knowledge. All the same, she really did manage to stop the glacier. The Daughter of God grasped the power of human thought through her feelings. She altered God’s plan a tiny bit.”

“Exactly – a tiny bit! And how much slobbery tenderness is there in your words? Just a tiny bit, I might add. A tiny bit. And you? ‘She grasped it through her feelings’ and ‘Daughter of God’...” Dark-haired said, mockingly mimicking him. Speaking with abandon, he went on. “The raging torrent will rush into the valley anyway. It’s rushing after the crowd of idiots who don’t even suspect that they themselves – and their thoughts and actions that drew them away from the natural and toward the artificial – are the cause of the disaster. For now, their aspirations are still in the beginning stages, but we know how destructive these aspirations are for them, and for the Earth and for the whole Universe. And so that they don’t suffer, and so that they don’t tear the surface of the Earth to bits, they will be destroyed – in accord with God’s program – at the very beginning stages of the disastrous aspiration. The raging torrent will overcome them. A huge, roaring tidal wave of water, rocks, fallen tree trunks and corpses of the formerly living will make its way unforgivingly toward them.

“At first, when they hear the rumbling behind them, they’ll feel something is wrong and pick up their pace. But the rumbling will grow, and off in the distance they’ll see a huge wall moving toward them, bringing death. For them it will signify the Flood. They will all be gripped by terror – their mammoth-elephants, their kittens, their children and their old folk. And their Souls will fly up into the Universe, retaining within them only the horrors.”

With a kind of venomous passion Dark-haired began using facial expressions and gestures to portray these people who had been gripped by terror. Mothers, pressing their infants to their breast, people who had knelt down with their hands stretched out to the heavens, feverishly praying for mercy. Others, running with their last ounce of strength and shouting. Dark-haired began running around in a circle, wailing, showing terror on his face. Then he stopped, glancing in the direction of the people who were leaving, and said:

“My pale-faced brother, do you get it? Do you get what kind of unavoidable destiny will overcome these people? And so, that little girlie, asleep on the mountain, didn’t change God’s program in any substantial way.”

“The way you’ve modeled the human future is not to my liking, Brother. We, Universal entities, can probably take some action. It’s not our business to remain indifferent. When we’re indifferent, then we do not exist.”

“What does the future care about your ‘to my liking’, ‘not to my liking’, if it’s unavoidable?” Dark-haired sneered.

Without waiting to hear his brother's answer, he turned sharply and saw... His light-haired brother had gone to stand beneath the granite block and all on his own, with his shoulders and arms, propped it up. The stream of water flowing along the edges of the block became significantly smaller.

“Idiotic, senseless and irrational,” Dark-haired said after a brief pause. Then he was silent a bit longer, as if deliberating about something, and then he began shaming his brother with new-found strength, attempting to prove the senselessness of his actions: “There's no one here, and thus, there's no one to laugh at your total idiocy. Before you went to stand under that granite block, you didn't even take the time to calculate how much it weighs. The water's still oozing through, and the supports holding the granite up are eroding, and that means more and more weight will be pressing down on you. Do you understand that, you pale-faced idiot?”

“By force of my will, I will condense to the density of the granite, and I'll be able to hold my ground. I only need hold out for two days. I'll hold out!” said the light-haired athlete.

“Right! ‘I'll hold out,’ ‘I'll condense,’ ... Well, go on, then, condense away, to the density of the granite. But what's your load-bearing surface area? Your load-bearing surface area is the size of the soles of your two feet. And along toward the middle of the second day, the whole burden will come to rest upon you, and you'll sink into the ground like some kind of granite stake, shoving the smaller rubble off to the sides. As soon as you sink in up to your knees, the torrent of water will shove the block aside.”

“I'll straighten my arms out. Then I'll be able to hold out half a day more.”

“Yes, of course, you'll hold out. Only not for half a day. You'll hold out, maybe for an hour more, you clueless blockhead. Then there'll be a landslide. For all of eternity, since the moment of creation, never once has God's program experienced a glitch. And I am in agreement with it. Given that mankind is stepping onto an absurd path of development, it's better to put them down at the beginning of their path. Maybe a new civilization on Earth will comprehend its life's purpose and then *we'll* comprehend. The Universe will see new deeds, not today's primitivism. Numerous times, the earth has experienced disasters that have washed away the filth that Man accumulated.

“Who is it you want to save? Mankind, which with its very own hands will, in the future, create a living hell for itself and everything living on Earth? Do I need to remind you where the technocratic path will drag them off to in the future? Should I remind you? Why don't you say something? Ah, excellent! You're condensing and petrifying. Are you already having a hard time talking? Don't talk, then. Excellent! Stand there like a stone idol and look. Look at the pictures of the future life of the people you're trying to save. I've always admired them. There's the most unenlightened folly, absurdity and vanity in them. But you don't like looking at them,

these pictures. Go on and look now, my pale-faced, petrifying, motionless one. Look! But no, first listen and hear what you don't want to hear.

“If those who have left the valley aren't destroyed, they'll follow their technocratic path. They'll multiply, and from one generation to the next, they'll break, destroy and remold the great earthly harmony. And they'll kill animals. Animals who are meant to serve them. They'll construct a multitude of various soulless devices out of completely living material. They'll start referring to their actions using the resonant words 'industrialization,' 'scientific and technical progress,' and they'll invest these words with the implication of intelligent development.

“Well, and what kind of development? Do they possess rationality? Are they developing in a rational way? Like crazy folk, they will destroy unsurpassed creations and call their own barbaric actions 'progress.' They are ill! A virus has taken up residence in their minds. And the epidemic will smite all of mankind. This virus is more terrible than the complete annihilation of everything on earth. It threatens the entire Universe. It is called... Have you already guess what word I'm going to utter now? More than once you've beseeched me not to repeat it and have turned away from me and hurried to walk off, away from me, but now you won't turn away, you won't walk off. What will strike this whole human civilization is... anti-rationality.

“Struck by this anti-rationality, mankind will enter into the virus' dimension. It will begin performing deeds unsurpassed in their idiocy and villainy, cloaking them in the words 'progress,' 'advanced,' 'moral,' 'lovely,' 'rational,' and 'spiritual' when they speak to each other. Now that's some kind of development, right?

“No, I can't get by without a visual here! Now, take a look.”

The dark-haired youth traced a square in the air with his hand, and a hologram immediately appeared inside it.

The hologram showed a twelve-story building being built. Two cranes were raising building materials up to the already complete stories. People in orange hardhats and blue coveralls who were busy doing the finishing work on the dwellings could be seen through the window openings.

The dark-haired youth commented:

“This incomprehensible thing here with a great number of cells – they're going to call that a 'home.' Anti-rationality is turning people into anti-people. They have distorted the concept and the meaning behind the words 'my home.'

“They've replaced the home – a living space formed by a person's thought, and reflecting his thought capacity – with an artificial, stone cell. And they've called it a 'home,' as some kind of travesty of Rationality. The Universe is not in need of their limited thought. It is becoming a breeding ground for anti-rationality and develops and strengthens its might. And this breeding ground is growing larger and larger.”

The hologram stretched out from horizon to horizon, showing the building of a multitude of little boxes with artificial, stone cells. Some of them were collapsing, but the people in the orange hardhats were erecting new, even taller stone structures with a multitude of cells in their place.

Dark-haired continued:

“To gain the right to live in these cells, they will have to perform deeds that aren’t proper for a rational being – Man! Children of God! Goddesses! Take a look, my pale-faced brother, take a look at these deeds.”

The dark-haired youth waved his hand once more, and a square with a hologram appeared once again. This time it showed a huge grocery store. A great many people were gathering all manner of items to purchase, placing them into metal baskets and walking up to one of the cash registers arranged in a row, to pay for the goods they’d chosen.

“These are the beings from the stone cells. Every day they engage in various deeds that are worthless in terms of rationality, and they call their deeds ‘work.’ For their work they receive slips of paper that they call ‘money.’ Here you see them exchanging the money they’ve received for food.

“In the beginning, God created everything so that all a rational person had to do was stretch out his hand and take the Divine creation that was to his liking and enjoy consuming it, thereby increasing the energy inside him and satisfying his body. But these beings have altered their way of life so much that there’s none of God’s food around them. The food they acquire in exchange for the slips of paper does not possess Divine energy. The beings who have created this way of life cannot be called rational. Their way of life is the result of anti-rationality.”

The picture in the square changed, and now it was showing a close-up of a female cashier. One after another, people would come up to her cash register and lay out this or that kind of packages, boxes, cans and bottles on a little table in front of the woman. Smiling, the woman would say, “Hello,” to each of them. She’d take the packages, pass them over some kind of little pane of glass, after which numerals representing the product’s price would light up on the cash register. The cashier would take some money from the person and say to him, smiling again, “Thank you for your purchase. Come visit us again.”

And now there was a close-up in the square, showing the woman’s face at the moment when she turned away from the people who were standing in line and bent down to the floor to pick up a bag that had fallen. She turned away from the people standing before her for only a few seconds, and some kind of sad and doomed expression appeared on her face. Her eyelids began to close a bit, betraying an incredible weariness. The woman picked the bag up with one hand and pressed the other to her side, wincing in pain. All of this lasted just a very short time. When she turned back to the people, there was a smile on her face once more, and once more she

said to each one, “Hello. Thank you for your purchase. Come visit us again.”

The dark-haired youth commented:

“You see, my brother? Before you is a being you call a goddess. She sits behind a register made up of a multitude of little screws and circuits, and she herself is less perfected than those little screws. The register has no soul and no rationality. It just acts in accord with its prescribed program. Now this being sits behind it twelve hours a day, tapping away at its keys and saying thank you to every person. What’s this being thanking each person who comes up for? For nothing – it is simply a robot. It should have rationality, but it sits and taps away at the keys of some register for twelve hours at a time. It will do that for half of its life, so that it can finally end up in a stone cell.

“Rationality wouldn’t have allowed something like that to take place, so that means that the anti-rationality virus is at work in her, that this woman is not a person, but an anti-person, and that she is located in the dimension of anti-rationality. Her internal organs have been petrified, she does not receive normal food, and the blood in her veins is solidifying and stagnating because she has to sit for twelve hours at a time. She looks older than her years. Look! This is the way she should look at her age, if she were in the dimension of Rationality, if she were a person. Now I’ll show her in the natural dimension at this same time. Look!”

A new hologram in the square showed a slender, blond beauty running along the side of a brook toward a naked little boy, her son. The beauty ran up to him, scooped him up in her arms and spun around, bursting into happy laughter.

The two women, living in different dimensions bore little resemblance to each other.

The supermarket cashier sitting at the register appeared in the square once more.

“This is just one little isolated instance,” Dark-haired said. “Would you say it’s totally uncharacteristic of all mankind? Take a look.”

Next he spread his arms out, and the picture in the square spread out from horizon to horizon, and a picture appeared: hundreds of thousands of people were sitting behind various registers in tightly packed rows, tapping away at the keys. They were varied, these people. Very young girls and elderly women, and there were some men, too. Then a picture appeared in space – hundreds of thousands of hands were tapping away incessantly at the registers’ keys. In the corner of the boundless screen the sun appeared, then the moon replaced it, then the sun appeared again, replacing a half moon. The daytime and nighttime luminaries measured off the days and months and years, like a clock. But the people who had filled the entire space from horizon to horizon, kept on tapping away at the keys of their registers, repeating, as if they were robots, “Hello, thank you for your purchase. Come visit us again.”

“Look, my brother. Take a look. Now it will get even more interesting. Take a

look at mankind's future.”

A hologram appeared in space, showing a close up of a person running with a sword in his hands, his face distorted by rage. It was replaced by a picture of a person lying on the ground in the mud, spraying machine gun fire. Then three people appeared who were shooting a cannon. And the entire space suddenly filled up with a multitude of people. They were shown as very tiny, so that more of them would fit into the space. With swords, pitchforks, scythes, machine guns and cannons, the people were cutting each other down and shooting at each other. They were strangling each other with their hands and kicking them with their feet. From up above, flying machines were dropping objects down onto the ground that was teeming with a mass of people. Upon reaching the ground, the objects would explode, sending up clumps of mud and the remains of human bodies.

“Did rational beings create this mess, my brother? And they're anti-rational because they've taken into their heads to justify this, too. They'll call this mess 'war.' They'll give various decorations to those who excel in this slaughter, and the ones who receive these medals will proudly wear them on their chest. They'll learn to pass laws that justify this slaughter that will go on for centuries without ceasing.”

Dark-haired waved his hands once more, and a hologram appeared in the space once more, divided into a great many squares. Each square showed the interior of various halls where people were sitting and listening to people speaking from rostrums.

“They have different names for this: a Congress, Parliament, Duma, or a House, but they're all essentially the same thing.

“Do you see the people sitting their, my brother? You can still see, so take a look. The people sitting before you are writing laws for various peoples and, if you lump them all together, for all mankind. They've been writing them for millennia, but there are no perfected laws – nor can there be. Do you get that, my brother? Of course, you get it!”

Dark-haired roared with laughter. His spiteful laughter filled the valley, and its echo bounced off the ridge of mountain. He stopped laughing and, turning to the pictures with the people sitting in them, shouted, as if they could hear and understand him:

“You'll never be able to write perfected laws because you don't know the most important thing. You don't know the life's purpose of each separate man and of mankind as a whole. This life's purpose – the Universal life's purpose – has been expressed in just four words. It is the foundation of all laws. It and only it, can string all the Earth's laws onto itself, like beads onto a thread, or repulse them. But you don't know what it is – you've forgotten it.

“Do you get it, my brother? They've forgotten the most important thing, and

now they're in the dimension of anti-rationality. They've forgotten that their life's purpose has been laid out in four words. What words are those? Do you want me to utter them, my brother? You do! Of course you do, very much. You're always uttering them, in the hope that they'll hear you and understand. You utter them, but they don't hear. They don't hear because they're located in the dimension of anti-rationality, and if I utter them, if you and I utter them together, they'll hear. They'll start to take action, and they'll become people. But I won't utter them.

“Let them deliberate until the next worldwide disaster, which will be unprecedented in scale and strength. It will approach inexorably, and they will be powerless to use their laws to stop it from approaching. These beings know of the approaching disaster. They even know why it will occur, and they can't manage to change their way of life. They can't manage at all. If you look at them, they still resemble people, but only on the outside. They themselves – just think about it, my brother – for centuries, they themselves have been inventing various mechanical substitutes for human capabilities. Just look what they're turning into.”

A hologram appeared in space. The right side showed the handsome, well-proportioned body of a youth, clad only in a loincloth, while the left side showed a girl in a short little grass skirt. Between them was a circle filled with a great many small, multicolored circles.

“In the circle I'm showing the capabilities with which each man was endowed inherently. They were capable of much...”

Night replaced day in the hologram. The young man glanced up at the heavens and said, “Today in the heavens above me, nine billion, eighty two stars can be seen.” “My love,” the girl said, replying to the youth, “right now in the heavens above you, nine billion eighty three stars can be seen. There's one you didn't notice. It's not at all bright. I will wait for you on it. We will create a space of love on it, and it will begin to shine with a bright blue light. For the time being, our star is barely noticeable.”

“Yes, they were capable of much,” Dark-haired commented. “Their initial capabilities enabled them to create everything you can imagine. And even things you can't. But once they start inventing mechanical, non-rational capability substitutes, they'll begin losing their God-given talents.” Calculating devices appeared one after another and then disappeared, and as each of the instruments appeared, several of the little circles decreased in size, some of them actually turning into black dots. “They used to be capable of counting all the stars by glancing at the sky for just an instant, but they'll get to the point in their inventions that they'll be calculating ‘two plus two’ on calculators.

“They'll invent the telephone and will begin losing the ability to communicate over distance and imagine their loved ones' whereabouts.

“In the end, they'll begin implanting artificial devices into their bodies,” Dark-haired went on, “and they themselves will turn more and more into a primitive,

soulless device. It will be impossible to call them ‘people.’ Their rationality is stuffed down somewhere deep inside. Anti-rationality dominates them. It is simultaneously around them and within them. Take a look, my brother – now you’ll see my final little picture.”

Dark-haired waved his hand, and on the screen, in the steaming air, hovering in the air, was a folded-out map of the Earth – that part of it where people lived very densely in the cities. And in each city, the stout tentacles of some monstrously large being were wending their way between the large concentrations of people, weaving in and out and shuddering. They were great in number. They encircled the cities and were also located inside them. Some kind of foul-smelling, dark-colored gas was being emitted from the great number of pores on each tentacle. But the people weren’t shrinking back from these terrifying emissions – they were breathing them. The people were building their homes close to the tentacles. From time to time, first in one spot and then in another, the reeking tentacles would burst, seemingly due to great pressure, and the people would rush to patch and smooth out these blow-outs, so as to restore the monstrous octopus’ vital functions.

“My brother, do you see the tentacles of the monstrous octopus? Perhaps you want me to show you the body of the monster that has covered the world with its tentacles? Naturally, you don’t even want to think and speak about this. But I’ll tell you right where this death-dealing body is located. I’ll tell you where the tentacles are coming from. They’re coming from the brains of these beings who used to be considered rational people. The monster’s body is inside their brains – that’s where they’re all coming from. And they are proud of their death-dealing progeny – they cherish it. They call the monstrous tentacles ‘roads’ and ‘highways.’” Dark-haired roared with laughter. “There you have it – the future of mankind! And you want to save to save those who are heading for the dimension of anti-rationality? You want to save them for *that* fate?” Dark-haired asked, turning to his brother who was holding the block of granite back, keeping it from falling.

It wasn’t just little drops of water that were seeping around the block of granite any more – now the water was flowing around it in thin streams. The body of the light-haired youth supporting the block of granite was petrifying ever more intensely. Even his facial muscles had hardened, and he could neither speak nor blink. Only his blue eyes, still alive, were looking at the pictures of mankind’s future.

The dark-haired youth stuck his palm beneath a stream of the water that was running off and said, his voice full of venom:

“There’s precious little time left before the flood. Maybe I’d have time to say three or four more phrases to you, my brother, but I’m not going to say anything. Most likely you can’t hear me any more.”

The dark-haired youth spread his arms out to the sides then bent his elbows, amusing himself with his athletic muscles, then shook his head, tossing his black locks

of hair back. He spent a bit more time observing the streams of water flowing around the block of granite his brother was propping up, watching them grow stronger. Then he said:

“It’s time for me to be going. It’s time. Now what has been preordained to come to pass shall come to pass. But... it shall not come to pass.”

The dark-haired athlete strode up to the block of granite and, taking his place alongside his light-haired brother, propped up the block of granite with his own shoulders and arms.

The muscles of the athletic body tensed, and the veins stood out, but the dark-haired athlete slowly straightened out his slightly bent knees and raised the granite a bit. The water stopped seeping around the edges of the block – only a few drops were still rolling off it.

The Universal opposites united in one for a short time, having changed God’s program. God’s program... Perhaps by uniting, they had opened up new possibilities for the program?

After a short time, the raging, shattering torrent reached the plains, and the danger that Anasta’s family valley would be flooded passed – and along with it, the danger that the people who had left the valley would perish.

The light-haired youth’s petrification began to gradually pass, a smile came to his face, and he regained his ability to speak.

“Thank you, Brother,” Light-haired said, albeit it still with difficulty.

“Only I don’t need any of your ‘thank yous.’ *This* disaster that was predestined for people, it’s passed. Now they’ll go even further along in their absurd worldview. They’ll stubbornly construct the anti-world. There will be more of them, and there will be a new disaster, on a bigger scale.”

“There won’t be one, Brother. Maybe it’ll happen just an instant before any disaster happens, but the Soul particles, and feelings and knowledge that the little girl Anasta dissolved in the space will awaken within people’s hearts. And a great many women and men will stop the unprecedented disaster with their thoughts. And people living in the dimension of anti-rationality will suddenly see the light. They’ll begin to build a new world on Earth, never before seen by anyone.

“They, the ones who have simultaneously experienced both anti-rationality and Rationality, will unite what is opposite within themselves, in harmony. And they will bring to life the Divine impulse of His dream in matter and spirit. Not simply will they bring it to life. To it they will add their dream’s perfection.”

Anastasia fell silent. And I was silent, too, as I tried to make sense of what had been said and seen. Only after an hour or two did I ask her a question.

COMING FACE TO FACE WITH OUR PRIMEVAL IMAGE

“Anastasia, everything you showed me and told me about the dark-haired and light-haired youths and about the little girl Anasta – did all of that exist in reality, or only in your imagination?”

“You can choose your own answer to that question yourself, Vladimir.”

“What do you mean, I can choose it myself? You’re the only one who can say for certain whether it actually happened or whether you imagined it.”

“Tell me, Vladimir, did any new information appear to you from my story?”

“I sure did. Of course, I did. Information and images... I’ll say!”

“So that means the information exists?”

“Yes, it exists. I need to analyze it, make sense of it. And I have questions.”

“If information appeared, then it follows that its source also exists.”

“Of course. There has to be a source.”

“Information is an image. An image is information. If someone decides he wants to erase information within you, he’ll try to prove to you that the image doesn’t exist in reality. And as soon as you agree with the image’s lack of reality, then you yourself erase the information you’ve taken in from the image.”

“Well, but if this or that image was created by a person, then who’s the information coming from in that case?”

“From the image.”

“Why from the image, if some specific person created it?”

“If a child was born to you, Vladimir, a child who imparted new information to all people – including to you, too – then who is the source of the new information?”

“The child, of course. But an image – now, an image isn’t a child who has a material body. An image can be non-material, too.”

“So, does that mean the difference lies only in that in the first case you can see a material body, but in the second you can’t?”

“Maybe that’s not quite it. It’s just that when there’s a body, it looks more familiar somehow, more credible.”

“A body you can see bears no definitive evidence. And what’s more, it can lead you astray.”

“Now that’s true. It sure can! There’s even an article in the criminal code called ‘fraud.’ That’s when a criminal – who has a body – deceives someone for his own personal gain. I think I’ve got everything, Anastasia. If information appears, and what’s more, if it comes from an image, then all of that exists – you can’t deny it – and we need to analyze the information we’ve received. But when we get caught up in thinking about it – ‘does it exist or doesn’t it exist’ – then we’re wasting time and depriving ourselves of the information we’ve gained.”

“Yes, you’ve understood correctly, Vladimir.”

“There’s just one thing I don’t get. If every person can think up an image, and the image begins to exist, then how much information do we have to sift through in order to come up with what’s genuine?”

“Not much at all. Certainly, every person can think up an image, but people will not accept every image with their whole heart and soul, not at all.”

“Well, yes, of course. Not every image. Really, thank you, Anastasia. It’s interesting what you have to say about the image. Tell me something else about the image. What’s your opinion – what is it?”

“Man himself is, in fact, an image that has taken material form, and since he is a materialized image, man himself can use his thought to create and can materialize images. This is where his Universal power, a power unsurpassed by no one and no thing, lies.

“If this or that person doesn’t recognize the capabilities within him that have been given him by the Creator, then that person himself blocks his lofty power and falls under the influence of other images and materializes their thoughts, until finally he destroys himself, his family, his family line, his state and the whole planet.

“The artificial, technocratic world was also created by Man using the energy of an image suggested to Man by his antipodes. The technocratic world is fragile and transitory. Even the most advanced car, building or any other object of the artificial world disintegrates with each second and within but a few years turns to dust or, worse still, into waste products harmful for Man.

“Man himself, by living in the artificial world, becomes fragile and transitory as

well. For it is hard for a person who spends each minute looking at a multitude of disintegrating objects that lack autogenic capability, to imagine eternal life, create the image of his own eternity and materialize it.

“The natural world that is visible to us has existed not for billions of years, but for significantly longer, for at the beginning it already existed within an as yet non-materialized image. The scientists who determined the Earth’s age calculated not the date of its birth, but merely the date of its materialization, as one of the stages of its life.

“The natural world possesses the capability for autogenesis, and this capability renders it eternal. The Creator, who created eternity, is himself the very same. He is Alpha and Omega, and Alpha once more.

“A great many people might say or think, ‘What *was* there before the birth of the Creator and of His extraordinary, multitudinous energies?’ At one time nothing existed. Nothing! But recall what the Creator said about ‘nothing’ to His son: ‘Out of nothing will arise the beautiful new birth of you and of the aspiration reflecting your soul and dream. My Son, you are infinite, eternal. Within you lie your creating dreams.’

“But if out of ‘nothing’ arises something, this means that ‘nothing,’ too, takes part in the birth.

“By giving birth – out of ‘nothing’, in part – the Creator completed the circle and presented to Man the image of eternity.

“The knowledge, understanding and perception of the energy of the image within him enable Man to not die, but rather to drift off into an ambrosial sleep. Upon awakening, he incarnates in the spot, time and image necessary to him and created by him before his sleep.

“Gaining knowledge of the science of imagery leads to understanding the entire universe created by the Creator, and to the creation of new and beautiful worlds.

“Lack of knowledge and understanding of the science of imagery leads unavoidably to unskillful interaction with the perfected, natural world, and to the creation of an artificial, primitive, unnatural world.

“Lack of knowledge of the science of imagery turns entire states and peoples into puppets, into chess pieces in the hands of those who are acquainted with this great gift.”

“But Anastasia, after all, images can be positive and negative. How are we supposed to figure out which of them bears useful information and which is misinforming us, perhaps for personal gain?”

“Through your own self, Vladimir, and through your own image you will discern the value of any information.”

“You mean every person has an image?”

“Why of course, Vladimir. Every person has his own image. Each differs strikingly from the others.

“Were every person to preserve his primeval image, then tell me, Vladimir, how would the world now look?”

“Primeval? That means every person has – or used to have – a primeval image? What was it like?”

“Divine! Such is the way our parent – the Creator – did create it in his inspired impulse.”

“It – our primeval image – was it God, or what?”

“It was the son of God, and so it remains.”

“But where’s this primeval image of man gotten to? We can see images of drunks and drug addicts on the streets. And images of prostitutes along the roads. And various images make fools of themselves on TV. Where can we get a glimpse of man’s primeval image?”

“Within ourselves. Imagine it yourself. Go out to meet it. And joyfully will it rush toward you. Joyful will the path be. Gradually coming nearer and nearer to each other, you will one day encounter each other. You will unite! Safeguard your primeval image. Do not give it over to others for their own delight.”

“But how can I imagine it? There’s all sorts of information raining down on us about how man’s imperfect.

“First they say he’s an eternal slave, then that he’s like a lab rat. One of my friends told me a while back that he read in some book somewhere that they said something like some alien beings created people and are now feeding on their energy and are training them to be imbeciles.”

“Should you wish to be an imbecile, Vladimir, then go ahead and believe them.

“Should you believe you’re a slave, you will give birth to a slave within you.

“Should you believe that someone is feeding on your energy against your very will, you will waste away and really will give over your own energy.

“Everything exists that you yourself believe to exist.

“From the very moment of birth, they try to belittle the significance of Man – the son of God. But take note, Vladimir, behind this there always stands someone striving to elevate himself. He is, in actual fact, not elevated when compared to Man, and is unable to elevate himself. And only one path is left to him – to belittle the elevated one and prevent him from growing.”

“Yes, Anastasia, you’re exactly right here. I somehow can’t recall even a single book or movie where man is presented as the strongest being in the Universe. It’s always the aliens that emerge as the strongest, and if the people are strong, too, then it’s always connected to some otherworldly powers. Now I understand what serious and ongoing indoctrination man is being subjected to, and of course, it’s no accident. There’s somebody who needs this very much.

“If Man really were weak and didn’t possess some kind of mysterious and unknown power, then why be afraid of him? Why take such great pains to prove the opposite?

“Anastasia, you’re the only one who sees man as the son of God and the strongest being in the Universe. But that means that a great many other images will come out in opposition to your explanation of what man’s image is. They have methods that have been developed over the course of millennia.

“They’ve already created a great many images of powerless people.

“Plus many various teachings that belittle man. The press the world over is working for them, and the screenwriters and directors, too, and there a lot of them, really a lot. Looks like you’re on your own, Anastasia. But all the same you’re placing your hopes on something. Where are you placing them? Where, Anastasia?”

“On my very own primeval image. And on your primeval image, Vladimir. On the primeval nature of those images of the people building homesteads. Those who will in the future set off to meet their true image.”

“Anastasia, and they also say you don’t exist at all. And about me, they say I’m not the person I seem to be, not the way I appear in the books. Now I see that by doing what they’re doing, they’re trying to erase the information coming from your image, erase it in people. And they’re succeeding in part. There are readers, even among those who are building family homesteads, who say, hey, let’s not mention Anastasia’s name. Let’s not talk about the books and let’s not call our family homesteads family

homesteads, given that someone has convinced the authorities that these names are bad. They even offer them various concessions for doing that.”

“And you, Vladimir? How do you feel about suggestions of that sort?”

“To tell the truth, Anastasia, even I had the thought that, given that these words are irritating to some people, maybe it would be better not to utter them. You know, so things would move along more quickly. Now I get that the process *might* move along on the surface, but it won’t be in quite the direction man needs. Now I get it: they don’t *want* us to utter the words ‘Anastasia’, ‘family homesteads’ and ‘ringing cedars of Russia’ because strong images and information immediately come up once we do. They want to deprive people of them. Am I understanding things correctly?”

“Of course, Vladimir, behind each word there really does stand an image, and information. It is sometimes the case, that behind just one word there stands such a huge volume of information that it would be impossible for even a hundred volumes to reflect its image, to substitute for it.”

“Well, you know, there are words that awaken different images in people. For example, the word ‘war.’ Some people might see a liberating war behind this word, and others an invasive one.”

“But nonetheless, when this word is uttered, in people’s imaginations there immediately arise a great many pictures of battles, of warring countries, of weaponry and many other things. And even if the pictures are a bit different, this is of no consequence: they are great in number, and similar, but there is but one word.”

“‘Family homestead’ – can there be a great many different images behind these words, too?”

“‘Family homestead’ is a word-combination backed by the most powerful of images, images capable of settling a person in a Divine dwelling land¹⁰. Judge for yourself, Vladimir: the first three letters of this word-combination form the word “*rod*”¹¹. “*Rod*” means the people who come into life one after another, and the first of these came from God. Each person born today takes his place at the head of this great chain. It is within his power to settle his “*rod*” in one dwelling land or another. In a stone cell or in the beautiful space of his family homestead. Or – he can break the family chain altogether. It is within his power to nourish his family with Divine

¹⁰ **Translator’s note:**

The original Russian phrase here is “среда обитания” (transliterated “sreda obitaniya”, pronounced “sree-DAH a-bee-TAH-nee-yuh”). It expresses of the area, space or spot in which one resides and is often rendered as “habitat.” However, in this book the phrase encompasses all that is part of the area where one lives as well as all the beings and energetic forces present within it. Thus, I have translated it throughout as “dwelling land,” as it is related to the phrase “среда обетованная” (transliterated “sreda obetovannaya” and pronounced “sree-dah ah-bee-TOH-vahn-nah-yuh”). See note 16 below for commentary on this phrase.

¹¹ **Translator’s note:**

The original Russian is “род” (transliterated “rod” and pronounced “roht”). Where “род”/“rod” occurs in the text, referring to the chain of family members stretching in the past or future, I have translated this using the phrase “family line.” See note 8 about other phrases in the book containing this same root.

creation or with food that doesn't bear the energy of the Soul.”

“What does food have to do with anything here, Anastasia, if my family's ancestors are long dead?”

“Tiny parts of all your ancestors live on within you, Vladimir. Both your body and your spirit come from them.”

“Well, sure, they come from them. But... But that means that each person born anew bears a colossal responsibility for the fate of the entire family line.”

“Yes, each one bears it, Vladimir, and each one is given the power to decide his own fate and the fate of his family line.”

“I agree that we're given that power. But the great majority of people don't really think about their family line, and maybe their ancestors didn't think about it, either. So does that mean the family line that stretches from the wellspring people¹², from God himself, has disintegrated, fallen to pieces, that it no longer exists?”

“Family homestead – please, Vladimir, think about it. Family homestead – two words. One word-combination. As soon as a person utters it, then the person – who perhaps hasn't yet even fully realized his aspiration – except subconsciously – has given voice to it: ‘I gather together my entire family line and settle it here.’”

¹² **Translator's note:**

The original Russian word, coined by Vladimir Megre, is “первоистоки” (transliterated “pervoistoki”, pronounced “pir-vah-ee-STOH-kee”). The roots in this word express both the idea of coming first or being in an original position, as well as the idea of flowing water and source. Hence, these are the people who served as the source for all others, in both the literal and figurative meanings of this word.

THE GATHERER OF ONE'S FAMILY LINE

“A person who has established his family homestead can gather together within it the souls of people from his family line, and they will be grateful to him for this great deed. Like guardian angels, they will protect and guard the family homestead and the person who created it. Nothing in the Universe disappears without a trace; it only passes from one state into another. When a person dies and his mortal body is given over to the land, then trees and grass and flowers grow up out of it. It passes from one state into another. But then, into what state does the main energetic complex – the human Soul – pass?

“At first, it lingers, hovering at the place where the person’s body is located, and in some religions, people understand this and don’t immediately commit the person’s body to the earth. And when the person’s body does join into an embrace with the earth, when the person is buried in a cemetery, then the Soul hovers above the spot where the body has been buried. The relatives spend some period of time near the grave. The Soul, deprived of its body – and so, of hearing and sight – cannot see or hear, but it can feel when people are speaking of it, or thinking of it. If they are saying good things, the Soul feels good, but if they are saying bad things, the Soul feels bad.

“Then the people leave the cemetery. For a certain period of time, the Soul remains above the mound of earth where its body is buried, but it no longer feels anything, only emptiness. Modern people, caught up in the everyday bustle of life, quickly forget their deceased relatives. In modern people’s apartments, often nothing at all serves as a reminder of the deceased relatives. After a year or five or ten, basically no one remembers them any more, and the souls of the deceased end up in a complete void. And we are speaking here about the recently deceased, but you know, there are also those relatives who lived a hundred, or a thousand or a million years ago, and they all find themselves in complete oblivion.

“A person who creates a family homestead can gather together his entire family line. To do this, he needs to call to mind his relative and imagine him or her, and then the Soul will give a little start. It will sense it’s being thought of, and no matter in which corner of the Universe it might be located, it will shoot off along this thought-ray to the place from which it is emanating.

“A person isn’t able to remember all his relatives and continually think about them and recall them, but he *can* plant a small grove of trees, preferably family trees”¹³,

¹³ **Translator’s note:**

The original Russian phrase, “родовые деревья” (transliterated “rodovye derev’ya”, pronounced “ruh-dah-VY-yeh di-REV-yuh”) contains the root “род”/“rod”, relating to “family line.” Thus, I have rendered this phrase as “family trees” to establish the link with the phrase “family homestead.”

that live a long time. These include oaks and cedars. As he plants them, he should definitely contribute his own family thought, saying to himself: ‘I am planting this grove or alley in memory of the members of my family line. I am creating a family homestead, and may all the members of my family line who have lived in the past and who will live in the future gather together on it.’

“As he plants each individual tree, it’s essential that he recall the name of one or another relative who has recently passed, and to imagine each of them and say a kind word about them.

“A person isn’t able to recall each of his family members every minute and every hour, but the trees, which have received this information, will preserve it within themselves every moment. The Souls of the relatives of your family line will sense this. And they’ll live in your homestead in the trees, the blades of grass and the flowers. The rays emanating from the trees are much weaker than those coming from people, but they are more constant. The Souls will sense this, and at first the Soul of the closest relative you’ve recalled will come to this spot, and after it comes, others will also gradually be drawn to this spot, too.

“In nine years, there will grow up a grove of trees that were planted by the person, and these will be extraordinary trees. They will possess colossal, beneficial energy. No one will be able to sense this energy’s benefits – no one except the gatherer of the family line himself and his close relatives.

“Imagine, Vladimir, what an extraordinary and kind thing it is that man will accomplish! He, like unto the Creator, will gather together anew his family line that had scattered through time.”

“But Anastasia, you said that the Souls are an energetic complex and that when people die, some of them disintegrate into particles and give their energy to various bugs and plants and animals.”

“Yes, I did say that, Vladimir. This happens when, during its life on earth, this energetic complex – the human Soul – is in disharmony with the surrounding environment to such an extent that it represents a danger to earthly existence. The Souls of the deceased preserve the complete complex when the imbalance has not yet reached a critical point. The more harmonious ones are the first to incarnate into earthly bodies. Unfortunately, there are fewer and fewer of them all the time within the Universal space, and the program is now choosing from the best of a bad lot.”

“But what if all the Souls of my family line have disintegrated into particles? Then will none of them come to the family grove I plant?”

“Since you exist, Vladimir, that means that your family chain has not been broken, either.”

“But what happens when a person is buried on the family homestead?”

“When a person’s body is buried on the homestead he himself established, his Soul does not fly off into the Universal darkness. It remains on the family homestead – after all, it is there that the person planted trees and communed with the land. The Soul, which cannot see or hear anything, but *can* feel, will sense the warmth that the plants give it, and besides that, the people – this person’s descendants – will recall him more often as they come into contact with what he created.”

“Anastasia, I know of one instance when the little old mother of some people I know came to their homestead to visit them. She was a little over eighty years old. She’d just come to visit for a few days. She’d come to visit her daughter, just to see what in the world she and her husband had cooked up. Then she asked them to let her stay forever. And she stayed. She’d spend a long time sitting on a little bench. Sometimes she’d walk through the homestead’s little forest, and one day she said to her daughter and son-in-law, ‘When I die, please don’t take me off to the cemetery. Bury me here.’ And she pointed out the spot she herself had picked out. When this elderly woman died, the daughter and son-in-law carried out her request. What will happen to this elderly woman’s Soul, if she didn’t manage to plant anything on this homestead?”

“Her Soul will remain on the family homestead, even if all she did was sit on a little bench. She herself decided she wanted to be buried there. That means she was thinking about that before she died, and her relatives will visit the spot where she was laid to rest more often than they would go to a cemetery, and they will think of her more often.

“You must not bury a person on a family homestead against his will, even if he has done something there. If that happens, it is essential to ask the person’s forgiveness, to go to the spot where he is buried and mentally explain to him why that was done, and ask for his help.”

“Yes, Anastasia, it’s an interesting situation. But way back when, did people know about this? Did they understand it?”

“Of course they knew, Vladimir. Even in the not so distant past many people had family crypts. You know about that. But in earlier periods of human existence, cemeteries didn’t exist at all. They came into existence when people appeared who had no family land at all: artisans in cities, domestics, various servants, and soldiers for hire. When they died, they needed to be buried, and so they’d carry their bodies off and toss them without their family members into the latrine pits where they’d throw sick animals. Or they’d bury them in common graves. A bit later on, when the cities grew larger and many various families lived in them, including well-to-do ones, then cemeteries began to appear. Well-to-do people would buy up small plots of land where they would bury their deceased relatives, and then other people would do the same nearby. As a result, cemeteries began to be divided up into – to put it in modern language – into upper class, middle class, and ordinary ones, for servants.”

“Those kinds of cemeteries still exist today: if you want to get into Vagankovo

Cemetery in Moscow, you'll need to bring a lot of money and effort to bear to get a good plot, and the plots are assigned by a special burial committee."

FOUR WORDS FROM THE UNIVERSAL LAW

“Anastasia, what about those four words from the Universal law, the words Dark-haired referred to, the ones that define the life’s purpose of each individual man and of all mankind as a whole – do you know what they are?”

“Yes, Vladimir, I know these four words, those that define the common task facing mankind.”

“Can you utter them for me now?”

“I can.”

“Then utter them.”

Anastasia rose to her feet and, painstakingly speaking each word, said:

“PERFECT THE DWELLING LAND.”

“And that’s it?” I said, disappointed.

“Yes, that’s it.”

“To be perfectly honest, I thought they’d be some unusual, magic words.”

“These *are* unusual, magic words from the Universal law. These are the most important words of all the Divine programs. With their help, it is possible to determine the degree to which both an individual person and mankind as a whole are necessary for the Universe. With their help it is possible to determine the usefulness or uselessness of the earthly laws conceived by people.

“Perfect the dwelling land means perfect yourself.

“All that exists within the Universe and on Earth represents through itself a united dwelling land, inseparably interconnected, and with man in the center.

“Perfect the dwelling land means give birth to and raise children who are more perfected than you yourself. Each generation should be more perfected than the previous. For this to come about, the generation that comes before should present the following generation with a more perfected dwelling land.

“In perfecting the dwelling land, man perfects his own thought. The perfected dwelling land quickens and refines man’s thought.

“In perfecting the dwelling land, man comes to know immortality.

“In perfecting the dwelling land, man turns the Earth into the most perfected planet of the Universe.

“Earthly perfection permits and helps man to perfect other planets of the Universe.

“Universal perfection permits and helps man to create new worlds.

““Where is the edge of the Universe? What will I do when I come to it? When I have filled everything with myself, when I create that which I have thought?” a man of the wellspring people asks God. And replied to His son: “My son, The Universe is thought. A dream was born of the thought, and it is partially visible as matter. When you come to the edge of everything, a new beginning and continuation shall your thought discover. Out of nothing will arise the new, beautiful birth of you, and of the aspiration, reflecting in itself your Soul and your dream. My son, you are endless, you are eternal, your creating dreams are within you.”

Anastasia fell silent. Astounded by the unusual intonations and by the meaning of the words she’d uttered, I kept on looking at her. And with complete clarity, I suddenly realized: she isn’t simply a taiga hermit living in the Siberian taiga. Not simply an extraordinarily beautiful woman.

Anastasia is a person from another dimension, a dimension where human Intelligence triumphs. She senses and sees this dimension of intelligence. She is worthy of it. Of a dimension in which a perfected, happy creator-man makes the planet Earth the most beautiful planet in the Universe. And the planets of the whole Universe, delighted by his earthly creations, call to him to contemplate them, too. To touch their surface ever so lightly, even with just their hand and, through a smile, give them a future. And how unbearably painful it must be for her to look at today’s earthly bacchanal.

But she gave birth to two children, and wasn’t put off by the danger that the anti-rationality that rules today would swallow up the children. That means she’s convinced that everything will change on its own – or that she’ll change it herself.

“Anastasia, given your world view, isn’t it painful for you to look at today’s reality?”

“Very painful, Vladimir,” Anastasia whispered.

“Then how do you bear such pain?”

“By creating pictures of a beautiful future, admiring them and delighting in them. The joy of beholding them vanquishes the pain. And what’s more, there is even more benefit from such beholding: the way you imagine the future to be, is the way it will come to pass.”

THE DIMENSION OF ANTI-RATIONALITY

“Anastasia, can it really be that modern mankind actually does live in the dimension of anti-rationality that the dark-haired youth mentioned? And what exactly *is* anti-rationality? How can we see this in real life?”

“Thought or information appears, and we need to assess its reality only through ourselves.”

“But how can we assess it, by what means? If a person is living in the anti-rational dimension, then he’ll think in the categories of anti-rationality.”

“Yes, that is so. But rationality all the same remains within a person, although in a significantly smaller degree.

“And if you mentally appeal to it, it is activated, and then you can use it to help you identify anti-rational manifestations. For now, we will speak no more on this topic, Vladimir. For now, go take a stroll here around the glade, around the taiga and reflect a bit. Here, in this spot, Rationality and anti-rationality are in balance. But in you they are not, and for that reason, help your rationality out – activate it from time to time.”

“How do I activate it?”

“Just mentally say within you: ‘Rationality.’ Or better yet, ‘Raaatio-naaal-iii-ty.’”

I was left alone and tried to reflect from a position of Rationality. And these are the conclusions I began to draw.

The Artificial World

Today's community of people lives in an artificial world, not a natural one.

It created it and slavishly serves it.

We have created an artificial world and live artificial lives within in.

The real, natural world is to be found along the side of the asphalt roadways along which modern mankind is rushing headlong toward an abyss.

Artificial concepts have been implanted into the collective consciousness of modern people.

Our scientists and "educated" researchers have, in their great wisdom, started to call modern medicine – which has existed for only two hundred years – traditional, while calling folk medicine – whose history is calculated in the hundreds of thousands of years – non-traditional. At the same time as they've begun referring to healers – and here I'm talking about real healers, who are well versed in the properties of medicinal plants – as charlatans. The result is that modern man ends up having to treat many diseases – ones that people just a hundred years ago easily cured themselves of, at no cost, using herbs from their very own garden – using expensive pharmaceuticals, on the advice of their doctor. Perhaps there should be two paths in medicine. We need to teach folk medicine in school and train specialists in medical schools. Eighty percent of ailments can be cured using folk medicine, and this will significantly lower the burden on today's medical facilities, which will make it possible to substantially improve the quality of medical service. But to do this we have to think in categories of Rationality.

Artificial Plumbing Systems

Mankind has buried millions of kilometers of metal pipes that they call plumbing systems in the ground. Colossal effort has been expended to manufacture these pipes and lay them in trenches. They require continual servicing and major overhauls, which come at the cost of people's hard labor. Meanwhile, the water that comes out of the faucets in our apartments ends up being unfit to drink. And besides that, we have a natural plumbing system in the natural world – by which I mean not just rivers, but groundwater aquifers as well. Living, healing water capable of filling millions of wells flow through the Earth's veins there. The natural plumbing system requires no repairs. But what's more, it's capable of purifying polluted surface water and of saturating a vital product with minerals and other necessary substances. But the city person's modern way of life has deprived him of the opportunity to utilize the natural plumbing system that was designed and constructed by the Creator.

The question arises: did man choose this way of life on his own, or under the influence of certain forces? In order to answer this question, let's take a look at one more case. We'd be hard pressed to call it anything other than the mental illness of a society. What steps must the average family in Europe, America or Russia take in order to acquire their own apartment or home?

The Anti-Rationality Mortgage

For example, they're advised to take out a mortgage. Or, more precisely, they're advised to take out a loan from a bank for a period of twenty or thirty years, acquire a modest residence with the bank's money and then, every month over the course of twenty years, pay the money back to the bank, with interest. If the family isn't able to pay the money back, the apartment will be taken away. A young family has to spend twenty years living in fear of losing their residence and – as a rule – work at a job they don't like, just so they can get paid more. Grovel at their boss's feet out of fear of losing their job. But perhaps there's no alternative to this kind of disconcerting situation? But there is! And that's not all – the alternative actually shows that obstacles that stand in the way of young people acquiring housing have been artificially implanted into their young heads. These obstacles are virtual, and intrinsic only to virtual reality. I'll give you a totally typical, real life example.

A young man named Andrei lived in the city of Vladimir, and on the outside, he didn't look much different from his peers. He went to cafes and discos; he smoked and used alcohol. When he read about family homesteads, he began dreaming of his own land and home.

He didn't have the funds to buy a plot of land and build a house, and his parents weren't in a position to offer him financial help. In 2001, a hectare¹⁴ of land on a deserted spot overgrown with tall grasses near the village of Konyaev, thirty kilometers from the city of Vladimir, cost thirty thousand rubles¹⁵. Nearly fifty families from among my readers have acquired their own hectares in this deserted spot and begun putting up structures. People mostly in their middle years, who possessed some financial reserves. Andrei also took a liking to this spot on the bank of a forest lake, and there was still some free land left there. Driven by his dream of having his own homestead, he stopped frequenting the youth club scene and, by working hard, was able to save up thirty thousand rubles in the space of only six months and acquire a hectare of land in the deserted spot. But where could he get the money to build a home? At that time in the city of Vladimir, a square meter of housing cost twenty thousand rubles, and thus, to build a home only fifty square meters in size, he'd need an additional million rubles. Andrei wasn't about to take out a loan from a bank, just so he'd then have to spend twenty years paying it back with interest. At the age of twenty-three, the young man went to the store, bought a good axe, and in the course of a year, all on his own, put up a wooden home on his plot. That's making a long story

¹⁴ **Translator's note:**

One hectare is equal to 10,000 square meters, or 2.471 acres.

¹⁵ **Translator's note:**

This is equivalent to roughly 1000 U.S. dollars or 750 Euros (for 2010).

short. Here's some more detail. First, Andrei got a job in a company where there were master craftsmen who knew how to frame a log house. From them he learned how to work with wood, while simultaneously earning the money to buy the logs for his future home. On this young man's plot, a garden is now growing, a well has been dug, there's a pond, and there's a wooden home, and people who are new arrivals to the settlement put themselves on the waiting list for him to build them log homes. Now Andrei is an acclaimed and respected master craftsman.

You could say that through his own actions, Andrei saved a million rubles. Or that he earned them. I think that's not even important. He gained immeasurably more than a million – he gained confidence in his own abilities, and a home built with his very own hands.

I think Andrei will manage to find a worthy girl who will enter this home and bear him a son and daughter, and the children will tell their grandchildren who it was who built the home with his very own hands, who put in the garden, who established their small motherland.

Andrei's story isn't the only one of its kind. In that same settlement, there are other families who have built their homes with their own hands.

I remember how my father and grandfather also put up their own wooden home, and the neighbors next to them, my parents' peers, did the same thing. More than half a century has passed, but people still live in these houses, just as they did back then.

And this is where questions come up. How could it happen, that for half a century, society has been developing new building techniques, new materials, machinery and devices which would seem to be more advanced, but in the end...

The average family has to work hard for twenty to thirty years to get a dwelling that it used to be able to provide itself with in the course of a year or two. For many families, the housing question has become insoluble, and the government has had to take it up.

Did the given situation come about by chance, or did someone artificially construct it? That, however, isn't important. The important thing is that the situation is absolutely anti-rational, but society, caught up in its everyday bustle, has turned out to be incapable of reflecting and analyzing. It's gotten used to the situation and can't imagine anything different. Society has gotten used to anti-rationality. And is ceasing to be rational.

Why Does Love Go Away?

Man's modern way of life has given birth to a great many problems that we are strictly forbidden to discuss, and since they don't get discussed, they don't get solved, either.

Billions of domestic conflicts take place all over the world, and they can get to the point where spouses fight with and murder each other. In so-called civilized countries, up to eighty percent of young people who enter into marriage divorce soon afterward. This process is preceded by negative emotions and stress of long standing, and children are made unhappy.

Over the course of millennia, millions of localized wars have been going on practically all over the world between people who have attempted to establish a loving union. It isn't only both sides in these battles that take the cruelest of beatings, but their children, too.

This kind of situation has been presented to modern mankind as a given. It's natural, they tell us – love comes and goes. But as it turns out, this kind of situation is characteristic only for people of the artificial world. It is not consistent with man's true nature.

For the first time ever, the taiga hermit has shown that young people's initial attraction for each other is not love – it is but the urge to give birth to the great feeling which arises when three components are united.

She identified these components and showed us three ancient rites that help real love be born. I have included them in previous books. I had to use the word 'rite' because Russian lacks a more precise definition that expresses these rational acts by young people who feel attracted to each other, and their parents.

But the given topic, like many others, turned out to be forbidden for the mass media. And that's not all – they began, using plausible pretexts, to make efforts to slander the source. It got to the point that on a show called "The Mysterious Anastasia" on Russian Central Television's Channel One, certain individuals began collectively declaring that people were going crazy from reading my books with the statements of the taiga hermit. Ludicrous! They don't go crazy from reading porn magazines or bloody thrillers or watching movies about violence, but they do from reading philosophical statements about love and man's way of life? This position makes it clear that there are forces in modern society that program social disasters. They target people and act through them, making use of their ignorance about what's really going on.

And we can understand these people. Imagine what would happen if a person who's read the "Ringing Cedars of Russia" book series starts asserting that by using three ancient rites, modern newlyweds can, during their marriage ceremony, in the space of thirty minutes and in plain view of all their relatives, create a family homestead on a deserted spot, along with a garden that will contain around a hundred plantings necessary for the family's sustenance. That they can erect a home with all the necessary farmyard structures, along with devoted animals that seem to have been settled in them as if by magic. Modern people who haven't read the "Ringing Cedars of Russia" book series might consider a person who asserts this fact crazy or gullible. But allow me to reveal a bit about this mechanism, the mechanism with whose help the given "miracles" really do take occur.

According to ancient rules or rites – you can call them what you want – a pair of young people who feel drawn to each other go out to the outskirts of the settlement, find themselves a plot of land no less than a hectare in size and build a small hut there. Together, they create a detailed and thorough design for their future homestead. For all intents and purposes, they are also creating a space where the energy of love can be found. In their design, they indicate not only the spots where their future home and farmyard structures will be located, but also where absolutely all the plantings will go.

Doing everything to create the design can keep them busy for anywhere from three months up to a year. Once the design is finished, they go around to all their relatives – on both the side of the bride and the groom – and invite them to participate in the rite of marriage. And each time they're at the home of this or that relative, they say, for example, "Ah, what a beautiful apple tree you have there." These words serve as a hint to the invited guest about what he should bring with him to the rite of marriage. In this particular case, a slip of the apple tree that the future newlyweds liked. To someone else they're inviting they might say, for example, "What a feisty little coat you have there." That means that the guest doesn't need to think about what gift to bring the young couple – he'll give them a colt. And so on.

During the rite of marriage, the newlyweds will tell their relatives and friends – as if they were taking some kind of great exam of life in their presence – all about the design they've created for their homestead, indicating in detail where everything should be located. Once they've finished the telling, they will give a signal, and the relatives and friends who have gathered together will set out their living gifts in precisely the spots indicated by the wedded couple. The newlyweds, all aquiver, will observe as their closet relatives and friends engage in the great joint action. Then the now-married young couple, having experienced great inspiration and emotional elevation, will be led away, each to his parents' home, where they will spend two nights. In the space of this time, the relatives on the side of the bride and groom will move previously readied structures to the spot, piece by piece. At dawn on the second day, he and she will hurry to their newly created family homestead, to their first meeting as husband and wife. It is impossible to describe what will pass between them in their new home, full of nothing but positive emotions and an inspired, never before experienced, energy of love for each other and for their newly created space of love.

What would have happened if the wellspring people had told such newlyweds that there will come a time when marriage will be carried out in an entirely different way? That two young people will come to some building, sign their names in some ledger and ride around in someone else's car that's been decorated with ribbons, all around a city that doesn't and never will belong to them. After that, along with their invited guests, they will take their seats at a table in some restaurant and eat food that wasn't prepared by their hands or by their relatives' hands, and drink vodka, and that the then tipsy guests and relatives will shout "bitter-bitter" to them, demanding that they kiss each other in front of everyone. And that's it. Next comes the so-called marriage bed and the lack of any pleasant after-effects from what has transpired. And what's more, any space that the energy of love can fill is totally lacking.

"Such a thing couldn't happen! It could never happen!" the wellspring people newlyweds will say. "Man is a rational being, not a crazed animal who would destroy love like that, love that is just an embryo and hasn't yet grown strong."

So, who is it who's really going crazy? Judge for yourselves, esteemed readers.

To answer the question of why love goes away, we can say that real, full-fledged love simply doesn't come to the majority of modern newlyweds, because there's no appropriate space for it.

What *is* love? It is a feeling, a great energy, that is capable of inspiring a person to create and that increases his spiritual powers and capabilities. It is a rational energy – it fills the space where two people in love are present and creates a unified whole for them, a space of love. Take a look at what happens nowadays. The newlyweds go to the marriage bureau to formalize their marriage. The marriage bureau facility isn't their space, but simple a temporary spot where they're spending some time, and what's more, divorce proceedings take place in this very same facility. And the rational energy of love is unable to fill a space like that.

Riding around in a car, often someone else's, also isn't fitting for the energy of love. And it can't fill a modern apartment, either. Because after all, the energy of love can't caress soulless, dying objects, and in a modern apartment, even in a very new one, everything is aging and disintegrating with each instant. Nothing is coming to life in it, and the energy of love can't make its peace with that kind of disintegration. When it's present in that kind of situation, it can't give its blessing.

What's needed for the energy of love is a living space that's been established by people – in the given case, by actual people who feel drawn to each other. It can't be any other way. The proof of this is the great number of secular divorce proceedings throughout the world.

The question of why love goes away deserves to be studied from all angles, and I intend to devote my next book to this, a book in which I will tell of the ancient land where people knew the secret of ever-lasting love. Today's approach to love is truly anti-rational.

Governing the Government

There are various methods one can use to influence people – we're not excluding the government here, either. And the most potent among them is the image. People grow accustomed to absurd conditions and images and accept them as givens. There's an image that tells us that the government, including the State Duma, too, where laws are developed and enacted, must definitely be located in the center of a big city. We've gotten accustomed to it being this way. But does this make sense?

Where did the prophets receive their revelations? And where did the wise men do their reflecting? Whence did they bring us the Divine laws?

Moses. He received the tables with the "ten commandments" after going into seclusion on Mount Sinai. Christ. He went off into the desert for forty days. Buddha. He spent several years deep in the forest. Mohammad. He spent months in seclusion in the cave of Hira on the mountain Jabal al-Nour.

Philosophers and scholars – Confucius, Lao-Tzu, Kant and Nietzsche and many others – have also spent years living in seclusion.

But where is our State Duma's building located? Where do they write our laws, these wise men chosen by the people? Do you recall?

Our State Duma's building is located at the intersection of busy highways – could we possibly create more absurd working conditions for our national chosen ones?

What do we have here – a roadside Duma?!

What Causes Empires to Die Out

I can cite a great many historical examples of images influencing human society and inducing planetary disasters. But for the contemporary person, particularly one living in Russia, the most obvious example will be the situation connected to the demise of Tsarist Russia and, later on, the fall of the USSR.

“From a spark a flame will burst forth,” said the leader of the worldwide proletariat, V.I. Lenin, speaking of the Bolshevik newspaper “Spark,” in which the Tsarist regime was smeared. All according to plan, a negative image of Tsarist rule took root, and a new, beautiful image was created, an image of Soviet rule. Tsarism was toppled. A new empire – the USSR – arose and began developing, an empire possessing a huge army and equipped with nuclear weapons.

But only seventy years later, the great empire of the USSR collapsed into several separate states, ones not always inclined to be friendly to each other. It was the politicians who had signed the agreement concerning the division, as well as the economic and political situation, that political scientists identified as the culprits in the collapse.

When we take a closer look, we can see all of this, too, as simply the result of the action of images. Let’s recall Solzhenitsyn’s gifted books about the GULAG and the works of other masters of the pen who smeared the USSR. Other writers at the same time were creating an image of the prospering Western states where, unlike in the USSR, store shelves were groaning beneath an abundance of all possible products and happy and free people were riding around in fancy cars. And at the same time as they were speaking of the merits of Western civilization, they remained silent about the problems existing there.

Russia’s future is also defined using images that are taking root in the minds and souls of the people living in the country. Unfortunately, this is a whole pleiad of images that are leading toward the annihilation of the state. The cult of violence and the cult of money are forming the image of destruction in thousands of movies in theaters and on television. “Catching up to the West.” That’s what many of our politicians are propagandizing. No economic or military achievements and no calls to be patriots in our motherland are capable of opposing these images.

The only thing that can oppose this image is a different image, an image of creation, an image capable of inspiring millions of people. And Anastasia has created it as a counterweight to the armadas of destructive images. Hundreds of thousands of people have taken up the image of a beautiful, future country and have contributed

their own ideas to it and have begun making it a reality – they’ve begun building family homesteads. This grass roots initiative was in line with the government’s plans. Many well-known politicians, government figures, well-known academics, cultural figures and religious leaders have made positive statements about those who are building family homesteads. I’m not going to bring in their statements here, but anyone who wishes to do so can learn about them on the site Anastasia.ru.

Now, of course, these statements have inspired people, but they are nominally off-the-record, although they’re also infinitely bold. After all, these rational words have resounded within the landscape of anti-rationality and penetrated it.

Some of the taiga hermit’s assertions might seem fantastical, and that’s the way they seemed to me, too, when I first started spending time with her. Now, fifteen years after my first meeting with her, there’s much I’ve had to rethink. It’s we, contemporary society, who live in a dwelling land that is fantastically unnatural for living a rational life. Anastasia speaks about rational reality. She is establishing it, methodically, and she *will* establish it. I will try to help her, and hundreds of thousands of people are already helping.

And here’s what else is interesting. In electronic and print media, literature and the movies, there are practically no positive heroes who commune with the earth in a rational fashion. Call to mind the way of life and dwelling land of any main characters. For the most part, they’re shown in apartments, offices, restaurants, casinos, on the streets of big cities and in places like that. And if they do show a person who communes with the earth in a conscious way – and this happens extremely rarely – then this person is presented as immature, as an imbecile. Human society is methodically and persistently being indoctrinated about the kind of dwelling land where he should pass his life. Did this situation come about by chance? I think, and I am even convinced, that it did not come about by chance. It is leading us toward a disaster – a personal, social and planetary disaster.

When I was talking with Anastasia later on, after I’d done some thinking on my own, I said, with certainty:

“I am absolutely convinced that contemporary mankind is living in the dimension of anti-rationality. It thinks in the categories of anti-rationality, because it has no clear plans for how to construct a harmonious future. All it does is state the obvious – the fact that it is coming to an end – and speak about that.”

THE YEAR 2012

These days, the date of December 22, 2012 is being widely and actively discussed, both in esoteric circles and among scholars, and on the Internet. Many people believe that the world will come to an end on that day.

Why are people talking specifically about this date? It's because this date is connected to a gloomy, apocalyptic prediction by the enigmatic ancient Mayans, according to whose calendar – and, by the way, experts admit that the Mayan calendar is much more precise than the Gregorian calendar we now use – on this day, on December 22, 2012, the current cycle of the so-called long count, the Era of the Fifth Sun, or the Epoch of the Jaguar, will come to an end. According to legend, the conclusion of Epoch of the Jaguar will be followed by years of death and destruction that will continue until the epoch of the renewal of mankind begins.

Scholars recently ascertained that the date indicated in the Mayan calendar is significant astronomically. On this day an event will occur that takes place only once every 25,800 years: the Sun will come into alignment with the mystical energetic center of the Galaxy, and modern civilization will, for the first time, live through this rare astronomical phenomenon. Or it won't live through it.

It has been suggested that during the second millennium B.C.E., the Mayan forbears, whose monuments we encounter in Central America, came down from the mountains where they'd been living into the tropical forests and plains of the Yucatan. It is precisely on the plains that the Mayan civilization achieved its greatest flowering, in the first millennium B.C.E. The Mayans knew how to write in hieroglyphs, and their math and medicine were at a very high level. They built stone cities and unbelievable ceremonial structures, such as the Great Palace at Palenque, and – here's the main thing – they had a deep knowledge of astronomy.

Up to the present day, no complete explanation has been found for the fact that the Mayan cities began to fall into disrepair long before the Europeans arrived.

At the heart of the Mayan civilization's astrology lies the Count of Days. The basis for generally accepted astrology (of Ancient Sumer and Babylon) is the arrangement of the planets around the zodiac circle. The Mayans also knew the zodiac constellations, but their Zodiac had 13 constellations, not 12. They included the constellation Serpentarius (which the Mayans called the Bat,) through which the Sun passes for only a few days.

Now about the enigmatic calendar. The current cycle of time, which comes to an end in the year 2012, is measured starting from a very ancient date: the 13th of August

in the year 3114 B.C.E. And this is rather strange, because, as I've already noted, the culture of the Mayans themselves is a minimum of a thousand years younger than that. Experts who study Mayan culture have not been able to reach consensus about how their famous calendar came into being. It's been suggested that the Mayans acquired the calendar – along with their written language – from the Olmecs, whose culture has a more ancient history. And actually, archaeologists have made finds on the territory of the ancient Olmecs' settlement at La Venta that confirm a certain continuity or interconnection between those cultures. But what's more interesting is something else.

When scholars took a look at comparative chronology, then it became clear that certain momentous events from the past of human civilization fully coincide with the beginning of the current cycle of the Mayan calendar, the 3114th year B.C.E.. Thus, it is roughly at this time that the mysterious megalithic structure of Stonehenge begins to be constructed. Written language appears in Mesopotamia. In Egypt, following the unification of the Upper and lower Kingdoms and the founding of the fortress of the White Wall (Memphis in Greek,) ruling dynasties are formed. In America they begin cultivating maize. One gets the impression that precisely at that time, a global cultural revolution took place across the whole planet and that people acquired new knowledge, under the influence of certain external forces. According to one of the theories, priests, shamans and holy men of that time came into contact with some repository of secret knowledge during their meditations.

Of course, the predictions of the Mayan culture, the well-known prophecies and official sources that speak of a planetary disaster are worthy of attention. Even so, it's each thinking person alive today who can make the most important and reliable reckoning about the future.

Let's try to analyze in what direction changes in the ecological situation in Russia are tending.

Let's take the time span of just the last fifty years. The majority of the country's population began living in big and middle-sized cities. People in the big cities have ended up without good quality drinking water. As if that weren't enough, people have started having to pay for their most life-sustaining product. Fifty years ago, a situation like this would have seemed simply fantastical to society. Today society has gotten used to it. And it shouldn't have done so. Water is a requirement for everything, and if society agrees to the ever greater pollution of water, then it does not have the right to exist. It isn't someone up on high who's sentencing man to this, but man himself.

"I'm Cancelling the Predicted Hell on Earth"

This phrase was uttered by the taiga hermit Anastasia. I think it's useful for the majority of people living on Earth to utter similar words and to perform acts that correspond to these words. Today this is a matter of life and death.

Many people living on the planet Earth are taking note of the negative results of global warming. Scientists are spreading the word about changes in the Earth's geomagnetic field and about the flooding of entire continents in the not-so-distant future. Such large-scale disasters have begun occurring right before our contemporaries' very eyes, like the one in Indonesia, where more than two hundred thousand people perished, and in the USA, where New Orleans, a city with a population of a million, was flooded. Scientists are also spreading the word about impending changes in the Sun's activity.

Questions about the ecological safety of the Earth have arisen so keenly that they were included in the UN agenda in 2007, at England's initiative. At the beginning of 2008, they were considered by Russia's Security Council.

For the first time, assertions by those forecasting a global disaster began to dovetail with the way contemporary scientists and the leadership of many states viewed this topic.

The priests of the Mayan civilization also spoke about how a global disaster would occur, and that it would take place in 2012.

Many people have heard about this to one degree or another, but even so, public conversations about the 2012 disaster touch on only a small portion of what is spoken about in talks behind closed doors.

It's only by hearsay that we can guess that the Japanese government is taking steps to resettle its population. According to the forecasts, England will be one of the first to be flooded and, evidently, that's why it was the one to initiate the inclusion of ecological questions in the agenda for the meeting of the UN Security Council.

It's possible that the governments of various countries are acting correctly by not publicizing the current situation widely and in detail. Why sow panic in the people? But on the other hand, the majority of a population might perish because they're out of the loop, and if that's the case, then only the informed elite would be able to save themselves, taking one or two hundred slaves each along with them.

Scientists are making predictions about which countries will be swallowed up by the elements, the way Atlantis was, and which ones won't be subject to flooding. In

Russia, for example, the coastal regions will be flooded, and Siberia will end up being the best place to live.

Following global warming on the Earth, an ice age will ensue.

But what difference does it even make what kind of global disaster comes about, if society is in no condition to withstand the disastrous phenomena we already have today, such as the fumes that contaminate the air in the cities, the electromagnetic radiation that penetrates our dwellings, and many others?

Is there an alternative to mankind's sad future? Of course, there is. But all in good time.

And so, at world forums, they've come to a clear conclusion: it's possible that a disaster will occur in coming years. And so here's where an interesting question arises: are leaders, the wealthy, and science capable of taking some kind of measures to avert it? Representatives of global science have been unable to answer this question. The governments of various countries, in an effort to affect the situation in some way, developed the so-called Kyoto Protocol, according to which all countries would be required to reduce harmful emissions into the atmosphere. Thus far, the protocol has remained unratified by many countries.

What might happen in the future does, of course, cause us worry, but shouldn't the disastrous situation that's already playing out today – the situation masquerading as the triumph of civilization – cause us even greater worry?

THE MAN-EATING OCTOPUS

The picture that Anastasia or the dark-haired youth showed, in which people build their homes along the stinking tentacles of a man-eating monster is not fiction at all, but the truest reality. A reality to which people have grown so accustomed that they accept it as a given.

And the monster exists still and is growing in size. It is our roads and what moves along them. Information about this is available to everyone.

We know, for example, that the length of the world's major paved highways exceeds 12 million kilometers, which is, for purposes of comparison, three hundred times the length of the Earth's equator, which extends for approximately forty thousand kilometers. The length of air traffic routes approaches 6 million kilometers, railway tracks are 1.5 million kilometers long, major pipelines stretch for roughly 1.1 million kilometers, and interior waterways – for more than six hundred thousand kilometers. The length of sea lanes equals many millions of kilometers. If we turn to the problem of pollution of the atmosphere by various means of transportation, then automobiles' share would make up 85 percent! And you know, the problem here isn't limited to harmful gases. We shouldn't forget about such unfavorable ecological factors as noise and vibration. So, 80 decibels – which is about the noise level on a busy city street – already has the potential to harm one's hearing. And the development of various means of transportation and the laying down of highways doesn't promote psychological health, either. And here, too, these factors directly or indirectly affect not only drivers and passengers, but also the many people who are outside the means of transportation and communications lines. Crammed roads, sitting for many hours in traffic jams, the fact that sometimes it's impossible even to simply cross the road – all of this sharply heightens nervousness, leads to chronic stress and increased aggression and sometimes drives people to acts they not only never would have committed, but couldn't even imagine themselves capable of committing, had they been in some other place.

Yearly surveys of the condition of the natural environment in the various regions of our country eloquently express the acute nature of the problem of the ecological safety of all Russian big cities without exception. And experts unanimously recognize “the intensifying process of the automobilization of society” as the fundamental reason that the regions' level of ecological safety has decreased. Even now, medical personnel are already testifying that “ecological stress” caused by the automotive and transportation system costs the average resident of a large city in Russia 4 to 5 years of his life. Here we're talking about people and a person, after all, can not only perceive a problem, but articulate it, too. But what about the Earth, for example? Although the

Earth can also articulate a problem, too, in its own way. It's just that amidst the noise and clatter and fumes of our lives, are we still capable of hearing the Earth's voice?

What specifically is it about the automotive and transportation system that is killing the Earth? First of all, you need actual earth when you're building transportation lines, just as you need water and air. In the USA, for example, there's a statistic that the amount of land that highways, railways and airports occupy equals 101,000 square kilometers, while cities occupy 109,000 square kilometers. In Russia, the length of roads is greater than half a million kilometers.

Well, roads are built on the land – what's the problem? The problem is that when roads, pipelines and airports are built and used, the soil is destroyed: you get landslides and sink holes, and erosion advances. And then you get gullies that run along the ruts in dirt roads and grow wider, which exacerbates the situation even more.

The further you go, the more happens: a large expanse of land alongside highways, railways and the oil and gas pipelines that come out onto the surface is polluted with a combination of lead, sulfur, petroleum products and other substances. Experts rank as most dangerous the strip of land that extends 200 meters outward along both sides runs of the busiest highways. This is the reason it is expressly prohibited to grow agricultural products, collect mushrooms and berries, and graze livestock – especially milk-producers – along the sides of roads. (There are known cases of children being poisoned by the milk of cows that have grazed around roads.) Near roads, the layer of air near the ground, up to a meter above the surface, is also devastatingly polluted with dust consisting of particles of asphalt, rubber and metal. You'll find lead in it, along with other substances that possess carcinogenic and mutagenic functions. Those who are fond of taking a stroll or jogging along the roadside should give this some thought, and one should be particularly mindful of this when taking walks with little children – after all, when they're in a stroller or are walking, they're passing right through this hazardous zone.

And here's something else I'd like to add. Please note that the greatest number of harmful roadways is concentrated not in the desert or in Antarctica, but in places with the greatest concentrations of people. And huge cities and metropolitan areas take pride in their killer multi-lane ring highways.

When putting their budgets together, all governments include major financing for constructing and repairing highways. What else could they do? After all, if there were no roads, the residents of metropolitan areas might be left without food and medication. Roads are the blood vessels that provide a person living in a metropolitan area with everything he needs.

Stop! What we've got here is some kind of gibberish. It truly is rampant anti-rationality. The blood vessels which – it would seem – we can't do without, are in truth delivering to us a slow death.

Ah, what spiritual, well-educated and intelligent people we want to seem to be!

But if we leave monsters like this to the new generation, that means we are handing our very own children over to it to be ripped to pieces. Who does that make us in that case?

And there seems to be no way out of the current, absurd situation. But it only seems that way. There *is* a way out. And it lies in the way we live – both the individual person and society as whole.

The exhaust gases from millions of cars, the smokestacks of giant and small companies and other sources that belch out harmful pollutants are but an effect, and not the cause that gave birth to them. The cause lies in the anti-rational, technocratic way of life.

HEADING OFF A PLANETARY DISASTER

Now, many people – starting with the UN and the governments of many countries and ending with ordinary people – are saying that we are on the brink of a planetary disaster.

There's also talk about how human acts are the cause of the disaster.

It goes without saying that simply stating the fact that a calamity is approaching does nothing to head it off. We need concrete, efficacious measures that are capable of changing the situation for the better. But does an efficacious method for finding our way out of a crisis situation exist in nature? Yes, it does! Its "code names" are "family homestead," "the ringing cedars of Russia" and "Anastasia." These words and the images, information and philosophy that stand behind them are capable not only of leading the country out of crisis in very short order, but also of initiating a new phase of harmonious development in society.

So that we can understand how this might come to pass, let's first enumerate some of today's problems.

Ecology. There is not enough good quality air, pure water and healthy food in the cities.

Transportation. Traffic jams many kilometers long have become customary in large cities. Because of poor roads in Russia, up to thirty thousand people die in traffic accidents each year.

Corruption. There is much talk, including on the highest levels, about the scale of this phenomenon. A bureaucrat who embezzles from the treasury, a bribe-taker and a bribe-giver are no less dangerous than enemy saboteurs.

Unemployment. The most dangerous consequence of unemployment is depression. When this illness overcomes one person, he turns into a living corpse. If it overcomes a segment of society, then the state is in danger of dying out.

Drunkenness and Drug Addiction. We've been fighting these afflictions for a long time now, and unsuccessfully.

The Housing Problem. Despite all the efforts that have been brought to bear to resolve it, the situation is only getting worse.

And now, let's imagine the following scenario:

Fifty percent of the population of Russia, America and Canada decides to live a healthy way of life and build a family homestead for their family on a plot of land not less than one hectare in size.

The governments lay the necessary legislative foundation and grant these families the necessary amount of land so they can create settlements of family homesteads.

On the previously abandoned lands of former collective farms, state farms and farmlands, the people who have received land begin building on an unprecedented scale. They build residential homes and the necessary farmyard structures. Those who lack sufficient means do the building using their own family's labor. Those who have the means to do so hire construction crews.

But what's most important is that these people, each of them on their own hectare, are planting gardens and putting in vegetable gardens.

Previously abandoned lands in the Far East, in Siberia and in the Central Region of Russia turn into blooming oases.

In a state that has such oases, the food problem is entirely solved, since families who have changed their way of life not only entirely provide for themselves with first class produce, but are also able to feed the population of large and smaller cities.

The threat of a collapse of the transportation system in big cities disappears. Since the quantity of cars falls by half, the air improves significantly. The housing problem is completely solved, since the housing that has been freed up is granted to all who need it. Unemployment entirely disappears, and the government need not worry about what will happen when unprofitable businesses shut down.

Social tension in society falls sharply. Stratification into poor and rich no longer elicits rage and envy in most people. People have found more important priorities than how much money one has.

Consciously communing with the land opens up such possibilities and horizons for man that the technocratic mind can't imagine them, not even in science fiction films. For this reason, I believe that all of us, all together, need to try to fathom what lies at the heart of the secret of this communing.

Changing the way a significant portion of the population lives will eliminate the possibility of an ecological disaster on a planetary scale.

Some might say that what we have here is a very rosy and fantastical picture of the future. How can a significant portion of the population suddenly experience the inspired desire to begin living a healthy way of life? To build family homesteads by acquiring some land that's overgrown with tall weeds, and pay for it themselves to

boot? And all thanks to some code names and phrases. That's not realistic. That's a fairy tale.

I'll tell you right off, there's no problem where this question is concerned. The words and phrases are efficacious. Tens of people are showing us this in practice. In Russia there are already more than fifteen hundred settlements of family homesteads that have been set up by readers of the books in the "Ringed Cedars of Russia" series. There are the same kind of settlements in Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan.

But what is fantastical, from the point of view of Rationality, is that government agencies have not aided these people enough and have, in some cases, opposed this beautiful aspiration.

A chorus of voices on the international and regional levels is calling for measures to be taken to head off a planetary disaster. But the only people who are really taking actions aimed at heading off social and ecological disruptions are the people who are building family homesteads.

More than a year ago an idea was born: for each person who has founded a family homestead and who is planning to found one to declare his intentions and aspirations. The first time I read a draft of a declaration like this out loud was at a gathering in one of the settlements. The idea was picked up, and since then, the text has undergone a great many changes and additions. I'm offering it here with the most significant additions.

FAMILY HOMESTEAD DECLARATION

Declaration of My Family Homestead (Draft)

I, a citizen of the Russian Federation, have familiarized myself with the philosophy of a way of life that has been set forth in fictional form in the “Ringing Cedars of Russia” book series. The idea of creating a family homestead has inspired me to take action.

I have acquired a plot of land in a deserted spot out in the country, one hectare in size, with the goal of establishing a more perfected dwelling land for my family and my descendants, and in memory of our ancestors.

I gave the given spot the name “Family Homestead.” On the land I acquired I have laid out a garden, dug a pond where fish will breed, and established several families of bees. I cultivate berries and vegetables.

I plan to fertilize the land using solely natural and native means of fertilization.

I believe that it will be a positive development if a large number of families who have the skills and desire to work the land, and who establish their daily lives on family homesteads located around large and small cities, are able to provide urban populations with a large quantity of ecologically pure vegetable produce and improve ecological conditions in the provinces.

I consider it unacceptable that tens of millions of hectares of land in our country are not cultivated and are overgrown with tall weeds, at the same time as we purchase 60% of our food products from foreign countries, and that in addition, these products are also often of low quality and are harmful to humans, especially children.

I believe that this situation not only threatens the safety of food in our country, but also destroys the populaces living within its territories.

I believe that under such conditions, it's counterproductive to accuse the government or anyone else of having made this or that mistake. Our entire society has made mistakes, and not only our country's society. As a result, the societies of many countries stand on the brink of social disruptions. In the current situation, it's essential for each person to think about what concrete steps he personally can take in the very near future to bring about positive changes.

The example of countries that have placed their bets on farm economy shows the ineffectiveness and even destructive nature of this choice. Farmers who focus on earning a profit from growing agricultural products enter into a competitive battle with each other. In order to prevail, they must use pesticides and herbicides and raise harmful genetically modified crops, and by doing this, they endanger the lives of people of entire states.

On the family homestead, a family lives and grows produce to meet its own needs and the needs of its relatives who live in the cities. Thus, a family living on a family homestead has a fundamentally different relationship with the land. The surplus produce from the homesteads will differ from all other produce that appears on the shelves of city stores in its beneficial nature.

The intensifying worldwide economic crisis creates the threat of social disorder in many countries. If we're to come out of this crisis, we must have a fundamentally new philosophy of a family way of life, one that people will understand. And such a philosophy has been set forth in the "Ring of Cedars of Russia" book series. I have accepted its fundamental concepts and they have inspired me to take the actions laid out above.

More than a hundred families – families in which children are being born and raised in a more perfected ecological setting – have each acquired one hectare of land and are already building their own family homesteads alongside my own family homestead. Practice has shown that they're doing so not because of some infusion of capital, but because of this philosophy.

I'm aware that thanks to this philosophy, tens of thousands of families in various regions of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus are already building their family homesteads. Millions of families are planning to do so as soon as a more favorable legislative basis for this is established. Many families are planning to become small business owners and produce agricultural products.

I fully support efforts by the Government and President of the Russian Federation to create favorable conditions for building small houses outside the cities, and to also make lands designated for agricultural use available for the construction of small houses, and to allocate each family a plot of land. I believe that each plot should be not less than one hectare in size, since on a smaller plot it's impossible to establish a comparably perfected and self-sustaining ecosystem and small-scale agriculture.

If families are not allocated a large enough plot of land, the settlements around the cities will turn into consumers instead of producers, which will only exacerbate the food, ecological and social situation in the country. I consider it essential for us to urgently ask the Government and President of the Russian Federation to speed up their work in this direction and adopt the necessary law regarding family homesteads.

I appeal to the President and Congress of the United States of America, to the UN, and to the heads of all states who have a vested interest in the flowering of the

peoples living in them, and recommend that they examine and embrace the idea that creating family homesteads is the most effective plan for enabling countries to come out of the global economic crisis, avert the approaching ecological catastrophe, and avoid a food crisis.

A significant portion of the peoples of Russia see the “Family Homestead” plan as a national idea. May it become an international national idea – and may our countries compete with each other to make the beautiful future a reality.

If the governments of various countries sincerely understand this idea, publicize it and support it, then the depression that is advancing on us can be stopped. An inspired, constructive international process will begin.

The actions of thousands of Russian families have already proven the positive influence of the “Family Homestead” plan. More than fifteen hundred Russian families, who have already begun building their own family homesteads have signed declarations like this one. We continue to collect signatures.

I wish all like-minded people success and inspiration as they creatively build a beautiful environment where their families can live – in various countries, and in the world as a whole!

Signature of the founder(s) of the family homestead

With the passage of time, this document, which has already taken on a life of its own, began to give rise in me to an ever-growing feeling of significance. I was getting the feeling that it’s not a passport, a diploma or any awards that constitute a person’s most important documents, but precisely this kind of declaration. Returning in my mind to this document again and again, I kept trying to understand why I was having these feelings. The text and language might vary, but they aren’t what’s most important here. What’s important is the essence.

I read the declaration to Anastasia, told her about my feelings, and asked:

“What do you think Anastasia, why do these feelings arise, and not only in me? I’ve spoken with many people, and they also experience the feeling that the declaration is very significant, but no one can explain why that happens. Why is it?”

“You see, Vladimir, the feeling that this document is significant immediately arose in me, also. But like you and these others, what about it makes me feel that way – I am unable to explain that immediately. Perhaps we need to ponder it a bit together?”

“Perhaps, but I’ve already pondered it a great deal. The feeling that it’s significant remains, but I still haven’t understood why that is.”

Suddenly Anastasia drew herself up somehow and began to shine. She began speaking, pronouncing each syllable distinctly, just the way she always did when she was trying to emphasize something significant:

“Vladimir, I think I am beginning to understand where its great significance lies. Look! When the Creator was creating the earthly world, before the great Creation, He first gave voice to his intention. He imparted it to all the entities of the Universe, and when they asked, ‘What is it you so fervently desire?’ he replied, ‘Co-creation and joy for all who behold it.’”

“But can it really be so important to impart your intentions to everyone?”

“Of course. It is very important. For, imparting it to all means, above all, imparting it to yourself, as well. It means comprehending what is taking place, and believing in yourself.

“Besides, having declared your intentions in words, you are already materializing them. By imparting them to all, you call upon them to join you in co-creation.”

“Why do I need to call upon everybody? I mean, somebody might laugh at me, or oppose me, or be indifferent.”

“Derision, opposition and indifference will be participants in the co-creation from the other side. They are needed to fill out this creation, within which you will bring everything into balance.”

“I’m feeling an excitement inside, Anastasia. Where’s that coming from?”

“Vladimir, I, too, feel excited. This document has appeared as a herald of a new era on Earth. The aspirations of the people who stand behind it are holding within them a great realization. For thousands of years people lived without determining their own lives. What were they striving for, and why? What should the new generations carry forth? Should they bear in mind where those paths went wrong? Which paths? Amidst the bustle of life, women gave birth children, but they offered no goals in life to those they bore. Their children knew not, what they were to carry forward. And they would die, the earthly civilizations, having lived out their empty lives. Only pottery shards remained of them, and arrowheads. The children would heed others’ opinions of their parents.

“And what your grandfather wanted of life, Vladimir – he did not impart this to your father and mother in words. Nor did they impart that to you in words. You are their continuation. Tell me, what kind of continuation did they want in life?”

“I don’t know. I can only imagine.”

“You can imagine whatever you might like. But you know for sure that they did not impart it, their life’s aspiration.”

“Of course they didn’t. Nor do all the other people I know.”

“For the first time in perhaps billions of year, as if awakening at dawn, a man has said, ‘I have an aspiration. I will begin my creation, and my generations will live in a promised land around them¹⁶. And they will perfect the promised land around them. Of course, they will be more perfected than I. But I will begin it all! And a little part of me will live on in my descendants.’

“You can cite many examples of how that which we do not impart in words dies along with the physical body.

“A man was thinking about how he might improve for his descendants the land where he lived, and he planted a cedar tree on his plot. Before long, the man died. Twenty-nine years passed, and the tree grew into a beautiful, spreading cedar, fifteen meters tall. Within but a year it would have borne marvelous, healing fruit, but people – the children of the man who had planted it – cut it down. They thought, why do we need this tree here? It casts a shadow over part of our plot, and its shade is keeping the tomatoes and cucumbers from growing in their beds. And they cut down the spreading cedar, and they cut it down precisely because the man had not given voice to his intentions.

“Genghis Khan conquered nearly half the world and brought Russia, India, China and Palestine together beneath his rule, so that there would be no war. He built roads, lowered taxes, and honored the traditions and cultures of various peoples, but he himself lived not in the palaces he had seized, but in a yurt. He sought to bring wise men from all over the world to him. Together with these wise men, he talked about how they could go about making people happy, and how to help everyone come to know eternity and immortality of peoples. Of all conquerors of the Earth, his empire endured the longest. He knew something. He attained and displayed it, but the empire collapsed all the same. And Genghis Khan has come down to us through the ages as just a conqueror. Who from among those alive today is able to say what his true intentions were? He didn’t give voice to them.”

“Well, perhaps they were just destroyed or are preserved in scrolls somewhere now.”

“Intentions should be preserved not only in scrolls, but in the hearts of the people. Genghis Khan wasn’t able to give voice to them so that they would be passed from generation to generation through the ages.”

¹⁶ **Translator’s note:**

The original Russian phrase is “среда обетованная” (transliterated “sreda obetovannaya” and pronounced “sree-DAH ah-bee-TOH-vuhn-nuh-yuh”). This phrase both echoes the phrase “dwelling land” (“среда обитания”, transliterated “sreda obitaniya” and pronounced “sree-DAH ah-bee-TAH-nee-yuh”) and is also meant to echo the Biblical phrase “promised land” (in Russian “земля обетованна” (transliterated “zemlya obetovanna” and pronounced “zeem-LYAH ah-bee-TOH-vuhn-nuh”). Thus, although “среда” is often translated as “habitat”, I chose to translate it here as “the land around you”, so as to retain the link to both “promised land” and the word “land” in the phrase “dwelling land”. See note 10 for discussion of the latter phrase.

“Those are striking examples. It’s amazing – why, for millions of years didn’t people attach any particular importance to the need to give voice to their lives? Now I’m thinking the same thing, that this document presages a new era. Tell me, Anastasia, how will you give voice to your aspirations – both before people and yourself?”

“Why, all of my aspirations are already laid out in your books, Vladimir. If I were to add anything else specific, I’d say, ‘I will gather together the best sounds from the whole Universe and will embed them into combinations of letters and into musical notes.’ I will ask today’s poets, you, Vladimir, and the bards to give voice to them. A great many people will sense them with their souls. Let people express them in a language they understand, let them model the dawn of the earth and its beautiful flowering. And when the melodies of man’s worthy land embrace the entire Earth, then I, amongst our kind neighbors, will help our grandchildren create their homesteads, and all the while, I will not forget my own family space.

“But what should I say to myself, and how should I voice my own declaration before people?”

“Each person needs to consider that on his own.”

“Yes. Of course. Each person on his own. Even this draft I already have resonates with me. I’ll think on my own about what I can add to it to make it my own.

“I’ll ask all the readers to consider it, too.

“This document is essential. It’s an important missive from the founders of a family homestead to the future generations of their family line. It’s a directive that comes from the people and goes to those at all levels of power, a communication with them. It will be a good thing if each family keeps a beautifully designed document like this, like a kind of relic, alongside the family book¹⁷ of the family homestead’s founders or those who intend to found one.

“A person will read it with awe and gratitude in his family homestead’s beautiful garden even a hundred years later, and he’ll read it and recall the founder. And another person, a hundred years later, a person who has lost his way in life’s whirlwind will suddenly come across it as he’s looking through his parents’ old things and will read about their unfulfilled intentions. And the person will have a burning desire to make them a reality.

“And I think it would also be useful to send this kind of document to each member of local governments personally, and to the UN.

¹⁷ **Translator’s note:**

The original Russian here is “родовая книга” (transliterated “rodovaya kniga” and pronounced “ruh-dah-VAH-yuh KNEE-guh”). This phrase, coined by Vladimir Megre, refers to a book that each family creates when they establish a family homestead. In the family book, family members will write down information about the members of the family line and about the family homestead, so that this valuable information will be preserved and handed down from generation to generation for centuries to come.

“Similarly, I consider it essential to establish a yearly scientific and practical conference called ‘Family Homesteads of the Future.’ under the auspices of the UN.”

MY LONELY LITTLE HECTARE

Anastasia has one trait that is, in my opinion, a bit aggravating. She possesses a colossal volume of information and is happy to answer many questions, but there are some she categorically refuses to answer. Sometimes this categorical nature of hers annoys me, and sometimes it simply enrages me. But even when she sees my annoyance and rage, she nonetheless maintains her position.

For example, she categorically refuses to make a sample layout for a family homestead and its landscaping. “If I were to do that, I’d be meddling in your creation, Vladimir, putting the brakes on your thought’s motion. I would be the one birthing the design, not you. It would be as if it were not your own child,” she says, and then she brings in various other arguments, as well.

But a serious and insoluble situation had come up for me that was precisely concerned with establishing a homestead. I spent a long time thinking about how to convince Anastasia to either help me or to say that the problem was insoluble so that I wouldn’t spend my time and have nothing to show for it.

I made another attempt to win Anastasia over and convince her to sacrifice her principles. I picked a suitable time – it was a sunny day and the taiga was fragrant. Anastasia was sitting beneath a cedar tree, weaving her golden hair into a braid. I was walking back and forth near her, mentally selecting some weighty arguments. She was the first to speak. Smiling, she asked affectionately:

“Have some complicated thoughts gotten you all stirred up, Vladimir? You’re right here beside me, yet at the same time, in your thoughts, you’re far from these parts.”

I took a seat next to Anastasia and began to speak, trying to be as convincing as possible.

“You see, Anastasia, a certain situation has come up, and I can’t possible deal with it without your help.”

“What situation, Vladimir?”

“Seven years ago, not far from the city of Vladimir, when I was having a look at the surrounding countryside, I drove onto a field in my jeep and got stuck. The vehicle was stuck up to its underside and the only way to pull it out was to use a tractor. While I was waiting for the tractor driver, I looked around at the abandoned field, overgrown with tall weeds. It was a rather pretty spot there. The field was surrounded by a mixed

forest, and a stream flowed in front of the forest, and not far off, you could glimpse a big lake. And I thought, it would be a good thing if a settlement of family homesteads were to spring up here. People would build pretty homes, dig flower beds, put in gardens and build some normal roads.

“And I could hardly believe it – that’s exactly what happened: a year later, on that very spot. People – readers of the ‘Ringed Cedars of Russia’ book series – began acquiring land so they could build family homesteads. The organizers suggested I take a hectare, too, and – I don’t even why, myself – I agreed. Maybe right then I felt like supporting them. But I hardly did anything at all with my hectare, and sometimes I’d totally forget about it. I only called twice and asked people to sow some mustard on the land, to improve the soil. The lands there are not very fertile – there’s layer of fertile soil about fifteen to twenty centimeters thick, and below that there’s about thirty centimeters of sand, and below that, nothing but clay.

“I totally forgot about my hectare. I have an apartment and a country house not far from town. You know of it, Anastasia. And I have a place to live in Siberia, too.

“But then, five years later, I happened to come to the spot where my jeep had gotten stuck. Even as I was driving up, I was astounded by what I saw. Can you imagine, Anastasia? Miracles *do* happen! Along both sides of the big lake, in the spot where there used to be a deserted space, there were homes. All different kinds. Big ones, solid ones and totally tiny ones. Driveways paved with gravel led from the main road to the homes. People had divided up the abandoned fields surrounding the lake into plots and were building up their family homesteads.

“I recalled how I’d dreamed there, by my stuck jeep, about family homesteads on just one field. But here, I could hardly believe it – people were settling all the fields surrounding the lake. A little island of the new and happy Russia was being born on this deserted space, overgrown with tall weeds.”

“That means your dream was powerful, Vladimir, and correct. They embraced it. And now you’ve seen the way it’s materializing, developing.”

“I should have been more careful what I wished for, five years ago, by my jeep. If I’d known how everything would turn out, then I’d have nipped that dream in the bud. I failed to take one thing into account, Anastasia.

“Now I’ll tell you everything in order. And this is where I desperately need your help.”

“Go on, then, Vladimir, and tell me everything in order.”

“Five years later, I was riding along a gravel road in that very same jeep with one of the local settlers. One spot caught my eye, and I stopped the jeep by a hectare that was overgrown with tall weeds. To the left of it, on another hectare, was a construction trailer, and next to it – a beautiful home with a roof had been put up. It didn’t have any

glass in the windows as of yet, but from all appearances you could see that people were making their family homestead livable. And to the right of the abandoned hectare was a beautiful, wooden home, too, as well as farmyard structures, and a bathhouse, and they'd dug a pond. It was as if this home on the right took great pride in its flower beds and, of course, in the people that had made it beautiful. And then I said to my travelling companion, 'I get the impression that these hectares of land have their own fates, and that their fates are tied with the people's.'

"'I think so, too,' my travelling companion replied. 'Probably, each person has his own hectare of land somewhere on Earth, but he doesn't know anything about it, or has forgotten about it.'

"I went on talking. 'When huge fields are abandoned, individual hectares don't feel so insulted, because they're all in the same situation, like homeless children. But this is a different case. It's insulting. The hectares to the right and the left are being set up, but this one, between the two of them, looks like an abandoned child.'

"My companion said nothing and even looked down somehow, as if he felt awkward, both for the hectare overgrown with tall weeds, and for the person who'd abandoned it.

"And I asked, 'Whose hectare is this?' 'It's yours, Vladimir Nikolaevich,' my travelling companion replied, without raising his eyes.

"'Mine?...'

"'Yes. Well, we all got together and made a driveway onto it. We laid a pipe in the ditch and covered it over with stone. We put in posts to mark the driveway, and we planted little fir trees on both sides. But nothing more – each person looks after his own land.'

"I got out of the car. On my hectare, which is almost an exact square, a hundred meters by a hundred, and which abuts the forest, only tall weeds were growing. It didn't just *seem* abandoned and lonely, like a homeless child. No, it was far worse off than a homeless child. Even a homeless child can go off somewhere, find himself some friends among his peers and somehow get himself set up. My hectare couldn't do that.

"I set off along the perimeter of the plot and suddenly saw two beautiful little flowers amongst the tall weeds. It was autumn. September. But they were blooming. You couldn't see them from the road because the weeds were taller. 'Wow,' I thought, 'My hectare is striving to be beautiful, too. Who knows how the flower seeds got here, but my hectare grew them and is reaching out to me through these little flowers, the way a child reaches out with his arms, and it's asking me to do something.'

"And some irresistible desire arose in me, the desire to set up this plot of land, no matter what, so that it would be no worse than other people's plots, and maybe even better. I don't know why that kind of desire arose. I wasn't thinking of this plot of land

as a family homestead for my family. I just wanted to make everything on it right and beautiful. And I didn't just *want* to – suddenly some irresistible idea arose to make it the best of all of them. Maybe later on it will draw my granddaughters to it. When it becomes the best in the world.

“I've returned to my hectare many times in my mind. I've sketched out the layout of various outbuildings on paper and made a list of the plants that should grow on it. I had to finish my work on the book and take care of a great number of other day-to-day affairs, but this hectare continually stirred up my thoughts in a pleasant way and even led my thoughts away from unpleasant problems. It's amazing, but it's actually thanks to it that I've been able to overcome a whole series of day-to-day difficulties and psychological problems. You know, there really is something mysterious in man's bond with the land. Some living link stands behind this bond. And the desire to make my land beautiful and well-tended has grown stronger and stronger.”

“A good desire has arisen within you, Vladimir, even passionate, I'm sensing. It will also be of help to you.”

“‘It' who?’”

“Your hectare. You yourself say that it stirs up your thoughts and leads them away from unpleasant problems.”

“There are very big challenges connected to that hectare, Anastasia. It's kind of like a child with a congenital physical defect.”

“What kind of defect?’”

“Nothing will grow on those lands except weeds. Vegetables won't grow. And the people in those parts don't have normal gardens. There's a village nearby, it's two hundred years old, but the village residents don't have normal gardens, either. Those lands there have a very thin fertile layer, and then right below it, nothing but clay. In the spring the water sits on the surface for a long time, and in the summer, too, if you get a rainy summer. Most plants' roots can't penetrate the clay. If you were to dig a deep hole in the clay, fill it with fertile earth brought in from somewhere, even then the tree might die. Water will collect in the clay pit in the rainy season, the clay will retain it, and the roots will rot.”

“Vladimir, I do not think that the situation is so very hopeless as you've painted it. Tell me, how do the people feel about what is happening? Maybe they're disheartened?”

“No, they're not disheartened. The majority of them, they sense that this is their family land, for centuries to come. Some of them, even their parents come to visit, live there for a bit and then ask to be buried not in a cemetery, but on the family homestead. Everything's fine, but the fact that the land can't bear fruit in a normal way is very

upsetting to me. I even regretted having dreamt of a settlement springing up on this spot. Now it's like I feel guilty.”

“What steps will you take now, Vladimir, in regard to your own hectare?”

“I don't intend to abandon it. I think there must be some way out.”

“I also think so. You must search for it and find it.”

“I've searched for it, but I haven't found it. So, I'm asking you to please help.”

“What task are you posing, Vladimir? Lay it out, in detail.”

I was overjoyed that Anastasia had asked about the specifics of the task, and I decided to formulate it in the most complicated way possible. Otherwise, I thought, it wouldn't be interesting for her. I began to explain:

“Anastasia, I'm asking you, I ask from the bottom of my heart, please arrange it so that apple trees and plum and pear trees, and cherries and sour cherries can grow on my hectare, and on other people's, too. So grapes can ripen! And good flowers and various shrubs. And also arrange it so that all of this can be done at minimal expense. Something an average person can afford, not an oligarch who can put in millions of dollars.”

“Is that all, Vladimir?”

“No, Anastasia, that's not all. I ask you, please. I ask you from the bottom of my heart. Arrange it so that all of this comes to pass in no longer than three years.”

“Four or five years would be better.”

“No, in three.”

“You've set a fine task for yourself, Vladimir. I will genuinely rejoice when you solve it.”

I actually got worked up to a fever pitch by that answer. I jumped to my feet, but restrained myself and didn't say anything rude. I tried to calm down – as much as that was possible – and explain:

“Anastasia, after all, I'm not just asking on my own behalf. Please understand. There are three hundred families there on that spot. Three hundred. They're building family homesteads. They've understood what you've said, they've felt it deeply. It's become their dream! But they're setting up their homesteads on land that is totally, totally low in productivity. It's even listed that way in the books. These people wouldn't be able to get any other kind of land. Before, back before Perestroika, these lands belonged to a State farm. At that time, the State worked to improve those lands – with a drainage system, by sinking pipes into the ground to drain off the water, but even

so, aside from grain, nothing would grow on them.

“And now all those improvements are no longer in existence, the equipment has all been stolen, and there’s practically nothing that can be done. And would it even be worth doing, since it didn’t help? How can we improve the productivity of the soil on my hectare now?”

“And besides that, I can’t fully imagine the layout of my entire plot. I really want to make everything beautifully and quickly. I need to catch up to the people who are five years ahead of me. And so here I’m asking you to help, to do this layout for me and choose the plantings.”

“Yes, certainly, Vladimir, the layout is very important. The layout – it is creation done with the help of the thought of the future, and then the materialization takes place. But if you farm out the layout to me, then what of *yours* will be materialized on that plot of land?”

“I’m telling you – I’m also planning it myself, but I’m afraid of making a mistake. So, in practice I came up against something that would seem to be such a simple matter, like a living fence, and it turns out that it’s not a simple matter at all. You can work on improving it forever, but you need just as much knowledge as a space ship designer. You have to know what plant blooms at what time, what kind of soil it needs, how tall it will get over the summer, what kind of flowers it has and how they’ll go with the other plants’ flowers, and a whole lot more. I made a plan to build something out of cob, but the experts say it the rain will wash it away. Can you imagine – I’ll be building something and will hire workers, and then I’ll be a laughing stock.”

“Even if you do make a mistake, Vladimir, then it will be *your* mistake, and it will materialize. For this reason, you need to do the layout yourself. Certainly, you can consult with someone, but in this case, the final decision must always rest with you. In the spring, Vladimir, it is all right for you to plant only annuals, and when they grow up, mow them down and enrich the soil. And do the very same the following year.”

“I can’t wait. I want to do things fast. Otherwise I’ll lose more than a whole ‘nother year.”

“Perhaps you shouldn’t rush? It’s better to do everything on a sound footing. What’s more, if you set yourself the condition of creating everything anew all in one year, then you will be extremely limited in your choice of plantings, and in the autumn, when all the annuals dry up and your living fence is left without any plantings, it might disenchant you. Now, if you do everything properly, then you will receive more positive emotions. Although certainly, it is also possible to do everything using a fast track approach.”

Anastasia grew thoughtful for a moment, and it seemed to me that she was considering the fast track approach, but here is what we ended up with.

THE OBSTACLE OF LACK OF FAITH

“What you are asking for, Vladimir, can be done. I sense that it can be done, but you do not want to seek the solution yourself. Rather than spending your energy on the search, you are expending it on convincing me to find a solution.

“You have placed an obstacle before you, consisting of lack of faith in your own powers, and, as you try to convince me, you are fortifying this obstacle more and more. Beyond it, Vladimir, beyond your obstacle of lack of faith in your own powers, there are beautiful gardens blooming and glorious flowers growing, and amongst them are living happy people. Yet you cannot see all of this. The obstacle you have constructed keeps you from doing so.

“If I find the solution, then it will grow more fortified still. What’s more, the solution might turn out to be very, very simple, and that would be an affront to you. You will think, why ever couldn’t I guess that myself? You will decide it is clear that you are not competent.

“You have turned to me, perhaps thinking me a sorceress who is capable of bringing to bear powers unknown to man to solve your problem, but I am no sorceress at all. Through my feelings, I am able to take in from the Universe information about everything that has been, about everything that the Universe knows, but every person is also capable of taking in the very same information, if he does not erect the obstacle of lack of faith in his own powers. If he is physically healthy and if he thinks in an undistorted way.

“The information of the Universe resembles that which a supercomputer can contain within it. A person who possesses a computer taps several keys and receives the information he needs. Now imagine, Vladimir, that instead of tapping several keys, you ask me to do that. A person is in continual need of information, and if he does not himself know how to tap these keys himself, then he will always need to have alongside him someone who does know how.”

“Well, I know how to get information using a computer. I *don’t* know how to get it from the Universe.”

“It’s simple, very simple: seek the solution of your problem yourself. Believe that you, precisely *you*, will find the correct solution. The most correct one.”

“Well, I’ve been thinking bout this, thinking about it for a whole year, and there’s no answer.”

“And I am telling you: the answer cannot make its way through the obstacle you have constructed, and your fervent appeal to me only confirms this. I will not solve your problem for you.”

Anastasia’s decisive refusal to help me outraged me.

“Well, of course, you won’t. You’re firm in your convictions. No arguments can make you act otherwise,” I said, with bitter irony. “I repeat, again: there are three hundred families there, and God forbid the same situation arises for people building family homesteads in other places that has arisen here, but there are three hundred...”

“Vladimir, perhaps God actually gave rise to this situation. Imagine: if there had been fertile soil there right from the start, then these people would not have received these spots. Perhaps God himself arranged everything this way, and those in power deemed these lands unsuitable for growing gardens. This situation made it possible for three hundred families to acquire this land and begin building family homesteads. Perhaps someone is even having a laugh at their expense and figuring that their heavenly oases won’t succeed, but the information will push its way through to one of them in the form of a tiny spark, and these spots will be lit up by billions of flowers on fruit trees and in the grasses.”

“Maybe it *will* push its way through, that tiny spark, but look, we want to live today, now, and with a beautiful vision of the future, not with hopelessness.”

All of a sudden I sensed a pleasant warmth behind my back and turned around. My son Volodya¹⁸ was standing next to me. Our eyes met, and the unusual warmth grew stronger.

My son’s face looked like Anastasia’s and maybe a little bit like mine when I was young. His height was nearly equal to mine. His still youthful build was distinguished by its good proportions and unusual athleticism – one expressed through ideal balance, rather than artificially pumped up muscles.

My son’s gaze... it resembled Anastasia’s affectionate gaze, and in this gaze there was also... You see, in his gaze you could detect an inexplicable confidence. An inexplicable and somehow calm confidence. It’s as if he has no idea that any difficulties even exist in life, or as if he can’t imagine any situations that man can’t overcome.

Volodya bowed to me and then began speaking, addressing Anastasia:

“Mama, I heard what you were speaking of here. Mama, please allow me to address you and express my opinion.” He bowed deferentially to Anastasia and silently awaited her reply.

¹⁸ **Translator’s note:**

Volodya (in Russian, “Володя”, transliterated “Volodya” and pronounced “Vah-LOH-dyuh”) is a diminutive name Vladimir.

This was the first time I had seen or felt the kind of deference and love he had for Anastasia. He probably couldn't begin a conversation without her permission.

Anastasia looked at our son attentively, in no hurry to answer. There was no severity in her gaze, but rather tenderness and respect.

"Strange," I thought. "Why is she taking so long to answer this simplest request of his? The speed of her thought is great – in the space of such a long pause she would be able to calculate a multitude of variations of the way events could play out. But here, there's nothing to calculate."

Anastasia finally replied:

"Do speak, my dear son. Papa and I will listen to you attentively."

"Mama, I feel it would be good and correct for you to help Papa. I feel it's important for him to solve this problem. And if you help him, the obstacle of lack of faith in his own powers and his own intelligence will not grow more fortified, but rather, smaller. It will even crumble – partially, perhaps, but it will still crumble." And Volodya fell silent.

Once again, Anastasia did not answer right away. For some time she looked at our son affectionately, smiling, and then she said:

"Well, of course you are right, my dear son – in the given situation, it really is necessary to help Papa. Volodya, you go ahead. Please help Papa. The two of you will find a solution, along with other people. It will be best if you begin searching for it right away, right here, and I will not hinder you."

Anastasia turned and began slowly moving away from us. After taking a few steps, she turned around and added:

"You are faced with co-creating a very interesting and useful deed – demonstrably and significantly perfecting the dwelling land."

My son and I stood before each other. I asked him:

"Tell me, Volodya, can you use all the information there is in the Universe, the way Mama can? Many thinkers speak of it. Stanislav Lem, a very famous writer, he said the Universe is like a supercomputer. We can't get along without it. Do you have any success in utilizing it?"

"Not in utilizing it as fast as Mama does."

"Why not?"

"Because Mama is a purebred."

"What does that mean, 'a purebred'?" I asked in surprise.

“That means the wellspring peoples’ breed has been preserved in her.”

“And why hasn’t it been preserved in you? Oh, I get it...” And I thought to myself, “It’s because I’m not a purebred. That’s probably the way Anastasia explained it to him. But then why the heck did she agree to have a child with a non-purebred? She couldn’t find anyone else? Is that what it means?”

My son looked at me attentively. It’s possible he understood what I was thinking about, and he said:

“Mama loves you very much, Papa. Come along with me. I’ll show you two things.”

“Let’s go,” I said, agreeing, and set off following my son.

When we got to the entrance to the dug-out where I’d spent the night with Anastasia when we first met, Volodya moved aside a stone, thereby opening up a way into a longish little cave, or den. He stuck his hand inside and, as if taking something out of a safe, pulled out an empty cognac bottle and a stick.

I recognized it: this was the bottle from which I’d drunk the cognac when we first met, when we stopped for a rest. “Wow,” I thought. “She kept the bottle.”

“But what’s that stick?” I asked Volodya.

“This is the stick you wanted to hit Mama with, when, before I was born, she wouldn’t agree to give me to you to raise.”

“She could have not saved the stick,” I said sheepishly.

“Mama says that when you were holding this stick, a great deal of energy was surging through you, and now it’s very dear to her.”

“But what does she do with them, with these things? At the very least, she might collect water in the bottle.”

“Mama doesn’t collect water in it. She often comes to this spot, moves aside the stone, takes the bottle and the stick in her hand, looks at them, smiling, and says some words. She’s made it so that you’ll live forever, Papa. From time to time you’ll go to sleep for a moment and awaken in a new body.”

I was stunned. “But how can you create such a thing with words?”

“You can create a great deal with words, Papa, and especially when these words are uttered by Mama. Oh, and when she repeats them so often, besides.”

“What words are these, Volodya?” I asked my son softly.

And my son began, as if reciting poetry, to recite the words Anastasia would

often utter at this spot:

“My love, you and I have before us all eternity. Life always comes into its own. A little ray of sun will shine in the springtime, the Soul will don a new body, but the mortal body, too, has reason to meekly embrace the earth – fresh flowers and grass will rise in the springtime from our bodies. And should you, retaining your lack of faith, scatter to the winds as specks of dust in the vast Universe, then I, my love, will put you back together again from the specks of dust wandering adrift for eons on end.”

“Volodya, I also heard Anastasia say these words one day. I thought it was just some pretty phrase she was uttering. I had no idea they had a literal meaning.”

“Yes, Papa, they have a literal meaning.”

“Well, how do you like that,” I said, drawing out the words. “Many thanks to Anastasia for eternity.”

“Papa, say thank you to Mama when you see her. Say it to her with belief in her words, and she will be very happy.”

“I’ll tell her.”

“We need to solve your problem, Papa, the problem that’s now our shared problem. Let’s go to the lake. We’ll sketch out a layout of the hectare you’re talking about in the sand, and we’ll think about how to set it up. We’ll think very powerfully and we’ll think until the correct solution comes to us.”

I walked behind my son and thought, “Well, but how? How can it come to us, this solution? There’s no answer to be found, not in the literature and not on the Internet. I’d searched for it everywhere, but hadn’t found it. I’d consulted with experts on agricultural methods, and they hadn’t given me any valuable advice. But he, Volodya, had clearly not read anything on this question. He didn’t have Anastasia’s capabilities. He didn’t know how to utilize information from the entire Universe. Then what could he use to help him find something there? But there he was, walking along, as if he was capable of solving the problem. We need to do something that will be more effective than meaningless expectations or searching.” And I decided I’d talk with my son.

“Stop, Volodya. Let’s have a seat on that tree there. I need to have a serious chat with you.”

“All right, Papa, let’s have a seat. I’ll listen to you attentively.”

We sat down on the trunk of a fallen tree. My son laid his hands on his knees and looked at me attentively with Anastasia’s gaze, but I didn’t know how to start off this not very pleasant conversation with him. Not very pleasant, but necessary.

“Now I’m going to say some things that may be not very pleasant for you,

Volodya, but I need to say them.”

“Go ahead and say them, Papa. I can endure unpleasant things. I won’t be offended.”

“Volodya, you need to understand that Anastasia directed you to help me so that I’d stop pestering her with my questions. You won’t be able to offer any help whatsoever, not to me, and not to those people who are setting up their homesteads. You don’t have Mama’s capabilities, you don’t know your way around agricultural methods, and clearly, you don’t know what ‘landscape design’ is. Am I right?”

“Papa, I think that landscape design is when a person is planning to create a space that’s beautiful.”

“That’s more or less it, but in order to make it beautiful, people who have a knack for this also spend five years or more studying, sharing information and looking at various illustrations. But have you seen even one well-designed homestead?”

“When Mama and I went to the village, I saw the way, on the land around their houses, people...”

“All you’ve seen is village gardens that have no design at all.”

“Yes, Papa, gardens. But I’ve imagined how I would make my own homestead. I’ve reflected on that often and imagined it.”

“Just imaginings alone aren’t enough. You need serious and comprehensive knowledge that you don’t have. And so, it follows that you have no basis for thinking. As for me, well, I’ve been thinking for a lot more than a year. And not just thinking – I’ve been consulting with experts, too. It’s all no use. And we won’t be able to get this business off the ground now simply with our thinking. But you really *can* help. I’ve hatched a plan. You should help me convince Anastasia to join in with us on solving this problem. If we give it all we’ve got, she’ll give in.”

“But Papa, Mama already made a decision. And her decision *is* help. I cannot allow myself to try to convince Mama to reverse her decision.”

“I see! He can’t allow himself!” I cried. “So, when Mama tells you to help, you obey her without thinking. But when your father asks, then right away it’s ‘I won’t.’ So that’s how you’re being raised! No respect for your elders! For your father!”

“I have great respect for you, Papa,” Volodya objected calmly. “I will carry out your request and help you.”

“Now, that’s more like it. Now, let’s take a bit of a walk somewhere until evening, then we’ll go to Anastasia as if we’re really upset. She won’t be able to stand it and will start helping us.”

“Papa, when I said I would help, I mean that I’d work with you to solve the problem of how to make the soil more productive, and make a mock-up of the landscaping for the whole homestead.”

“Ah, so that’s how it is! You mean, you’ll help me solve it. Do you even get... Come on, you’ll get it...” And I set off walking toward the shore at a fast clip.

I used a twig to sketch out a plan in the sand of the hectare abutting the forest. Volodya used various grasses and sticks, which he stuck into the sand on one side, to represent the forest that abuts the side of the plot opposite the road. I had sketched the layout of the plot just so Volodya could realize in practical terms of how useless his attempts were. But then it happened that I myself got caught up in searching for all possible options.

We spent two days thinking about this problem of how to arrange it so that gardens would grow up and various vegetables would mature on not very fertile land. We went over and over it in our minds and discussed a great many options, but we weren’t finding a solution to the problem. And we weren’t finding a solution, because one of the conditions was to do everything with minimal resources. If not for that condition, then with enough money we could bring in fertile dirt on dump trucks, but we would need a minimum of fifty loads of dirt. Each load costs seventeen thousand rubles. It follows that we’d need eight hundred-fifty thousand rubles.

The majority of the three hundred families couldn’t afford that. What’s more, in the spring, water close to the surface might wash out the fertile layer and carry it away as it ran off to the flat lands.

In order to distract ourselves from what at that point seemed like the hopeless problem of improving the soil’s productivity, Volodya and I began designing the landscaping for the area. Or, more precisely, we attempted to arrange various structures so that they’d complement each other and the surrounding area.

I explained to Volodya:

“First of all we need to build the outhouse and the bath house, then the shed, the home, the garage, the root cellar and the greenhouse. We have to arrange all of this somehow so it will be both pretty and convenient.”

We constructed a mock-up of the home out of sand and placed it at the center of the plot. The bath house and outhouse were next to the home, and the shed on the backside of the home. We created the greenhouse out of sand, too. We laid a little white stick atop the oblong mound so it would look like glass or plastic sheeting.

Clearly, this greenhouse wouldn’t fit in anywhere. We built it first to the right of the home and then to the left, but even so, it stuck out of the overall grouping like a sore thumb. And really, I didn’t like this so-called grouping itself, and, to all appearances, neither did Volodya. Gazing thoughtfully at the rough design, he said:

“We’ve made some kind of mistake.”

“And not just one,” I added. “Looks like there’s a lot of them.”

“But even so, I think it’s one. There must be some kind of right approach, some principle, some view, or some other kind of thing that will solve all the problems at once.”

“And what kind of new approach could that possibly be? I’ve laid everything out the way most people in the country do. This layout has been worked out over the centuries. It’s all we’ve got. People just can’t have been mistaken for centuries, not knowing some principle that might not even exist at all.”

“It does exist. I sense that.” Volodya was silent for a bit and then added, “Or, perhaps it *will* exist. We have to think, Papa, and we’ll find it.”

“And where the heck will we find it, if neither you nor I is in contact with this Universal data base?”

“We’ll look for it within ourselves.”

“Well, maybe *you’ll* find it within you, but I’ll be sixty years old soon, and I probably won’t have enough time.”

“We’ll have enough time, Papa. We’ll definitely have enough time. I’ll try very, very hard. I’ll find it. We’ll find it.”

I had strained my thoughts to such a great extent, that even during the night, when I’d fallen asleep on the fragrant grasses in the dug-out, I kept going over and over all possible options in my dreams. In my dreams, the fruit trees and flowers grew quickly, right before my very eyes, but then they just as quickly wilted and fell without giving any fruit.

A DUEL OF WIZARDS

By the middle of the second day, we were considering this option: what if we didn't drive ourselves crazy worrying about soil productivity and didn't draw the spring waters off the plot, but rather, blocked the streams from draining off and chose plants that love water? This option proved somewhat sparse, and it lacked a good garden. At this point Anastasia came up, leading our daughter by the hand.

Little Nastenka probably figured that Volodya and I were playing some kind of game. She quickly sat down with us and began attentively looking over the mock-up. We'd already dug out a pit on it to represent the pond. On the edge there was a mountain of sand that represented the clay, since there was a lot of clay in the soil on the plot.

So as not to sit there like a lump, I began running a stick around the perimeter of the hectare, deepening the boundary line. Then I threw away the stick and began simply looking at the sand mock-up.

On all fours, Nastenka crawled right up to the mock-up, sat down at the edge, thoughtfully rubbed her little nose for some reason and suddenly... Her chubby little hand started raking the sand onto the boundary line and forming a little hill. She did this slowly and carefully. When she got to the middle of one of the sides of the hectare, Volodya, too, began making an oblong little hill on his side. And without knowing why myself, I also began raking the sand up onto the line with both hands.

What we ended up with was a hectare framed on four sides with an earthen mound. Silently, we looked at what we'd created. Each of us, me included, was probably trying to understand what this might mean.

Anastasia's voice rang out behind my back. "Ah! I've got it! How great! You've found a very unusual solution! Now, now I will attempt to understand, to guess your intention more precisely. There! I've got it! You decided to take the already existing fertile soil on the hectare and spread a nearly meter-high mound of fertile soil along the perimeter of the hectare. And to use a portion of the fertile layer as well as sand. Great! You've increased the thickness of the fertile layer.

"Around the perimeter of the entire plot, you decided to make two little walls of cob, four meters apart. There will be a lot of clay from digging the pond, and you can use it to construct these little walls. In this way, your mound will end up being inside a clay trench. Into this trench you will throw branches and rotting foliage from the forest, and then you will even out the earth on top of them. You will have a long, four-hundred-meter compost trench in which the elevated earth will be above the

regular level of the whole plot. The clay walls will prevent the fertile layer from sliding off when the spring rains fall.

“The elevated earth will warm up more quickly in the spring, and this will enable you to set out many plants two weeks earlier than usual. This means that you have correctly understood, that it makes less sense to make compost by digging a hole in earth where water stands on the surface for a long time, since the pit will fill with water, water which, in soil with much clay in it, will have nowhere to go, and if you plant fruit trees in it, their roots can rot.

“On this mound, already the first year, you will be able to plant corn and sunflowers, and along the external sides – flowers. By autumn, already in the very first year, the hectare will be framed not simply by a mound, but by a mound on which a two-meter high green fence will grow. Closer on to autumn you will cover it over, spread earth over it again, and by the next spring, this mound will grow more fertile still. When the earth firms up, you will be able to set out on it fruit trees, vegetables and flowers. Over time, the clay walls might settle, due to moisture, but even so, the settled clay will still retain the fertile layer, and the plants’ roots will keep it from sliding off.

“And those half-meter cob squares you will have built next to the pond – what are they for? Oh, don’t tell me! I’ve got it. You will fill them with fertile soil you’ve brought from the forest, and you’ll plant fruit trees in them, and around the trees – vegetables and flowers.

“It’s great, what a simple and original solution you’ve found. You decided to raise the fertile layer in the necessary spots, increasing it to half a meter. The roots will be warm and comfortable in a little hill like that. And after that, the trees that grow will themselves do what’s needed. Each autumn the trees will cast off their foliage, and it will all rot, increasing the fertile layer.

“It’s great. It’s as if you pushed a button and turned on a self-nurturing biological organism.”

I understood that Anastasia was laying out the solution *she* had found, but making it seem as if *we* had found it and all she was doing was figuring it out. This situation did not humiliate me in the least. I was thrilled with the solution she’d found. It was simple and beautiful and wouldn’t require large expenditures.

But Volodya was not at all thrilled. He was staring fixedly at the mock-up of the homestead without lifting his head. My heart even felt like it would break when I understood what might be going on in his soul at that moment. He felt awkward before me for having assured me that he could find a solution. And probably before himself as well, for not carrying out the task Anastasia had given him.

My son and I had grown closer over as we’d working on the design together over that day and a half, and I didn’t get offended at all any more at his stubbornness. I saw how Volodya was trying, sorting through all possible options for improving the soil’s

productivity. And now I felt sorry for him, and I even stopped listening to Anastasia. Really, you can't go and humiliate a child like that! It wasn't enough that the night before, I'd kept telling him, trying to prove he wouldn't be able to come up with anything – now Anastasia, too, with her ensuing criticism, had totally reduced our efforts to rubble. She shouldn't act that way. Or... It seemed to me that Anastasia was teasing our son on purpose, forcing him to rack his brains and speed up his thought.

“And so what does this square in the middle of your design represent?” Anastasia asked.

“It's the home,” I replied. “Volodya and I decided to situate the home right in the middle of the homestead. There are various farmyard structures around it. We've laid a road from the gates to the home, and flowers will be growing along the edges of the road.”

I was convinced that Anastasia would begin praising such a decision, which is why I said “Volodya and I,” although it had been my idea to situate the home in the middle of the homestead. I wanted to support my son in at least some way, but I'd ended up doing the opposite.

“Now, where is the entrance into your home?” Anastasia asked.

“On the driveway side, of course. You drive right straight up to the entrance, leave your car in the parking area right in front of it and go up to the veranda. There'll be a table there. We can drink tea with friends and admire the flowers.”

“As well as the driveway,” Anastasia added, her voice a bit needling.

“As well as the driveway,” I replied, “if the driveway is done in a pretty stone.”

“And what is situated behind the home?”

“Behind the home are the pond, the garden, and a vegetable garden of some kind.”

“That means your garden has ended up in the back yard. You're drinking tea on the veranda with your friends, admiring the flowers, and everything that's situated in the back yard is deprived of your attention. Vladimir, you know very well that all animals and plants need human attention. Without it, they are unable to fully fulfill their life's purpose.

“Plants can give a person the energies he needs, assuming they know precisely which energies he needs in the first place. But how will they learn about this if you limit your interaction with them? Vladimir, do you know what the purpose is of interacting with the plant world?”

“I do,” I replied, trying to hide my disappointment that – as it turned out – I hadn't been terribly successful in placing the home. Half the hectare, including the

garden, really had ended up in the back yard.

“And something else I don’t understand,” Anastasia continued, “is why you didn’t remove that huge hill on the bank of the pond. It weighs down the space.”

After hearing these words, Volodya couldn’t restrain himself any more. He stood up, bowed slightly to Anastasia as he’d done before, and said:

“Mama, please permit me to clarify this for you.”

“Please, dear son, clarify it.”

They were standing opposite each other, son and mother. But for some reason, I got the impression that they were two great wizards of the Universe standing opposite each other. Now they were going to enter into a duel. A duel of intelligence and man’s capabilities. My God, how beautiful Anastasia was! How enigmatic and extraordinary in her capabilities and thought was this woman who had become the person closest to me. One life, and even two, would not suffice for me to reach her level. And our son, whose facial features somewhat resembled Anastasia’s, was also handsome and statuesque, but a bit foolhardy or excessively self-confident. Why was he entering into the showdown? And in my presence, to boot. He himself has said that Anastasia’s capacities exceed his own. Probably, he’s proud and decisive, but a bit foolhardy. Even so, I was rooting for Volodya with all my heart – I wanted him to emerge victorious in this competition, whatever form it might take. And it began.

“This isn’t just a hill, Mama,” Volodya said.

“Then what in the world is it?” Anastasia inquired with a smile, her voice a bit needling.

“Well, how should I put it...”

Slowly, drawing out the words, clearly trying to think up some rational explanation for the hill, Volodya suddenly said:

“It’s the bath house, Mama.”

I even started, so surprisingly absurd was my son’s announcement, but, without knowing why myself, I affirmed this, with a kind of gravitas:

“Yes, it’s a normal contemporary bath house, a structure you really need on a homestead. If you don’t have a bath house, then where the heck are you going to wash and have a steam bath?” I tried to draw out the time every way I could, to give Volodya some way to get himself out of this fix and think of something. He would have been better off saying this mountain would be for skiing during the winter. He definitely was foolhardy. “And you can sleep in the bath house, too, before the home is ready,” I went on, continuing my line of reasoning. But now I didn’t know what to say next, and I fell silent.

“Strange. I see no resemblance between the mountain of clay and a bath house, and somehow, I see no entrance at all into this bath house,” Anastasia noted.

Well, that’s it, I figured – my son really put his foot in it with this bath house, and he’s lost. No more battle of the wizards. However, Volodya went on:

“This is just a mock-up, Mama. The hill that represents the clay – we’ve made it out of sand, and the sand slides off, and it’s difficult to show the entrance.” Just as before, Volodya spoke slowly, and clearly he was thinking about something very strenuously as he did so. And suddenly it was as if his face lit up, and he kept on talking, but precisely and confidently now: “When we do it out of clay, then right here, on the pond side, we’ll form a small entrance into an oval chamber with a cupola. The chamber’s diameter will be two or three meters. The height will be two meters and thirty centimeters. The walls of the structure might be as thick as a meter. There are ducts in the walls to let out the smoke and hot air, and they all come together in one big duct that you can then close off with a plug.

“There can be stones along the edges inside the oval chamber, and in the middle is where the fire will be lit.

“The interior walls of the space will heat up. You’ll be able to admire the fire from the pond side, and if you don’t want to admire it, you can cover the entrance over with a door. When the walls heat up and the fire goes out, a person can go inside the chamber. His body will be warmed from all sides, from below and from above. The clay will emit a very healthy and beneficial warmth for the person.”

“Yes, of course, that is a very healthy emission,” Anastasia said, now thoughtfully, “especially if you were to place a vessel there containing an infusion of medicinal herbs. Information about such a bath house did not exist in the Universe, and you could not have received it. This means you have added this information to the Universe, and now you...”

I looked at the little mountain of earth in the mock-up and imagined this bath house, and around it – flower beds, roses, and the bank of a beautiful pond. And even just from imagining it, some kind of most beneficial warmth really was spreading through my body. I intuitively understood that Volodya had thought up something that hadn’t previously existed. That made me extraordinarily joyful, as if my body and Soul were both rejoicing.

I began thinking once again about the overall homestead project, about how awesome and beautiful Anastasia was, both in body and mind. Naturally, she isn’t indifferent to this project and perhaps she deserved more credit than anyone for solving the problem of how to improve the soil productivity, a problem that we’d previously considered hopeless. Wow, what a thing to think of – raising a regular compost pit just above ground level and turning it into a living fence. That meant she’d agreed to help after all, her principles notwithstanding. To help in some discreet way. I walked up to Anastasia and softly whispered:

“You’re the one who thought all of this up. You found the solution. Thank you, Anastasia.”

“We thought it up together, Vladimir,” Anastasia said, also in a whisper, “and perhaps those three hundred families you spoke of deserve the most credit.”

“But *they* weren’t here while we were thinking.”

“Perhaps they weren’t here, but they were there, on their hectares, also contemplating the best steps to take. And just imagine, Vladimir, what if they didn’t exist at all? Would you have thrown the whole family into a tizzy? Would you really have racked your brains so and demanded with such agitation that we find a solution? If they did not exist, you might not have given this question the slightest of thoughts. Perhaps they, these three hundred families are the main figures behind this project.”

“Yes, I agree. We created it all together, and I thank you even more for that ‘together’, Anastasia.” And then I added, “And thank you, too, for the eternity you’ve given me. I was at the spot where you hid the empty bottle.”

Anastasia added, with slightly downcast eyes:

“And the stick.”

“And the stick,” I confirmed, and started laughing.

Anastasia also started laughing, a rolling, light-hearted laughter, and even little Nastenka began hopping around near the mock-up, swinging her little hands and laughing. Only Volodya, indifferent to what was going on, was still looking intently and thoughtfully at the mock-up.

And I suddenly felt unbearably sorry for my son. Despite the fact that he’d managed to think up the extraordinary bath house, he – naturally, of course – still considered that he hadn’t managed the task Anastasia had set for him.

And he probably felt uncomfortable before me, too, for not listening to me, for arguing that we’d get along without Anastasia. He really had tried, but ... I wanted to support him somehow, cheer him up. But how could I do that? I didn’t know.

Volodya was looking at the mock-up intently, most likely trying to come up with something else of his own in it. He didn’t understand that we’d already come up with what was most important.

Late in the evening, before going to sleep, I asked Anastasia:

“But where do Volodya and Nastenka sleep?”

“In various spots,” Anastasia replied. “Nastenka will sleep with me sometimes. Why are you inquiring about this, Vladimir?”

“Oh, no reason. I just wanted to talk with Volodya about something.”

“Then call him.”

“How do I call him? Do I shout, or what?”

“Just call him. He’ll hear.”

I called him. And a short time later, I saw our son coming in my direction. As before, he was intent as could be. When Volodya got closer to me, I asked him:

“Volodya, when did you come up with the mountain of clay being a bath house, and why didn’t you tell me about that earlier?”

“I decided to say that when Mama began criticizing our design and the clay mountain in our design. I decided to call it a bath house because you, Papa, told me, ‘First of all we need to build the outhouse and the bath house on the plot.’ The mountain was a bit too large to be an outhouse, and I decided to call it a bath house.”

“But then you began talking about how it would be arranged and used. Did you think that up on the fly, just like that, or maybe you’re able to use the Universal information after all, like Mama?”

“I can’t do it the way Mama does, Papa, but it’s possible that there’s some benefit in that, too. What I’m unable to receive information about – I try to quickly think that up on my own, and sometimes that works.”

“I’ll say! It works like a charm! You’re a real inventor. I can’t get your invention out of my mind. I’ve even decided to make up a working model when I get back. I’ll buy a clay pitcher, put a hole in its base and cover its mouth with a cover of some sort with a hole for a pipe. I’ll light a candle inside it and leave it for an hour or two – instead of a fire – so we can see how it’ll heat up. Only a pitcher’s walls are thin, so we won’t have a perfectly accurate model.”

“Papa, apply a layer of clay around the pitcher, and the model will be more accurate.”

“Perfect, I’ll apply a layer of clay. Now, Volodya, please forgive me, well, you know, for being so hot-headed and saying that you have nothing to think with. Don’t be angry with me.”

“I’ve never gotten angry at you, Papa,” he answered calmly.

“And I’m not angry at Mama. And of course you got it, that she was only pretending that we’d thought up that earthen mound along the hectare’s perimeter – actually, she and Nastenka gave us a hint.”

“Yes, Papa, I got all that.”

“But it’s not important, who thought it up. What’s important is that the problem with the soil has now been solved. Good for Anastasia, right, Volodya?”

“Mama challenged us to a duel, Papa.”

“A duel? She challenged us? I had that kind of feeling when you were standing opposite each other. Is that a kind of game, Volodya? To develop the mind, is that it?”

“You could say it’s a game, but to be more precise, it’s a duel.”

“That’s not a fair duel. Anastasia possesses information as broad as the Universe, but we don’t have that opportunity. How can we duel under those circumstances?”

Volodya heard out my arguments and replied, with calm confidence:

“I have accepted the challenge, Papa.”

“Well, there was no point in accepting it. The chances are a hundred percent you’ll lose! Then you’ll get upset, the way you got upset today. I saw the way you were sitting there all upset, hanging your head when Anastasia was talking about the earthen mound, about the home in the middle and the back yard. And here you’ll get even more upset.”

“I must not lose, Papa. If I lose, it will make Mama sad.”

“Well, then she should surrender to you in some non-obvious way, so that she herself won’t be sad afterwards.”

“Mama can’t surrender.”

“Oh, Volodya, Volodya – sometimes it seems to me you’re a bit foolhardy. Okay, what’s happened has happened. You go get some sleep, Volodya. I’ll go, too, and I’ll think about how best to situate the home on the hectare. Maybe I’ll think of something.”

“Yes, Papa, you need to get a good sleep. I wish you a serene sleep, Papa.”

My son and I went our separate ways, but I couldn’t go to sleep right away. I said to Anastasia:

“Don’t wait up for me. Go to sleep on your own, Anastasia. I need to think about something for a bit.”

I walked around by the entrance to the dug-out in the light of the white Siberian night, thinking about how to help Volodya. From time to time I’d look at the sleeping Anastasia. She was sleeping on her side, curled up into a ball with her palm beneath her head, and smiling a little about something in her sleep.

She's smiling like a child, the gentle beauty. But the day before – she sure had ripped our layout apart mercilessly! She'd called the spot where we'd put the home in the mock-up incorrect. Half the hectare had ended up as the back yard, she'd said. Of course, that really was the case. I needed to recall how homes were situated in the landscape design journals. Of course, Volodya wouldn't be able to solve the problem of where to situate the structures, since he didn't have the information. I'd have to think everything through. Otherwise, he'd lose all confidence in his own capabilities. I had such a strong desire to help my son that I sensed that I wouldn't fall asleep until I'd thought up something useful. I've seen lots of country homes with various structures on plots of land, so that meant it was up to me to find the correct solution. But it wasn't coming. Most of the houses I'd had occasion to see basically had their windows looking out over the driveway.

It was getting long past midnight, but I was still walking back and forth along the dug-out, sorting through various options for situating the home and farmyard structures.

And suddenly it came to me! It came to me just like that, somehow, as if it just erupted, and I really liked what came to me. Well, I'll give her an answer tomorrow! Yeah, I'll answer her!

I started imagining the way, the next day, I'd answer Anastasia's remark about the back yard. I'd start in an off-hand way: "Anastasia, you were saying something here yesterday about the spot where we put the home, about some kind of back yard."

"Yes," she'd say. "I was saying that half of your hectare has ended up in the back yard."

"That's not true, Anastasia. That's not the way it all is. You just failed to notice a little indentation on the mock-up. That's a veranda that goes around the whole home. When it's hot, we'll sit on the shady side with our friends, along the wall that's on the other side of the house from the entrance. We'll sit and admire the garden and the flower beds, and thus you don't have any back yard. An open veranda runs all around the house."

"Yes, that's true," Anastasia will say. "I didn't notice that."

I decided I'd come up with something good, and quietly, so as not to disturb her sleep, I laid down on the fragrant bed next to the sleeping beauty.

During the night I had a strange dream about the bath house. It was as if I was walking into it and closing the door behind me. And the bath house lifted up off the ground and was flying into the sky, picking up more and more speed.

THE FIERY BIRD

I woke up around eleven o'clock. Most likely I'd slept so long due to the two days of non-stop mental exertion. As soon as I woke up, I once again wanted to see my son and talk with him about the bath house. To tell him this wasn't simply a bath house. It was a multi-function structure. It could serve as an outdoor fireplace, where it would be great to sit with your friends or family. You could also dry clothing, mushrooms and many other things in it. You could bake bread and prepare tasty dishes in it. And it goes without saying that you could treat what ails you in it by warming your body with its extraordinary heat. I reflected this way as I walked to the spot where the homestead mock-up was, on the lakeshore. When I came out of the bushes, this is the picture that presented itself to me.

Alongside the mock-up of the homestead lay an exhausted she-wolf, her legs smeared with clay. About two meters from the she-wolf, a she-bear was shifting from foot to foot in a small pit – she was working the clay. Volodya, kneeling, was using the palms of his hands to smooth out the bath house he'd constructed of clay on the bank of the pond. But no! You'd be hard pressed to call what I saw there a bath house. Even my fear at the presence of the she-bear and she wolf took a back seat, and I went up closer.

The central part of what Volodya had constructed resembled the head and torso of some unusual kind of bird. At the base was a small opening – the entrance to the interior room. Extending out from the central part of the structure that resembled an unusual bird were its two wings. They were embracing the space. Beneath one of the wings sat a man and a woman who resembled Anastasia and me. A little girl was playing in the middle. It was a cloudy day – the sun would by turns shine brightly and hide behind the clouds. The shadows' play created the impression of a live bird that might lift off in flight as soon as the people went inside it.

I could hear Anastasia's voice – she had just come out onto the lakeshore, holding little Nastenka by the hand. "This is simply a hallucination of some kind. Since morning I have been thinking of nothing but your bath house. There's something extraordinary in it. I need to figure it out. I even..."

Anastasia stopped speaking, without finishing her sentence. She caught sight of what our son had constructed. Together with Nastenka, she went up closer, took a seat by the mock-up, put her arms around her little daughter and for a short while silently looked at the extraordinarily beautiful sculpture. And she began speaking, as if thinking aloud:

"Earth, fire, water, air, light rays, man. And all of it in one bird. And such an

extraordinary one – a bird resembling an eagle teaching its sons to fly.”

“This structure is multi-functional,” I remarked to Anastasia, pleased by her delight. “You can not only warm up with your friends in it, but bake bread, too, prepare good and dry mushrooms and other things, too.”

“Yes, you can. But you shouldn’t do that with friends. Only with close relatives, but more often on your own.”

“Why?”

“Vladimir, this apparatus might possibly function more effectively than a dolmen. You can meditate inside it.”

During our conversation, Nastenka went up to the mock-up and for some reason was diligently poking at it with her finger.

“Look, Anastasia, is our daughter Nastenka trying to destroy the mock-up?”

“I think she wants to show that we need to make some small round openings in the cupola, make little windows that look out onto the four sides of the world. Then in the day it will be light inside, and at night the stars will be visible.”

“And I planned to make a round window in the middle, too,” Volodya added.

Nastenka, as if she’d understood that everyone agreed with her, stopped boring holes in the clay with her finger and slowly – as if reflecting on some thoughts of her own – headed off in the direction of the forest.

“Anasta,” I said in her direction, without even understanding why myself.

Nastenka turned and looked at me intently. The breeze rearranged a lock of her hair and uncovered a birthmark on her forehead – it looked like a little star. The little girl smiled and continued her journey, whose goal was known to her alone.

Anastasia continued silently examining what Volodya had constructed. She was trying to comprehend something. Never before had I seen her so concentrated. Finally Anastasia began speaking, as if reasoning aloud:

“Five illuminated circles, and they will move in accord with the movement of the sun and of the moon. They will move across the walls and the floor of the interior oval or round chamber. That is very important. They will illuminate the person.”

“Tell me, Anastasia. What about the person who’s inside this structure – will he be able to restore his health, just the way he’d be able to in any bath house?”

“It will function more effectively than any bath house, or than all of them put together. The heated clay gives off rays that are very beneficial for a person. Blood will move more quickly through the veins, and the internal organs will warm and be

cleansed.”

“But specifically, what illnesses can be treated with a session in this structure?”

“A person will receive a healthy effect on his entire organism. Thus it follows that it will be easier for the organism to fight off any illness, but it is possible to focus the energies and direct them to a specific organ.”

“Well, take the kidneys, for example. How can you treat them? How can you direct the energies?”

“You need to pour clean sand into a wooden tub, roll the tub into the center of the oval chamber, and when the sand has heated up, bury yourself in it. Only your head should remain outside. Before this you should eat a good amount of watermelon. The sand is very good at absorbing sweat that comes out of the pores.”

“Well, sweat comes out of a person’s body even in a regular bath house. Why do you need to lie in the sand?”

“But Vladimir, look – in a regular bath house, where does the sweat which comes, for example, out of the upper pores on the back, or the chest or the shoulders flow away to?”

“What do you mean, where? It runs down.”

“Precisely. It runs down, along the other pores, thereby hindering them from perspiring. The dry, warmed sand is very good at absorbing moisture, and the sweat will flow out directly into the sand, rather than down along the person’s entire body. It is also good, when you’re in the sand bath, to drink a medicinal herbal infusion.”

“And what about the liver? How can you treat that?”

“Does this mean your liver is bothering you, too, Vladimir?”

“Yes, it bothers everybody.”

“Effective treatment of the liver in this structure can be carried out at three o’clock in the morning.”

“Why precisely at three?”

“At that time all the other organs help the liver cleanse itself of all the accumulated impurities within it. As well, if you place your palm on the spot where the liver is located and think of it with gratitude, and in your thoughts say to it ‘Thank you!’ then it will stir and begin to restore itself.”

“How can that be – restore itself? What, is it alive, or something?”

“Of course it’s alive, just as are all the organs of your body.”

“But why can you meditate well in this structure? You said it might possibly be more powerful than in a dolmen.”

“People who entered into a dolmen would go off into internal meditation. They were trying to transmit information to their descendants. The dolmen aided them in this. This unique apparatus is even more effective than a dolmen: it can help transmit information, but it can also, under certain conditions, receive information from the Universe and transmit it to the person inside, while hiding away deep within itself any negative information...”

Anastasia suddenly fell silent, looked at our son and asked him:

“Are you wanting to add something else to the homestead design, Volodya?”

“Yes, Mama. But first I want to be alone for a bit and think.”

“All right. We won’t hinder you.”

She took Nastenka by the hand, intending to leave. But Volodya said:

“Let Nastenka stay.”

And Nastenka, hearing her brother’s request, quickly slipped out of Anastasia’s arms and headed for the mock-up. Anastasia and I left.

DON'T JUDGE TOO HARSHLY

The next morning, Anastasia and I decided to go over to her grandfather's glade. I'd long been asking her to show me this spot, his glade, and besides that, I wanted to have a chat with him. According to what Anastasia has said, it would take no less than three hours to walk to her grandfather's glade. Consequently, such a hike might take up an entire day, but it stretched out to two days.

Even as we made our way through the taiga to her grandfather's glade, Anastasia and I spoke about homesteads.

"You know, Anastasia, many people who build family homesteads feel they shouldn't run electricity to their homestead or use all kinds of technology. Others do use it."

"And what do you think, Vladimir?"

"I think that at the beginning stage, you can't get along without technology and even without professional builders."

"You might possibly be right, Vladimir. Let the technical means that have accumulated over the centuries be used for good. A unity of opposites will result. But I think we must design life so that in the future we will gradually do without them."

For some time I walked silently behind Anastasia. I was stepping over the fallen trunks of old trees, skirting thickets of bushes along the invisible path and thinking my own thoughts, and maybe for that reason, I fell a bit behind. I even lost sight of her. But then, after I'd taken a few more steps, I heard Anastasia's voice.

"You must be tired, Vladimir. We can take a rest. Let's take a seat."

I agreed. "Let's. This isn't the easiest path. We've only been walking an hour, but it feels as if we've gone ten kilometers."

We sat down on a tree trunk. Anastasia held out a handful of currants to me that she'd collected along the way. I silently ate the delicious berries from the Siberian taiga and continued to think about my unpleasant situation. Then I decided to tell Anastasia about it.

"Anastasia, it so happens that for a number of years now I've been thinking about a situation I find unpleasant. In one of the books I told about the inception of Christianity in Rus and included historical facts and information from museums. And I ended up with negative information. This whole inception looked like a takeover of

Russia. It seemed as if I'd laid out all the accurate facts and conclusions, but now I have an unpleasant feeling in my heart, and for years, now, I've been tormented by doubts."

"Why unpleasant, Vladimir? Is it because certain representatives of the Church have been responding badly to you?"

"That's not it – I'm already used to that. It's something else I just can't figure out."

"What is it, Vladimir?"

"When I wrote about the baptism of Rus in such negative terms, then it ended up that I was saying something negative not about some specific person, but about everyone, all at once. Only afterwards did I get that no way I should have done that."

"And how did you come to that understanding, Vladimir?"

"I spent the best years of my childhood at my grandparents' place in the village of Kuznichi. I remember lots of details from living there. I remember that there, in the little Ukrainian hut, on a table in the corner, were Orthodox icons. My grandmother would decorate them with an embroidered towel and light a little lamp.

"I also remember the way my mom would attend church, even with her ailing legs. I often recall my spiritual father, Father Feodorit, the archpriest of Trinity-St. Sergius Lavra monastery. To this day, I still keep the Bible he gave me.

"And so it turns out that by speaking out negatively about Christianity, I was speaking out negatively about my grandparents, my mother and my spiritual father Feodorit. Well, and maybe about many good and worthy people, too. When I realized all this, then the first chance I got, I appeared on television, on Channel One, and apologized to the Church. But I didn't feel much better after I did that. What else do you think I need to do to expiate my guilt before the people close to me? And before myself, too, maybe."

"I think you need to fully comprehend everything and summon up a positive image that will eclipse the negative."

"Of course, it's easy to say 'comprehend everything' – I've been trying to do that for more than a year, and I'm not doing such a great job. But tell me, how do you feel about religions? Maybe you prefer some, and disavow or even reject some other, false ones?"

"Vladimir, I don't understand what meaning you assign to the word 'disavow,' but I will try to show you the links in your family chain. Take this twig here. That will serve as your sabre for severing those links of the chain that you disavow."

A depiction of a long chain of people holding hands arose in the space. The people of the first group wore crosses and little icons around their necks.

“Do you see, Vladimir? These are your relatives of the Orthodox faith. And those wearing turbans are Muslims. They also figure in your genealogy. And now here is a large group of people who today are called pagans. Next, holding hands, come your forbears from the Vedic period. Behind them come the blurred outlines of people of the first race, and we can also say of them that these are people from the first civilization on earth. They are blurry because information regarding them has not been articulated in the space, but your relatives are present there, too.

“The first person in this family chain was created by God, and he even now holds the hand of God. In all who follow also exists a particle of God. One day it will come to pass that the next person born of your line will come to know all and will sense everyone. He will also link hands with God. It may be that this will be you, or it may be your great-granddaughters. The circle will be formed. The circle – Alpha and Omega and Alpha once more.

“But now think and tell me, which of these groups of people would you like to remove from the chain?”

“I have to think about which one... Wait, Anastasia. Wait. But if I remove even one group of people, then, you know, the chain will be broken.”

“Of course, it will be broken.”

“And if it is broken, then the person who breaks it can never come to know God, link hands with him and form the circle.”

“I also think this, that he will be unable to do this.”

“So what does that mean? Should a person accept absolutely all religions?”

“Which religion to accept – that is the choice of each person, but I think we should disavow nothing from the path humanity has followed. It’s possible that all that occurred in the past is essential for today’s awareness. What you consider to be good is essential to accept. That which to your mind appears negative is essential simply to know, in order that it should not recur going forward. But not to be rejected.”

“But what about if you don’t know? Will it necessarily have to recur, and in the very same way?”

“Yes, it will recur. There will come a prophet who seems the bearer of the new. Those who have forgotten will hark unto him in delight, not knowing that in doing so they create nothing new.”

“But really, it’s impossible to know with precision everything that has happened to mankind since the time of creation. Historians distort even the most recent historical events to curry favor with those in power.”

“Within you, Vladimir, and within each person alive on Earth there exists a

particle containing all information of your family line, from creation up to the present day.”

“I understand – this information is stored in each person on the genetic level, but how can we learn to make use of it? That’s the question.”

“By not disavowing and not rejecting even a smidgen of your particle.”

“But nobody has the least intention of rejecting their own particle.”

“When you disavow information about the past that has come to you from outside, you at the same time reject that particle that is within you.”

“But what about if this information is false?”

“The particle with false information is also within you. It has been preserved so that you might gain insight into the lie.”

“But Anastasia, really, you were the one who showed me and told me about how the black monks killed the Vedic Russian family who didn’t want to betray their faith and their way of life. I wrote about that in a book. The image of the Vedic Russians turned out very powerfully – that’s what many people have said. And I often recall it. Especially the picture when the wounded Vedic Russian, the artist, is lying under the pine tree, clutching to his chest the figurine he’d carved of the woman he loved. He’d loved her his whole life, but she’d married another. He kept on loving her, hiding his love. Only, when he’d carve figurines, they’d always end up looking like her.

“He, an old elder, entered into battle with a whole enemy detachment, in order to lead them away from the family of the woman he loved, and he was wounded. And I wrote your words: ‘The Vedic Russian lay on the grass and did not moan. A small stream of blood flowed from his chest. The wooden pine tree did not know how to cry...’ Well, do you remember?”

“Yes, Vladimir, I remember this emotional scene.”

“Well, so after this picture, then how can I – or someone else – *not* reject the black monks?”

“Tell me, Vladimir who you feel yourself to be, that wounded Vedic Russian or the black monk?”

“Me? Who am I? That means that’s why you showed this... To determine... But what’s this got to do with me?”

“Back there, in the past, in that picture – your forbears were there. Who were they? What do you think, Vladimir?”

“I don’t know. I’d like it if they were the Vedic Russians. Of course they were

the Vedic Russians! Because the black monks came to Rus from a different state. Tell me, Anastasia, have I understood all this correctly? Tell me!”

“Vladimir, don’t get agitated. Take in the information calmly. Your ancestors really were Vedic Russians. But the screeching black monk, too, was your ancestor.

“Everything arose from the Whole, and this means all are brothers. Forgetting this, peoples fight amongst themselves, thereby destroying within their ‘opponent’ their own selves. It was this way, perhaps, for a reason. With the beginning of the new millennium, a new era has arrived as a new awareness of existence on Earth. The era of the beautiful transformation of the Earth.”

“It’s arrived? It’s already arrived? ... Basically, I have a feeling inside me, too, that something new is going on in the world, especially when I see the way people are setting up entire settlements of family homesteads in deserted spaces. Are they the ones who will lead the new era forward?”

“Their awareness and feelings represent something new for the world.”

“But on the other hand, you watch the news on television, and everything there is just the same as it’s been – right off the bat, they talk about who among the leaders met with whom, and how much oil costs, and how many years now have they been harping on about an economic crisis, but they don’t suggest anything of significant.”

“On television, Vladimir, you are seeing news of the past life. The Universe is already alive through different dimensions. Commit everything from the past to memory. Leave nothing out. Take with you your ancestors’ prayer-fed strength.”

“How am I to understand that? What does ‘prayer-fed strength’ mean? What does it look like?”

“From generation to generation, your ancestors would look upon an Orthodox icon each day, pray to it and dedicate to it their thoughts, their hopes and their requests. It would harken unto them and try to help, and with each day, the icon itself would grow stronger. It will help you, and has helped already. As well, esteem the rosary and the Koran that were given to you by the Grand Mufti of the Muslims. And the bible of your Father Feodorit. Remember with reverence the day when you appeared before people in the great Christ the Savior Cathedral. And the day when, in the most beautiful Lyalya Tyulpan Mosque, you sat before the people who had crowded into the hall, at a table, and alongside you were an Orthodox priest and a rabbi. You spoke of homesteads. Ecologists spoke in support of you. Do you recall that day?”

“Yes, I do recall. The Grand Mufti organized that event, and people of various faiths came to the mosque then, and they were all grateful to him. But I remember something different, too. I remember the slanderous articles in the press. I remember how there was an orchestrated attempt to ridicule me on television, on Channel One.”

“Perhaps it is necessary, this slander directed toward you?”

“Necessary? For what? What are you saying, Anastasia?”

“You enter into a palace and a temple. A hero? Yes! Only you were unable to bear up beneath the brass trumpets and the fanfare of speech. How can you be saved from your self? By means of yourself?”

“Come on, I have no self and no pridefulness. Only fatigue.”

“So that means that it was due to fatigue, Vladimir, that one day, when you appeared in hall packed with readers in the capital of Belarus, you began to eject the bishop from the church publicly. That was due to fatigue?”

“Oh, I wasn’t serious about that. They told me before my appearance, that he...”

“And the crowd applauded you. The collective thought was energized and took off.”

“And what’s up now with the bishop?”

“But we are speaking not about him right now, Vladimir, but rather, about you. You wanted to understand how you feel about religions, to get a feel for this and figure it out.”

“Yes.”

“You must do this only yourself, but I will tell you of future events. Perhaps the information concerning them will help you.

“It will happen before long, that more than a hundred and fifty leaders of various countries will come together. One question will they address, with scientists taking part: how to reduce the amount of harmful gases that are emitted into the atmosphere by human deeds. Gases that threaten the planet with disaster. But the hundred and fifty leaders of the Earth will be unable to make a decision that will save us, and they will go their separate ways. And the harmful gas created by mankind will continue to kill the planet. * What can you say about such a situation, Vladimir?”

“What can I possibly say here? Heads of state have come together numerous times to solve the question of how to improve the ecological situation, but to no end. Most people don’t pay any attention to these meetings any more.”

“Why is that?”

* **Author’s note:** In 2009, a climate summit of heads of state was held in Copenhagen from December 7-18, regarding capping and reducing emissions of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. Representatives of 192 countries participated in the summit.

“Well, because not a single state has announced any workable proposals. And if there aren’t any workable proposals on the agenda, then what’s the use of meeting? It only makes people laugh.”

“And what would you consider a workable proposal?”

“The kind of proposal where the majority of people on Earth will change their life’s priorities. The desire will arise to perfect one’s dwelling land, instead of working at harmful manufacturing plants to get money to subsist on. No ruler is in a position to stop these harmful manufacturing plants, because unemployment will arise and there will be riots, and his power will end up being threatened.”

“That means that heads of state are not in a position to stop a global disaster. But perhaps different authorities, spiritual authorities, are capable of doing this. The patriarchs of all the religions will come together, give their word before each other that they will call upon their congregations to perfect the earth’s dwelling land.”

“Yes! Exactly! They’d be able to deal with this question more effectively and have an effect on the people and the authorities at the same time.”

“And so that means that religions are important and needed. What do you think, Vladimir?”

“Turns out, they’re important and needed. And it would be great if they could all together direct their efforts toward perfecting both the spiritual and material dwelling land. But we need specifics here, too. Your plan, Anastasia, is unsurpassed in terms of specifics, and people’s hearts and souls everywhere are embracing it. But there *is* one circumstance that calls into question how viable it is.”

“What circumstance is that?”

“There’s no doubt that the way of life for a family on the family homestead that you’ve shown is greatly superior to today’s way of life for people in cities and rural areas. And even now, the number of families living this way – without any support whatsoever from the government – is growing steadily with each year. And there might come a time when the majority of the Earth’s population will want to have their own family homesteads and live on them. And at that point, there won’t be enough hectares for every family that wants one. Even now, people are talking about how a portion of the population needs to be eradicated due to the fact that there’s not enough living space and natural resources. According to these rumors, there should remain on Earth the so-called Golden Billion, plus two or three billion people who serve them. The Earth’s population is now six billion, and people are already raising the question of restricting births, like, say, China, where one billion, three hundred million people live in an area comprising 9.6 million square kilometers.

“If people’s way of life begins to change in accord with your plan, then people’s life expectancy will increase. It’s a completely obvious and undisputed fact, that the

life expectancy for a person living on a family homestead, assuming he has no harmful habits – here I'm talking about drinking, smoking and others – has an excellent diet, clean air and healthy water, will, on average, be twice as long.

“A family living on a family homestead will want to have children, and such families have a significantly greater desire to bear children than those living in modern cities. So it follows that before long, new families won't be able to get a hectare to build a family homestead.

“I understand that there must be some way out of this. When God was thinking of all that's beautiful, he can't have set up this kind of dead-end situation that would incite people to battle for living space. Your grandfather has said it's absurd and futile to explore outer space using current methods, and that there's another method – he calls it psychoteleportation. But no matter how much you think about it, it doesn't appear possible to understand it in a detailed way. Basically, people don't believe it exists, and science doesn't say anything about it.”

“I am also aware that the psychoteleportation method of exploring outer space and the planets of other galaxies does exist. But no one in my family line is privy to the details or mechanisms of this method. I hope that people who are now establishing family homesteads, or their children or grandchildren will discover and grasp what helps it function. And this will definitely come to pass.

“But I understand your anxiety, too, Vladimir. If a person already today cannot see at least a part of this mechanism, he will remain anxious, due to his uncertainty regarding his family line. It is essential for us to grasp at least a part of it.

“I have been thinking tirelessly about it and searching, but I am finding only more and more confirmations all the time of its existence. It is possible that it's essential for us to lay out the logical lines of reasoning, and to ask people who are familiar with science, with biology and programming, to think together. We must discover it all together.

“Vladimir, we've arrived,” announced Anastasia. “This is the home... This is Grandfather's space.”

THE FAMILY PARTY

Anastasia's grandfather had always been notable for his unusual behavior. Even when speaking about very serious things, he'd always use humor or try to trip you up. And this time, too, he remained true to himself. When we came out into his glade, we saw Anastasia's grandfather sitting beneath a cedar tree with his legs crossed, looking intently at a staff stuck into the ground before him. It was clear that he'd long since sensed we were on our way to him, and besides, he couldn't help but sense our presence, but he paid no attention to us whatsoever. And even when we walked practically right up to him, he still didn't turn in our direction and didn't greet us. We stood there silently for three or four minutes. Then I whispered to Anastasia:

"You try saying something to him. Otherwise, we're just going to keep standing here like this."

"All right, Vladimir. But I'm trying to grasp what he's up to here," Anastasia replied, also speaking softly.

Then, all the same, she addressed her grandfather, saying:

"We arrived quite a while ago, Grandfather."

And something totally odd happened next. Anastasia's grandfather, turning to the staff, suddenly said:

"Due to unforeseen circumstances, I announce a fifteen-minute break."

Then he stood up, led us off to the side and, completely serious, began explaining:

"I'm currently leading a party meeting of the Family Party. It will continue for another forty-five minutes or so, so you will have to wait."

"How's that, a party meeting?" I asked, surprised. "There's nobody here. And besides, the Family Party hasn't been constituted yet."

"Well, not by you, it hasn't been," Grandfather replied. "But I've constituted it for myself."

"How's that, you've constituted it? Who's joining it?"

"I'm joining it all on my own. And I'm preparing for the convention."

"What convention, if there's only you in the party membership?"

“For now there is only I, but perhaps someone else will come along and constitute their own Family Party. And then we’ll convene.”

“But how the heck is something like that possible?”

“Well, you yourself said that we need to come up with something new. And so I came up with the idea that each person can lead his own Family Party, so no one will use his authority and position to put pressure on the party rank and file. And at the conventions, everyone will be equal.”

“And what kind of agenda do you have here at this meeting?”

“The government’s report on the work it’s done in connection with perfecting the dwelling land.”

“Well, and who do you have giving reports?”

“Various people. After the break I’ll be hearing from the Minister of Railway Transport.”

“But he’s not here!”

“Not for you, but for me he is.”

“How about him, does he know you’ll be hearing from him?” I wondered.

“He doesn’t know. And really, why should I take him away from his work?”

“But when and where will your convention take place?”

“When the organizers set the date.”

“What organizers?”

“Other Family Party leaders.”

Really, in spite of how comical Grandfather’s display was, I do think the idea of creating a Family Party, in which all are equal, deserves attention. The usual way of organizing a party won’t get us anywhere, except to something resembling the CPSU. And this is where I can see some grains of truth. Each person is free to act in accordance with his own heart and soul, rather than orders or a universal charter. Different party members can initiate the best actions and endeavors and advances. It seems to me that in this case you’ll end up with a lively community of people that develops on its own, in which each individual really can express his own initiative. As we took our leave of Grandfather, I said, matching his tone, and trying to be serious:

“From this day forward I also constitute my own family party.”

Why go on and on about it? It’s time for each of us to take action.

Further developments connected to Anastasia's grandfather deserve a separate book, and I intend to tell about them at a later date.

EXPLORING VIRGIN PLANETS

On our way back, as Anastasia and I were returning from seeing Grandfather, our conversation once again turned to the possible existence of a biological way for a person on Earth to explore other planets and galaxies. I reminded Anastasia:

“Anastasia, you mentioned that you think tirelessly about a biological way to explore other planets, and that you’re finding logical confirmations of its existence. Can you lay out these logical lines of reasoning?”

“We can begin now, together, to analyze the situation. Further on you can continue on your own.”

“All right, Anastasia, but you go ahead and start us off.”

“First of all it’s essential to authoritatively establish the first fact. All that has been created in the technocratic world existed and exists in a biological and significantly more perfected form. Do you agree with this, Vladimir? Do you understand how important it is to establish this understanding?”

“Of course, I agree. I’m not the only one who knows this. Many other people do, too. Man used to be able to do calculations in his head a lot better and faster – each person had his own inner calculator. Well, and so on. You can cite a great many examples here.

“The example I like most is a person’s birth. It’s the clearest and most striking example, because two methods exist simultaneously in the world now – the technocratic and the biological.

“The technocratic method is when scientists in a specialized institute take sperm from a man and an egg from a woman, mix them together in a test tube that they keep inside a special apparatus. They keep it at the necessary temperature and humidity, and basically, it takes a lot of fuss and resources. Now, the biological method is a lot simpler and more effective. A man and a woman in a bed... They enjoy themselves, and soon afterwards a person is born.”

“A good example, Vladimir, only, please, take note of one very important detail. Even so, when a person is created, even if it is via a technocratic method, what lies at the heart of him is the biological material.”

“Yes, of course, that’s what lies at his heart. You can’t get anything without the sperm and the egg.”

“And the biological method has no need to adopt anything from the technocratic world.”

“Agreed. Not a thing. Well, except for a bed. Although you can get along without a bed, too. Basically, Anastasia, I totally agree, and I get it – the biological alternatives are significantly more perfected than the technocratic. When the technocratic man thinks up his so-called inventions and brainchildren, he’s replacing existing and perfected biological mechanisms with primitive, technocratic ones. That situation is completely anti-rational.”

“And nonetheless, time and time again, human civilizations, losing all memory of their natural capabilities, have replaced them with primitive, technocratic alternatives.

“We are unable to imagine now, how one can get to another planet using a natural method. And in this very same way, people of a different civilization were unable to imagine the birth of a child in a non-technocratic way.

“Many women today cannot imagine giving birth to a child without others’ help, without a maternity ward and technocratic equipment. If we continue further along these lines, then more and more children will be born using surrogate mothers.

“Something resembling farms will arise, where women who have been artificially inseminated will be concentrated. Their whole lives, they will bear children and give them up. They will be provided with food and lodging, but they themselves – each one of them will see herself as an incubator for a human embryo. This has already happened in history, in one human civilization.

“In this same civilization, the practice of cloning of people was also developed. As a result, a person in this civilization was unaware that it was possible to give birth to a person through biological means. Lacking awareness of this, lacking this thought, a woman had no possibility of conceiving a child, no matter how much she entered into intimate relations with a man. Now, if a woman did become pregnant by natural means after all, this was considered pathological, and the human embryo was immediately destroyed or was removed and grown artificially.

“Vladimir, do you agree with the assertion that any technocratic achievement is preceded by a person’s act of losing the memory of his biological capabilities?”

“I do.”

“But now, tell me, can a person use a technocratic method to transfer an image, a photograph of his family homestead, for example, from one point on Earth to another, or into outer space?”

“Of course, he can, using a computer and the Internet. All he needs to do is choose an electronic address, scan this image into his computer, go onto the Internet

and send it to the address he's chosen, and it will come up there on the computer. You can print it off the other computer using a printer. You can also send it into space, too, if you know the spaceship's electronic address. You can send it to the Moon, too, and you can send an image from the Moon to Earth. That's already been done."

"Good, Vladimir, very good. Only you have forgotten one very important detail. The most important."

"Which one?"

"Before the person does all these various operations on the computer, the thought was born in him to send off the image."

"I agree. I didn't mention the thought because that goes without saying."

"But now, tell me, can a person use a modern technocratic method to transfer not only an image, but an object, too, to all the points you named?"

"And object? I don't think it'll work with an object." I thought about it for a brief time and then added, "Anastasia, I remembered that there are lathes that carve various designs out of wood, little sculptures, for example, under the direction of computer programs, and if you send the computer program tasked with carving out the little sculptures to a different continent via an electronic address, or to the Moon, then another computer there, if it's hooked up to the same kind of lathe, will carve out very same little figure, and there will be two of them – one that my computer made and a second that the other computer will carve out. In that way, the little sculpture I have will be copied on a different continent, or on the Moon."

"So it follows, that one can use a modern technocratic method to transfer or copy and recreate an object, even on a different planet?"

"Yes, one can."

"But do you understand what this means, Vladimir?"

"What?"

"This means, that there exists a biological method for transferring an object from one planet to another, and this means it is a thousand times more perfected, simpler, and can be accessible to any person. The biological method requires the presence of no technology whatsoever. It is the human thought that is most important in it."

"Yes, I agree, and in the case of creating a child, the most important thing is the thought, but a man who's thought about creating a child needs a woman, too, and a woman who's thought about a child needs a man. Together they materialize what they've thought."

"Together they..."

“Vladimir, the possibility of creation and birthing of a person by a man and a woman is the highest achievement. This means that it is possible – all the more so – for a person to create life on another planet using a biological method. For now it is unclear what components are necessary in order to materialize him.”

“Yes, Anastasia, a tremendous discovery. It would turn out to be tremendous, if you or someone else could find or discover these biological components.”

“We need to think. It would be possible to comprehend and sense much, were we to encounter that knowledge possessed by the people of the first civilization on Earth.”

PEOPLE OF THE FIRST CIVILIZATION

“I infer, I surmise, and the logic of life confirms this, that they possessed potentials greater than did God Himself.”

“But who the heck are these mysterious ‘they’?”

“These are the children of God. People of the first earthly civilization.”

“The first civilization? Does that mean there were ones that came after? And how might the first civilization have differed from those that came after it?”

“In the direction of its development. Mankind, Vladimir, has not always followed the technocratic path into the dimension of anti-rationality, toward disaster. In the beginning was the first civilization, which developed in a different direction. We will call it the biological path. They made use of all that was originally created by God. A person of this civilization would study the divine creations and, with their help, would perfect his dwelling land. The divine creations are perfected, but each generation must be more rational than the preceding one. Such is the way God programmed it.

“It could be no other way. Were it another way, God could not be called God, and His creations, lacking the potential for becoming perfected, would represent the end of creation. Man is the beginning of the great creation.

“And now it is taxing for us to even imagine what the first civilization achieved, what heights, in its divine development, and how the planet looked during the period of their material life.

“Naturally, people of the first earthly civilization might also have looked different than contemporary man on the outside, too. They had an ideal body build, and their physical health enabled them to hold within themselves immeasurably more energy than contemporary man is able to hold. Their original knowledge of the biological divine world that came from God, enabled them to perfect it.

“All the scientific and technological achievements existing today in the technocratic world existed for them in a significantly more perfected, biological form.”

“Where’s the proof that this civilization and their achievements existed?”

“If you see a grown person, Vladimir, do you really need proof of the fact that this person was at first an infant and then a child?”

“No, I don’t. The person himself serves as proof that he used to be a child.”

“In just that way, today’s human civilization, too, serves as proof that there existed the first. And this first one could not be technocratic.”

“All right, maybe it couldn’t, but we can see from historical evidence and archaeological digs that people of ancient civilizations who lived a hundred thousand years ago ran around in animal skins with clubs and hunted animals, as we’re told, and that they had trouble finding food for themselves.”

“Archaeologists are finding people of the post-disaster period of technocratic civilizations.

“Imagine, Vladimir, that on the earth is living a technocratic civilization, that it is achieving great heights in so-called technocratic development. But any technocratic path rends the planet Earth, impairs the ecology and disturbs the biosphere, and large-scale technology-induced disaster ensues. Those in power, or the elite, always know of its approach beforehand and make preparations to save themselves. One of the civilizations, for example, constructed, in near earth orbit, an entire technological complex of a size equaling two ocean liners. On it they saved themselves from the disastrous changes that had befallen the earth. But this technological complex could not hold the people indefinitely, for it itself was mortal. The people who were saving themselves from the earthly disaster held out on it for around sixty years. Children were born to them. But there came a time, when life on the artificial complex became impossible. The people, its inhabitants, began dying, and then the decision was made to return to Earth, and they returned. They landed in groups, in special capsules. On the Earth, which was cooling now after the great fire, grass was already growing up anew, and the animal world was coming back to life. Not all the people managed to end up in this kind of oasis. Those who ended up in the desert or on red-hot lava perished. Those who managed to land on a plot of land where life had been partially preserved, rejoiced at their luck.

“Now I will show you.

“Look, there they are – there are but six of them – coming out of their red-hot capsule. They are rejoicing at the little green grass and the air they can breathe. Here are two children, a little boy and a little girl. They’re examining a currant bush and the bugs on it with interest. And here is an elderly man without any hair at all. He’s returning to the capsule, and before long he carries a box out of it. There is food inside it. The person sets the box on the ground, looks at the little boy and the little girl by the currant bush and walks up to their mother, who is standing nearby.

“‘It’s best for you to go far away from this place and take the children with you. We have enough food left for no more than a week. Your husband has died and I am your distant relative, but I have no intention of protecting you when the fight for food begins.’

“‘Give us at least a day’s worth of food.’

“‘Take it yourself, but try to do it so no one will notice you, and leave quickly.’

“The woman walked up to the box on the ground, bent over as if adjusting her shoe, and quickly took three little tubes of some substance and hid them beneath her jumpsuit. Then she quickly walked up to her children and, saying something about wanting to show them some even more interesting bushes, led them off far away from the craft lying on the ground.

“The people who had returned to earth possessed knowledge of the technocratic world. They could use computers and satellite telephones, operate an automobile or a spaceship, but their knowledge was now absolutely useless and even hazardous. All communications and the majority of machines on earth had been destroyed. Many of those that remained were radioactive and posed a mortal danger.

“The mother who left with her son and daughter carried on her family line. And once again, for millennia, mankind developed in the technocratic direction. Archaeologists excavated huge ancient cities. They excavated the graves of the forbears, finding in them crude hunting weapons, and concluded that they were seeing primitive people at the beginning of their civilization. But they were seeing people at the end of their civilization. Archaeologists would sometimes find cave drawings of people dressed in pressurized suits. The scientific world put forth hypotheses that mankind arose from extraterrestrial beings, that in antiquity mankind had received knowledge from extraterrestrials. But, just as before, they did not even want to entertain the thought that in the cave drawings of beings in pressurized suits... they were seeing people at the end of their civilization.”

“But then where is the first civilization now?”

“It has disappeared. It disappeared suddenly, for some mysterious reason. At the moment of their disappearance, the people of the first civilization erased all information about their achievements from the Universal database. They did this in some inconceivable fashion. Why they took such steps, one can only infer and surmise.”

“Well, so what do you infer, Anastasia?”

“I infer that, perceiving themselves as in control of the fates of Universal worlds, they also recognized within themselves the germs of the anti-world, anti-rationality virus and understood that they lacked within themselves sufficient immunity to it. And at that point, they detonated themselves psychologically, along with their achievements, leaving on earth those who were more infected with the virus of anti-rationality and anti-world than the others. So that they could follow it to its conclusion and come to fully know the dimension of anti-rationality. And now we, the descendants of the first civilization, will come to know conclusively the essence of anti-rationality, and one instant before the planetary disaster, we will bring rationality

and anti-rationality into balance within ourselves. All the achievements of the first earthly civilization will open up within us in a new and more perfected form.”

“But if, as you say, their knowledge will open up, does that mean they’re somewhere, that they exist?”

“They exist within each person.”

Anastasia suddenly broke off her tale and froze.

“What’s happened, Anastasia? Why did you stop talking and freeze?”

“Something has happened in the Universal space. I sense that, Vladimir. I sense the vibrations. Do you also?”

“I don’t sense a thing. Just some little breeze started to blow.”

“Yes, a breeze, but it’s variable.”

“Well, maybe it’s variable, but what of it? Did something bad happen, or something good?”

“I don’t know, Vladimir. Only one thing is clear: what has happened has disturbed the space.”

“But where did it happen?”

“On the shore of our lake, I think.”

“And what, are you saying the whole Universe reacted to this thing that happened?”

“It always reacts when interesting or unusual information appears.”

“Let’s run over to our lake as fast as we can, Anastasia.”

We set off walking at a fast clip. At times, when the taiga would allow me to, I tried to run. Only once did we sit down to rest, and then once again rushed toward the lake.

When we were already almost to the lake, I suddenly imagined what unpleasant things might be in store for our son, and I asked Anastasia to stop.

“Wait, Anastasia. Hear me out, try to understand. Volodya’s under the impression that you challenged us to a duel. Is that right?”

“Yes,” Anastasia replied calmly.

“I won’t going into it right now, about why it’s an unfair challenge. There’s no

time. But I'm asking you – please don't criticize what Volodya has done during the two days we've been gone.

“It's clear that he's been working on the mock-up from dawn to dusk. He's been trying. I know. I saw it when he and I were thinking over the design on our own. But he doesn't have enough information. If you start criticizing his creation, he'll be very upset. He's said to me, ‘If I don't win the duel, it will make Mama sad.’”

“Can you imagine? He'll try and try, so he doesn't make you sad.”

“And you, too, Vladimir.”

“Yes. And me, too. But you and I – we're grownups. We should understand that there's simply nothing else he can add to the homestead design. The earthen wall around the perimeter was a brilliant idea, but it's already been articulated, and the pond's been settled and you haven't rejected where we've put the home with the veranda all around it. What's left? Flower beds, raised vegetable beds – that's the small stuff. The technical construction details aren't significant. You need to understand, Anastasia, there's no room left there for creativity. I mean, you yourself have already done everything. You gave us a hint, and didn't leave anything for our son. At least praise him for trying.”

“I cannot praise him just for trying. That would be humiliating praise.”

“Humiliating? But putting a child in a position where there's no way out – that's not humiliation? No, that's not humiliation. It's mockery.”

“Please believe me, Vladimir. I am not mocking our son, not at all. Within him are little parts of you and of me. Information and knowledge gathered by your ancestors and mine. He has been raised and taught by Grandfather and Great-grandfather. Our son's capabilities are yet to be revealed, but I am certain that they are great.”

“Maybe they *are* great, but I'm trying to explain to you, that there's no area left for creativity, for him to display them. The homestead design has already been created.”

“You feel it's been created. But for a long time now, I've been under the impression that even so, neither you nor I, nor the people who are creating homesteads are aware of some key purpose of theirs. Many sense it intuitively, and for this reason the thought to create a family homestead draws people in. This thought is on the level of feelings. They are not fully clear or grasped. Something very important for the future and for eternity has not been grasped.

“From the moment of man's creation and up to the present, within him has lain all that was created in the beginning, and they, the man-gods of the first civilization, are secreted away within each person, in the form of a small and perhaps microscopic

particle. It's possible that they can see or feel what is transpiring. When I excessively precipitously put our son in a difficult position in regard to you, it is possible that this particle responded, that it couldn't help it, and perhaps the time has come... It is possible that Volodya senses, feels the knowledge stored within him. His structure, this fiery bird, turned out too extraordinary in its beauty and function."

"Anastasia, please understand, you're asking the impossible. You want our son to explain something to you or to create something, but you yourself don't know what, exactly. You only feel some new potentials for the family homestead, but Volodya might not even know about your feelings."

"My feelings lie within our son, too, Vladimir."

I was walking behind Anastasia, fully aware that she wasn't going to pull any punches with our son or praise him for no good reason. And she might even start criticizing him, too. But I wasn't going to criticize him. I made a firm decision: I had to find some kind of words to say to cheer him up and praise him for trying.

I fell a bit behind Anastasia. When I came out of the taiga, I saw that she, standing by a cedar tree, was focused on peering from afar at what was transpiring on the shore. And on the sandy shore of the taiga lake, surrounded by centuries-old cedars, Volodya was making some kind of incomprehensible structure. It was a simple square or rectangle that framed the earthen mound and enclosed it on both sides with little clay walls. The little walls at the corners were white and higher than along the sides. On the square's inner edge was the pond, and next to it his unique bird, and in the middle of square, right on the sand, sat Nastenka. That was it. I understood that Anastasia wouldn't be praising Volodya. There was nothing to praise him for. He'd made the bird before, and he basically wasn't the one who'd come up with the earthen mound. Either he hadn't had time to construct the home and farmyard structures, or he didn't know where to situate them. To tell the truth, the square was a little bit strange. I turned to Anastasia and said:

"Volodya hasn't managed to do anything special, and since that's the case, there's nothing here to criticize."

But Anastasia gave me no answer and didn't even turn in my direction. It was as if she had lost track of everything and was focused on studying the square.

I set off in the direction of the square my son was fussing with, but here's where something incomprehensible happened. When I came to within a few steps of the homestead mock-up, I stopped. I didn't have the strength to move further. It was as if the space around me was suddenly transformed. On the outside, everything was still the same, but my sensations... Unbelievably pleasant sensations that seemed familiar, or as if they'd come from another lifetime, were enveloping the whole surrounding space and warming my body from within. I was afraid to move – I didn't want them to go away. I just stood there and looked at a corner of the square. At a corner that was

shaped like a little white home with a window and a door.

I'd begun to come to, when I heard the voice of Anastasia, who'd walked up. She addressed Volodya who, kneeling, was smoothing out the uneven parts of the outer wall with his hands.

"May I ask you something, my dear son?" Anastasia seemed agitated to me.

Volodya stood up, went up to Anastasia, gave her a slight bow and replied:

"I'm happy to listen to you, Mama."

"Have you found a new definition for the concept of a 'home'?"

"I've been trying to seek one out, Mama, and I decided that a person should simultaneously build a home for both himself and his hectare. Then they will be inseparably connected to each other and united in their space."

"Tell me about your mock-up, Volodya, and about how it is meant to function. Tell me about all its details."

"All right, Mama, I'll tell you."

And our son began to tell her. It was as if, through his telling, the conventional labels of the extraordinary family homestead came to life in the mock-up.

Volodya pointed to a depression in the wall. "This here is the entrance to the home, Mama. It's located not on the road side, but the forest side."

"You mean to say that this is the entrance to the territory of the family homestead," Anastasia clarified.

"The entire family homestead is the home," Volodya replied, "and for that reason I called it the entrance to the home. And the person should wipe his feet before he walks in, if something has stuck to them, and even if nothing has, he needs to do this mentally.

"Now this wall," Volodya said, pointing to the greenhouse running along the hectare's perimeter, "is the living wall of the home. The plants growing inside it will be warm and happy. This is a clay wall, heated by the rays of the sun that pass through glass – or the transparent plastic sheeting Papa has spoken of – from above. During the day, the clay wall will heat up, and during the night, when it's cool, it will begin giving off warmth to everything growing inside.

"There are rooms inside this wall. It's a place where various garden supplies and tools the person will use will be stored. And in this space, Mama," Volodya said, pointing to an oval extending out from the homestead's perimeter, "a person can sleep and eat in the winter.

“Next, there’s a compartment where the firewood is kept. The various domestic animals – chickens, swans, a goat, a pony, a hedgehog, peacocks and doves – are housed amongst the corners of the living wall that abuts the forest. There are two exits from their dwelling, one in the direction of the forest, the other into the home space. Papa has said that he often has to go away, and there won’t be anyone to look after the animals. Papa feels a person shouldn’t take on animals if he can’t give them enough attention and feed them at the right time. But I feel that animals shouldn’t have to depend on the person for food, that that demeans the animals. The person should create a comfortable dwelling land for the animals he likes, so that they can feed themselves independently and come to the person when he needs them. Many various wild animals live around our glade – our home – but there’s no need for us to feed them. On the contrary, they are happy to bring *us* food. I infer that we can create the very same conditions for animals on the family homestead, too, especially if it abuts a forest.”

“It’s possible,” Anastasia said thoughtfully, and continued asking our son questions. “Volodya, on the road side, at the corners, there are two little homes with small windows. What are they for?”

“Mama, I designed this for Papa. I know that Papa’s best childhood memories are connected to the time he spent living as a little boy with his grandmother and grandfather, in a little whitewashed clay hut with a straw roof. I built the little walls of this little village hut. I think it will be really good if Papa’s homestead has other elements, too, that will call up pleasant memories from his life.”

I quickly turned to the white... I began studying it. And I recognized it – my childhood home. I recognized the little whitewashed Ukrainian hut with a straw roof, with a little window and a door, and a little old bench beside it. I wanted to rush to my son and hug him, and then the pleasant sensations enveloped me anew and wouldn’t let me move from my spot. All I could do was to say:

“Thank you, my dear son. It all really does look like it – the little window and the little bench, and the door.”

“The door to your little childhood house opens, Papa. If you open it, you’ll immediately be inside the covered perimeter of your homestead, and you can pass through it, to wherever you want to go.

“And Papa, I’ve also arranged various plants on the homestead space and have composed the necessary symbols out of them.

“In the greenhouse, Papa, you can grow everything you like to eat in the spring and summer, but in addition to your favorite vegetables and fruits, it will be very good if you set up raised beds no more than eleven meters apart and with a diameter of no less than ninety centimeters. On these beds you’ll put in seedlings of, for example, currant and raspberry, and it would be good to put in at least one little cedar seedling on each side, along with grasses and flowers you’ve brought there from the taiga. And it’s desirable for them to come not from the edge of the taiga, but from deep inside it.”

“It will be extremely difficult for people to do that, Volodya. Now me – I can do that, but I’d like a lot of other people who are building family homesteads to have this option, too. A lot of them won’t be able to put in plants from deep inside the taiga.

“There are no roads in the taiga, you can’t use public transportation, and you can’t carry much out on our own, and then you still have to spend a long time hauling it back on public transportation. All of this will require no small financial expenditure. And when you add it all up, the plants you deliver from Siberia will cost significantly more than ones that are grown in nurseries and sold right on site or not far away. You know, there’s even a saying: ‘For a cow abroad you you’ll pay a penny, plus a hundred for her delivery.’ And besides that, can you explain why you should get plants from deep in the taiga, when you can dig them up in your local forest or get them from your nearest nursery?”

“But those will be different plants, Papa. After all, you yourself have told me about how, for example, the milk agaric mushrooms that grow here and that you can eat raw differ significantly from the milk agaric mushrooms that grow in the region of Russia you call the central region. The cowberries, too, differ. And Papa, the currants and raspberries differ, too. You yourself have written in your books, Papa, that scientists have spoken of this, too, such as the academician Pallas.”

“Tell me, Volodya, is the way they taste the only reason we need to fill these raised beds with plants from deep in the taiga?”

“That’s not the only reason, Papa. Taiga plants will not admit the anti-rational information of that world in which you have to live. When they’re set out along the perimeter, they will not let that information through onto the territory of the homestead. Local plants, which you call regionalized, have gotten used to it to a greater degree and will let it through. In particular, plants that do not produce seeds provide no barrier whatsoever to this information.”

“I know about that kind of plants. They’re called genetically modified.”

“Papa, it’s important for the perimeter of the homestead to be able to not let unnecessary, hostile information you don’t need through when it transports you to another spot.”

I didn’t understand what my son had said and began asking him to clarify:

“To what other spot? How can it transport me?”

Volodya didn’t have a chance to reply. Anastasia, who was having a hard time concealing her agitation, began to speak:

“You’ve come up with something very good, my dear son. It’s very important to concentrate positive emotions on the homestead. And, by wiping your feet when you enter, to not bring the negative onto it.”

THE BURNING BLOOD OF THE ANCESTORS

Anastasia took me by the hand. I felt the pleasant warmth of her tender palm. And I also felt how agitated she was, and I glanced at her face. Anastasia was looking into the center of the homestead mock-up. I also looked into its center. Nothing special there. Unless the little white sticks arranged in the center had caught her attention. Once again she asked our son a question.

“Tell me, my dear son, what does the white circle located in the center of the homestead represent?”

I began explaining, instead of my son. “It represents a small, round greenhouse. That’s what Volodya and I decided on. Our little white sticks represent some kind of transparent material – glass, for example, or polycarbonate, or plastic sheeting. For a long time we couldn’t stick it anywhere. It didn’t go with anything. But now that Volodya has placed a greenhouse along the whole perimeter of the homestead, I really like it. Here you get both a greenhouse and a fence at the same time, and various utility rooms, too. And I also like it that Volodya made a small, round greenhouse in the center, too. Now it fits. Now it even goes really well with the whole perimeter of the homestead.”

“I think that what we have in the center is not a greenhouse, Vladimir,” Anastasia said in a whisper, slightly agitated, as before.

Volodya heard her and calmly said, addressing me:

“Mama’s correct. The little white sticks in the center of the homestead do not represent a greenhouse.”

“They what do they represent?” I asked our son.

“In the center of the homestead, Papa, I have placed a circle of mirroring water.”

I asked him to clarify. “Is it a mirror, or what?”

“You can put it that way. A mirror with mirroring water,” Volodya calmly replied.

“Hmm. Very original, actually. You’ve situated a round mirror on a small rise in the center of the homestead. The clouds are reflected in it, and the sun and moon can admire themselves in it. And streaks of sunlight will fly off it and go dancing

throughout the whole homestead. There's nothing like it in any landscape design, and I've looked through a lot of them. Very original."

"You've stuck little red leaves around the mirror, Volodya. What do they represent?" Anastasia asked, speaking quickly.

"That's a flame burning, Mama."

"Where did the flame come from?"

"From oil and gas, Mama."

After this answer, Anastasia squeezed my hand a bit more strongly and asked our son the following question:

"Did they allow you to light their blood on fire, Volodya?"

"Yes. The Souls of our ancestors allowed me to light their earthly blood on fire, Mama. If they had not wanted this, then what came to me wouldn't have come to me."

Suddenly Anastasia's grandfather spoke, and I could sense agitation in his voice, too. "Perhaps that's enough of distracting a person from important business. After all, you haven't done all you're going to do with the mock-up yet, have you Volodya?"

"No, I haven't done all I'm going to do, Grandfather."

"Then go on and do all you're going to do, and no one will bother you."

"Yes, go on and do all you're going to do, Volodya. We'll get out of your way for now," Anastasia added and led me off to the side, away from the extraordinary family homestead design. When she'd sat herself down near the trunk of a large cedar, I asked:

"Anastasia, I can feel that you're agitated for some reason. Am I right?"

"Yes, Vladimir, I'm agitated. Much of what our son is doing does not exist on earth today. Nor is there information about it in the Universe, either. That, which he has created in the center of the homestead – you called it beautiful and original. But it is not those words, not only those words, that describe what has been created. The construction Volodya told us about is an apparatus, and the main component of the apparatus is of unheard-of power, a biological mechanism. I can sense this, but I can not find a precise word to describe its properties. Perhaps such a word does not yet exist. We can only speculate about this device's capacities, its unheard-of capabilities. But please, Vladimir, do not rush me. Allow me to gradually come to an understanding of what I have seen."

A GIFT FROM THE FIRST EARTHLY CIVILIZATION

“I surmise, that all the separate details in the homestead design, when taken together, form a unified whole. It is possible, that the homestead is a biological device or mechanism, or something else previously unimagined by consciousness. We have to think. We have to solve this riddle. The elongated oval of your hectare is framed with an earthen mound with clay edges. The mound is covered over with some sort of transparent material. Inside are various plants. There must be something significant in them.”

“Volodya said the plants can be ordinary ones, vegetables, for example, tomatoes, cucumbers, and various green, leafy plants. Basically, everything a person wants to eat. But you have to put in raised beds with a diameter of about ninety centimeters, spaced no less than eleven meters apart. On these beds you have to put out plants from deep in the taiga, because they won't let the information of anti-rationality through. That's what he was saying.”

“Yes, they won't let it through. In this way, the perimeter functions as a membrane.”

“A membrane for what?”

“For everything located inside the membrane. The greenhouse situated along the perimeter, where all the areas a person requires for living and for his household needs have been incorporated, looks pretty and sensible. Within a few years, the need for the transparent dome will fall away. The most important thing remaining will be what is growing strong and firm beneath it. Our son has pursued quite an extraordinary goal. He has fenced the homestead space off from the pernicious influence of the anti-world and anti-rationality, using the most powerful fence you can possibly imagine. It is not the clay walls and the transparent dome that play the most important role in this fence, but the plants inside the structure. They will exert a psychological effect simply by being there, and they will help you immediately bring opposites into balance within you.”

“How will they help me bring opposites into balance within me? That's some kind of mysticism, or magic.”

“There's not a jot of mysticism or magic here, Vladimir. Rather, it's science, the one you call psychology. Imagine: you drive up to your homestead, and from far off you can see the little white walls of the little home of your childhood, and this

immediately calls up positive emotions in you. Then you get out of the car and wipe off your feet, once more mentally cleansing yourself of negative information. The gates open wide before you, and your gaze takes in the living magnificence of your family homestead's space, which will never cease to amaze and delight you. Unlike a non-living picture, it will always be varied. New flowers have blossomed on the raised beds and trees, and the light playing in a new way, or the little flowers stirred by the breeze will enchant you each time. Then you will want to take a look at whatever might be transpiring inside the fence, and you'll go into it. Its beautiful living richness and its airs will completely draw you away from the negative information of the anti-world."

"Yes, it really is great. The homestead will also play the role of my personal psychologist, and an extremely effective one at that. You're right, Anastasia – each time I come back even to my country home after being gone for three or four days, each time it's interesting to look at what's changed in the garden, in the beds and in the greenhouse.

"Now, of course you can't compare a country home to the homestead you're talking about. Of course, it's much more effective. Look how much one bird on the bank of a pond means to us. Wow, to come up with something like that. It all started with an ordinary bath house, and it ended up with a magnificent and functional sculpture. Now I understand that it will also have a very strong psychological effect."

"It certainly will, Vladimir. The bird will greet you, both when you have only just crossed the threshold of the home, and when you light a fire, and then when you go inside the bird, so as to warm your body and soul."

"Tell me, Anastasia, but why did you take such notice, or get so frightened when Volodya started telling you about the mirroring structure in the center of the homestead?"

"The little walls of the little white hut from your childhood, the greenhouse along the perimeter with the living organism inside, the earthen bird with the burning heart who strives to carry a person off into the sky... It's possible that it is a more perfected analog... The mirror in the center, reflecting the heavenly bodies..."

Anastasia stood up and, pronouncing her words precisely, the way she always does when speaking of something significant, she said:

"Vladimir, our son has created a mock-up... He has constructed a biological interplanetary ship."

"What???" I was amazed. "Anastasia, are you sure?"

"Yes. I am sure. It's possible that we need to use a different word to name it. I don't know this word as of yet. But I am sure that the intended function of what we saw is to teleport the space along with the people located in it.

“A person who builds a family homestead using the elements of this design will, without a doubt, be able to build his own world on a different planet, and this world will be beautiful.

“In the center of the homestead is located part of the apparatus a person can use to transform (to psycho-teleport, to transfer) the space along with all its contents to other planets and other worlds. Part of... But then where... I’ve understood it, Vladimir. Before us is a mock-up of a beautiful family homestead, and at the same time, before us is a mock-up of a perfected interplanetary ship. It is capable of moving at the speed of thought. Of reaching, in one instant, the Moon, Mars, or Jupiter.

“Distance is basically of no consequence at all for it. It can cover a distance of one meter or a distance of a million light years in one and the same amount of time. It is capable of transferring people onto any planet in the solar system, and beyond its bounds.”

“But Anastasia, scientists have proven that there’s no life on planets, at least not the closest ones.”

“And that is why, Vladimir, I said it is capable of psycho-teleporting the space along with all its contents, including the dwelling land of all that lives in that space. In other words, this homestead can be transferred, or to express it more precisely, the given homestead can be copied and situated on a different planet.”

“How about the people who live on the homestead? Will they be transferred to the different planet, too?”

“The people, too, if they are located on the homestead at the moment of transfer.”

“But if there isn’t any fertile soil on the other planet, or if it’s three hundred degrees, or a hundred below zero?”

“When the space is teleported, something akin to an explosion takes place on the planet, and as a result, the existence of the new space is secured.”

TELEPORTING THE SPACE

“Unbelievable information, Anastasia. It’s even hard to imagine that such potentials exist in man. Perhaps you’re mistaken in your conjectures?”

“These are no longer conjectures, Vladimir, and I am not the tiniest bit mistaken. Previously this information did not exist in the Universe. Now it has appeared. But what is most important, is that the particle of mankind’s first civilization, which exists within me and within you, just as it does in each person as well, will allow this information in.”

“You know, Anastasia, I’m only just now starting to understand how mighty those four words of the Universal law are: PERFECT THE DWELLING LAND. Turns out a person can perfect his land to such a degree that he becomes a god. I mean, because when he moves to another planet that hasn’t yet been made habitable, man will begin creating life there, like God did on earth.”

“Man will never become a god, Vladimir. Each person is the son of God, or his daughter. And God, the creator and parent, wanted his children to be more perfected than he himself, and they most certainly will be, they *will* be! By bringing anti-rationality and Rationality into balance within themselves.”

We heard the voice of Anastasia’s grandfather, who had come up without us noticing him. “Now that is real scientific progress. He will open up a new era for mankind.”

Anastasia stood up. Her grandfather, an elder with graying hair, but an erect posture, stood there, leaning on his staff and looking thoughtfully at the shore of the taiga lake.

“Granddad, are you speaking of Volodya’s design?” Anastasia asked her grandfather.

“What can one possibly say when an epiphany comes? Throughout the millennia, he or they, – it’s unimportant, which– have turned the living teachings of messiahs and scientific luminaries into incoherent gobbledygook. *He* has shown the potentials of people living on the earth. He has created a new image of man. Or has brought back the man who was called the son of God. A man capable, like unto God, of creating on lifeless planets a life more beautiful than earthly life.”

“People will have a hard time believing something like that,” I remarked to Grandfather.

“Fine. Even if someone doesn’t believe, then what of it? What remains for an unbeliever who doesn’t believe in his might? To be born? Yes! But to what end, if the ensuing life is meaningless, if it is death? And then again the question: to what end was he born?”

“For millions of years, there has existed a multitude of teachings. And all about one and the same thing, that mankind should live in expectation of receiving something from someone. And mankind has done so, closing off its thought and rationality. It has not thought about why and to what end the Universe lights up the stars above man.”

“And now what? Will our son become a messiah?” Anastasia said bitterly. “He will have difficulty holding his ground in the face of pridefulness. What’s more, the anti-rationality will rush to seek him out.”

Everyone fell silent and, for some reason, simultaneously turned in the direction of the homestead mock-up. At the same time, Volodya was heading toward us, walking with a calm gait. He was carrying Nastenka. She was hugging him around the neck and pressing her cheek to his. Volodya stopped a few steps away from us and set Nastenka down on the ground. He bowed to us all and began to speak:

“Mama. Don’t worry, Mama. I know that if I become a messiah, then people will direct their thought to me, with hope. And that means that they will not be directing their thought fully to creating.”

“What have you decided to do, Volodya?” Anastasia asked our son.

“I need to go. I will dissolve, insignificant, in the human crowd.”

After these words, Volodya looked each of us, in turn, in the eye. The thought flashed in my mind that he was intending to leave forever. And as he was looking at me, I said:

“Thank you, dear son, for your extraordinary, marvelous family homestead design. This will be the very best gift for my sixtieth birthday. And, really, the very best gift I’ve received in the sixty years I’ve lived.”

“Papa, this design is a gift not just for you. I give it to all the readers of your books. Let them take from it all that they wish to take.”

“Let it be for all of them. That means, it’s for me, too.”

“I want to give you a separate gift, Papa.”

At these words, Volodya slipped his hand beneath his shirt, took something out and held his hand out to me. I watched as he slowly and carefully opened his fingers, uncovering the gift that lay in his hand. But when Volodya had fully opened his fingers, there was nothing on his palm. I looked at Grandfather, then at Anastasia, trying, with their help, to understand what my son’s gesture meant, and how I was

supposed to respond to it, but they said nothing.

“Papa, go ahead and take my gift to you,” Volodya repeated.

I kept standing there, not understanding how you can take what you can't see. Suddenly Nastenka walked up to me, took me by the hand and led me over to Volodya. When I came up to my son, I stretched my hand out toward his hand. He carefully placed something invisible into my palm.

It, this something invisible, was pulsating and slightly warming my hand. I closed my fingers and placed the gift beneath my shirt, in the same spot Volodya had kept it. A tender and extraordinary warmth enveloped my whole body.

“It will live in your home, Papa, and when you've built the homestead perimeter, ask it to fill the space.”

Volodya bowed deeply to everyone, then turned around and began moving away from us, his steps confident. Then he suddenly vanished beyond the bushes, or dissolved in the space. And we all stood there, as if spellbound, and both when he looked each of us in the eye and when he was walking off, all we all did was to silently follow him with our eyes. And then I said:

“Anastasia, I got the impression our son has left us forever.”

Hearing no reply, I turned toward Anastasia. She was looking in the direction in which Volodya had headed off. Her body was shaking. A thin stream of scarlet blood was flowing from her lower lip. She had bitten her lip, so as to not cry out. I understood. This meant the anti-rationality would hunt our son, and Anastasia and me, as well. I saw Anastasia's hands clenching into fists. The taiga froze. Some unknown sound resembling the rumbling of something huge was filling the space. I got the impression that the huge space was compressing and, when it opened back up, it might wipe everything from the face of the earth.

I had already witnessed this kind of phenomenon before, when I'd lost consciousness while trying to possess Anastasia against her will, and also when I'd tried to strike her with the stick because she wouldn't agree to give our son to me to raise. Each time it started, Anastasia would raise her hands upward, as if waving to someone in greeting, and everything would calm down, before any sound even appeared. But now the sound was growing louder and louder, and Anastasia was not raising her hand upward. And I didn't want her to raise it. On the contrary. I wanted this invisible and mighty thing to thunder and wipe from the earth all the filth that had accumulated on it.

But Anastasia raised her hand. The space began to calm down.

Before leaving the taiga glade, I went once more to the shore of the lake. I stood there alone and looked at the homestead mock-up our son had created, and I imagined

it actually existing on my hectare that for now was overgrown only with tall weeds. Here I am, driving up in my car. I see the two white walls with little windows from my happy childhood. The gates swing open automatically, revealing a living picture of the finery inside, and I drive toward the entrance to the home. Stop! What the heck am I doing? I'm driving through all this magnificence in a roaring car! Through my own home! Go back!

I leave my car at the entrance. The gates swing open, and I wipe my shoes, trying to wipe the filth of another world from my soles. Then I remove my shoes and leave them by the entrance and walk barefoot through my beautiful world to the pond, where there are swans swimming. My cat and dog are run alongside me. In the distance, a rooster crows in greeting from one corner, and in another, a little goat bleats. And by the pond, on the sand, my grandsons and granddaughters are constructing mock-ups of their own family homesteads. And the woman I love, her beauty never fading, comes out of the garden, smiles at me and waves her hand in greeting.

When it gets darker and the stars begin appearing in the sky, all the windows of the oval space will light up with a joyful light. Lamps will come on in the greenhouse and show the stars the living magnificence growing inside it. The stars will think, "There, on Earth, a very small point is glowing with an extraordinary luminosity. It is no bigger than one hectare, but its light caresses us." The stars are not yet aware that there will soon be more and more points like that on the earth. And the whole earth will start shining with a blessed light and will caress the expanses of the Universe with it.

I made a firm decision to make the homestead mock-up my son had created a reality. And perhaps it was a good thing that I'd gotten a hectare with unproductive soil, where the water takes a long time to run off in the spring. But I will take it and make its soil fertile, make it into the kind of soil trees will bloom on in the garden, and flowers. I will perfect the dwelling land in that spot.

A LETTER TO MY SON

Hello, Volodya.

I don't know where you are now, and so I decided to write you a letter through my book. I sometimes write you letters, but I have no idea where to send them. But something I publish in a book – I think you'll read that. A book makes its way into many countries. It's like a living thing. It can find various people all on its own, and perhaps it will find you, too.

In September of 2009 I set about creating my family homestead according to your design. I don't know who will live on it. Maybe you'll want to, or Nastenka, when she gets older. There should come a time soon, when the representatives of anti-rationality will not hinder people like you. Maybe my grandchildren will want to live here, or my great-grandchildren. The moment has come, when I feel an urgent need to bring what you designed to life.

I ploughed my hectare with a tractor and sowed winter rye on it. I sowed the seed by hand myself, and my neighbors helped me. I used an excavator to make the earthen mound all along the perimeter, a meter high and a meter and a half wide. I didn't have time to make the little clay walls this year – the rains and the cold weather set in. I'll start building them in the spring. But my hectare has been transformed even just from what I've done this year. It's the only one framed with an earthen mound, and the rye has grown up in place of the former weeds. It even seems to me that it's showing off a little bit before the neighboring hectares.

I also managed to dig the pond this year – about thirty meters in diameter, and it will fill with water in the spring.

I also bought up various fruit tree saplings. For now I've put them in on the grounds of my country home. I'm planning to move them to the homestead next fall.

During the winter I'm going to have to decide how to make your fiery bird. I don't think molding it out of clay should pose any particular problems, but how do I fire it then, so the rains don't wash it away? And besides, too, it's about three meters high, and in addition then you have the wingspan, which works out to about twelve meters. Then the thought came to me that I need to mold it out of clay, then saw it into sections and fire it at a factory. And after that I can reassemble the fiery bird on my homestead, on the bank of the pond.

I've shown your creation to my friends – I just drew them a clay capsule with a fire inside and explained how you can warm and heal yourself inside it, or just sit

outside in front of the fire with your friends the way you'd do with an inside fireplace. And they decided they want to build something like that at their places, too. Can you imagine how delighted they'll be when they find out it's not just a capsule you can warm your body and heal yourself in, but a beautiful bird, too, with a burning heart inside?

How in the world were you able to create such a miraculous thing?

Anastasia surmises that the people of the first earthly civilization are helping you. If that's the case, then why shouldn't they help everyone who's set about building their family homesteads? However, on the other hand, since you've given your design to all the readers, then they really *have* helped everyone.

Oh, and Volodya, your mama also said that your family homestead design is a great and beautiful missive to mankind from some civilization that's unknown to contemporary people. Whether it's on a different planet or in a different dimension – that's not important. It's entered into communication with contemporary people, and in the language of matter, too. And the contemporary society of people stands on the threshold of great and beautiful transformations.

When your mama said this, I didn't yet fully sense the significance of her words. But later on, when I was reflecting about them, I became convinced that she is totally correct. You know, Volodya, there's a lot of talk in society about UFOs, about visitors from other planets, and we have no small number of treatises, of all possible kinds, supposedly written by great teachers, but what concrete results do we have from them?

Nothing changes. People have been moving along their path, heading toward a sad end, and that's just the path they keep on following. A picture even came to me.

People are walking along a road and there's someone dressed very oddly standing on the side of the road. And, as if to underscore his strangeness, he's yelling:

“I'm a visitor from afar. I'm a visitor from afar, a representative of great powers.”

“Well, so what?” people say to him. “What will you bestow on us? If you're a representative of great powers, then take drug addiction from the earth, and prostitution and wars, and take the various illnesses away, too.”

“You don't understand. I'm a visitor from afar...”

But he couldn't pique people's interest. Only one person came up to him.

“If you're some great visitor from afar, then you probably won't have any trouble giving me a hundred rubles for a bottle of vodka.”

And he got this answer:

“I’m a great visitor from afar. You need to listen to me, give me shelter and food, even make a great fuss over me.”

That’s more or less the back story with all the “great visitors from afar” who have come to earth.

But things are totally different in the case of your design, Volodya.

Without saying who he was, without asking for a thing, he simply offered: “Take a look, people, and if you like it, take it and be happy.”

And when you left, Volodya, Mama spent a long time looking over your homestead mock-up with great attention.

She said it’s extraordinary, lovely and multi-functional, but that it’s not a simple homestead. The details of its separate parts are closely interconnected, and all of them together are actually an interplanetary biological apparatus that is capable of moving a person – along with his dwelling land – to any planet, all in the space of one instant.

This apparatus’ ultrastrong biological membrane extends along the homestead’s perimeter. The fiery bird is programmed to cleanse one of viruses. The internal arrangement and selection of plants suggest an eternal life-support system for those living inside this apparatus. The object with the mirrored water is, pure and simple, a launch button that initiates the biological program.

The propulsion device of this apparatus is unsurpassed in terms of its generating capacity. It goes beyond the boundaries of specifications like rate of movement, for what lies at its core is unmediated human thought.

Anastasia also said that all technocratic inventions have a biological analog – or the other way around, to be more precise. And this biological analog is more perfected. Now, we, by using achievements in space exploration and in the sphere of computer technology as a launch point, can define the significance of those separate details of yours. I think that readers who happen to be programmers will comprehend more of what you have done.

But here’s what’s bothering me, Volodya. The perimeter is a membrane. The fiery bird is a cleansing, anti-viral program. The mirror in the center with the torches is a launch button. I’ll make all of this, and maybe somebody else will make it, too. But there aren’t any instructions for how everyone is supposed to use this. All devices always come with instructions, so people don’t break the devices or hurt themselves. And here we’ve got significant biological technology, and without instructions. A person might accidentally do something with the launch button, and his family will wake up on another planet, without even intending to do so. They’ll want to come back, but they’ll have no idea how.

I bought an octagonal mirror and torches. Out at my country home, in the

evening, I placed this mirror on the ground and lit the torches around it, and it turned out really beautiful. But, I think it's not totally safe to do that in your garden in the autumn. When the mirror poured out water, it felt like the trees were trying to come back to life. But deep in the autumn, they shouldn't come back to life.

I'm really sorry I didn't have a chance to talk a little more with you, Volodya and ask you to clarify the intended purpose of this apparatus, what it's for, and how we're supposed to use it. Maybe the readers will be able to figure it out, or it will come to me later on, once I get it in place on my hectare.

Now, I probably won't be able to build the greenhouse around the perimeter of the homestead next year. I don't have the money to do everything all at once. We're hardly getting any royalties at all from America.

Basically, I don't get what's going on over there – they're making some kind of changes to the books without my permission. The domain name “Ringing Cedars” in English belongs to somebody. And can you imagine – they even have the domain name “Vladimir Megre” there, and a site with that name, and it's being passed off as my official site. But I have no connection to it whatsoever. Polina's tried to register the trademark in my name, and they asked her to pay six thousand dollars.

I wouldn't really care, but I feel bad for the readers. What are they being told on these sites? What products are being sold using those trademarks and logo? How can I sort it out? Where can I find the time to sort things out?

But I decided that in my new book I'll give the name of a website where people can communicate directly with Polina. And to ask Polina to publish the new book in English, too. But so far I don't know how to get it published in the English-speaking countries.

And something else, Volodya – I have a problem. We have to come up with a comprehensible and concise appeal to those in power in various countries. The goal of the appeal is to encourage each one of them to take whatever forceful measures they can to perfect the dwelling land on the earth. I've put together various versions of this message, but it always seems to me I could do it in a simpler, shorter and more convincing fashion. Here's the latest version. Maybe it'll do? What do you think?

An Appeal

Dear Sirs:

I have written a series of books called “The Ringing Cedars of Russia.” Many of these books' readers – people of various ages, nationalities, religious faiths and social

statuses – are each acquiring one hectare of land for their families and are establishing family homesteads on them. Among them number doctoral students and PhDs, as well as simple workers. Ninety percent of these people have a college education and profound life experience. Each family on its own and everyone as a group – they are creating a dwelling land for themselves, their children and future generations that is more livable in all respects. In Russia and in the countries of the former Soviet Union, these people have already created more than fifteen hundred settlements made up of family homesteads, without any government support whatsoever. They include large settlements, with up to three hundred families, and small ones, formed by ten to fifteen families.

I do not know how many people are taking similar steps – whether united in small groups, or for the most part on their own – in other countries where my books in the “Ringing Cedars of Russia” series are being published. But they do exist, and their numbers are growing steadily.

Dear Sirs, people have talked a great deal in the world about the need to improve the ecological situation on the earth. In certain regions, this situation has already reached a critical stage, and a global disaster looms. For some time, now, conferences and symposia have been held at the governmental level with many countries, the UN and all possible NGOs. But, dear Sirs, where have we seen even the slightest result? The earth’s ecology continues to worsen.

The only people taking real steps are the people who are founding their own family homesteads, people focused on improving man’s dwelling land.

Dear Sirs, I am not asking you to discuss the merits or weaknesses of my books or me personally.

I am asking you to examine the actual idea, from the position of rational thought. And if you are unable, by drawing on contemporary science, to propose anything more effective than this idea, I ask you to recognize its essence and accept it.”

I don’t know to whom specifically I should address this appeal.

I’d also like to touch on another serious question. I often think about it. I try to find a solution. The thing is, Volodya, that given your approach to life and the way you understand the meaning of existence, it will be hard for you to find a bride, a girl who understands you.

You probably already know that from the time they’re little, many girls dream of becoming an actress or a model, or of marrying a wealthy man and going to resorts and having a maid at home. If you suddenly take a liking to that kind of girl, a girl who hasn’t read the books and hasn’t heard anything about family homesteads – after all, love is unpredictable – now, don’t go trying to tell her about the homestead right off the

bat. She won't get it. Now, when I've made my homestead according to your design, then you go ahead and bring this girl there and show her this homestead. When you're approaching it, you tell your girl that it's yours, and go inside the homestead with her. Go in through the door of the white hut. The key to the door will always be in the spot where Grandmother used to leave it. And show her everything that's there.

Anastasia has said that when a woman sees a more perfected dwelling land than the one she's previously been in, the desire to bear a child immediately awakens within her, along with an attraction to the man who's connected to this land.

Volodya, should you sense this kind of desire in your girl, then you can be certain that she will most certainly come to love you, and that her past, mindless inclinations will desert her.

And Volodya, your little sister Nastenka often visits your mock-up and plays in it, building little flowerbeds inside it. Anastasia says she has fervent thought. Anastasia has told me about Nastenka's past life, the one when her name was Anasta.

That's all for now. The letter has turned out kind of long, but I haven't said everything I wanted to say.

Be careful. Take care of yourself, Volodya.

With all greatest respect for you,

Your papa

AN APPEAL FROM VLADIMIR MEGRE TO HIS READERS

Several Internet websites now share ideas that are very similar to those of the main character, Anastasia, in the “Ringing Cedars of Russia” series.

Many of these websites purport to be official and use the name “Vladimir Megre.” They even answer letters in my name.

In this regard, I feel it is my duty to inform you, dear readers, of my decision to create an official international website, www.vmegre.com/en/ .

This will be the only official source for correspondence in all languages from my readers all over the world.

By registering at and subscribing to this website you will be eligible to receive information on the dates and locations of upcoming reader conferences, as well as other information.

Our unified website will keep you, dear readers, informed about the Ringing Cedars of Russia movement throughout the world.

Yours truly,

Vladimir Megre

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* * *

Anasta – the tenth volume, part two of the “Ringing Cedars of Russia” book series. The series consists of 10 volumes. The author continues working on the next book.

The author holds readers’ and press conferences in Russia and other countries.

The most active readers of the “Ringing Cedars of Russia” book series unite into public organizations, one of the aims of which is the creation of Kin’s domains (homesteads). In 2010 another book *Anasta* was issued. The author plans to write a scenario on the basis of his books.

Throughout 1996-2006 nine books were written by Vladimir Megre (The “Ringing Cedars of Russia” Series: *Anastasia*, *Ringing Cedars of Russia*, *The Dimension of Love*, *Co-Creation*, *Who Are We?*, *The Family Book*, *The Energy of Life*, *The New Civilization*, *The New Civilization II: Rites of Love*). More than 11 million copies of the books translated into 20 languages have been sold worldwide. In 1999 Vladimir Megre established the Anastasia Foundation for the cultural support of Anastasia’s philosophy and launched the site www.Anastasia.ru

The author: *Vladimir Megre*
Original language: *Russian*

Volume I *Anastasia*
Volume II *Ringing Cedars of Russia*
Volume III *The Dimension of Love*
Volume IV *Co-creation*
Volume V *Who Are We?*
Volume VI *The Family Book*
Volume VII *The Energy of Life*
Volume VIII (Part I) *The New Civilization*
Volume VIII (Part II) *The New Civilization II: Rites of Love*
Volume X *Anasta*

According to the author’s idea, the 9th volume is being written by his readers. These are the Family Books, kin annals.

www.vmegre.com The official site of the author

www.Anastasia.ru An international portal

www.megrellc.com The “Ringing Cedars” company presents products, self-manufactured in the taiga as well as products of Kin’s domains.