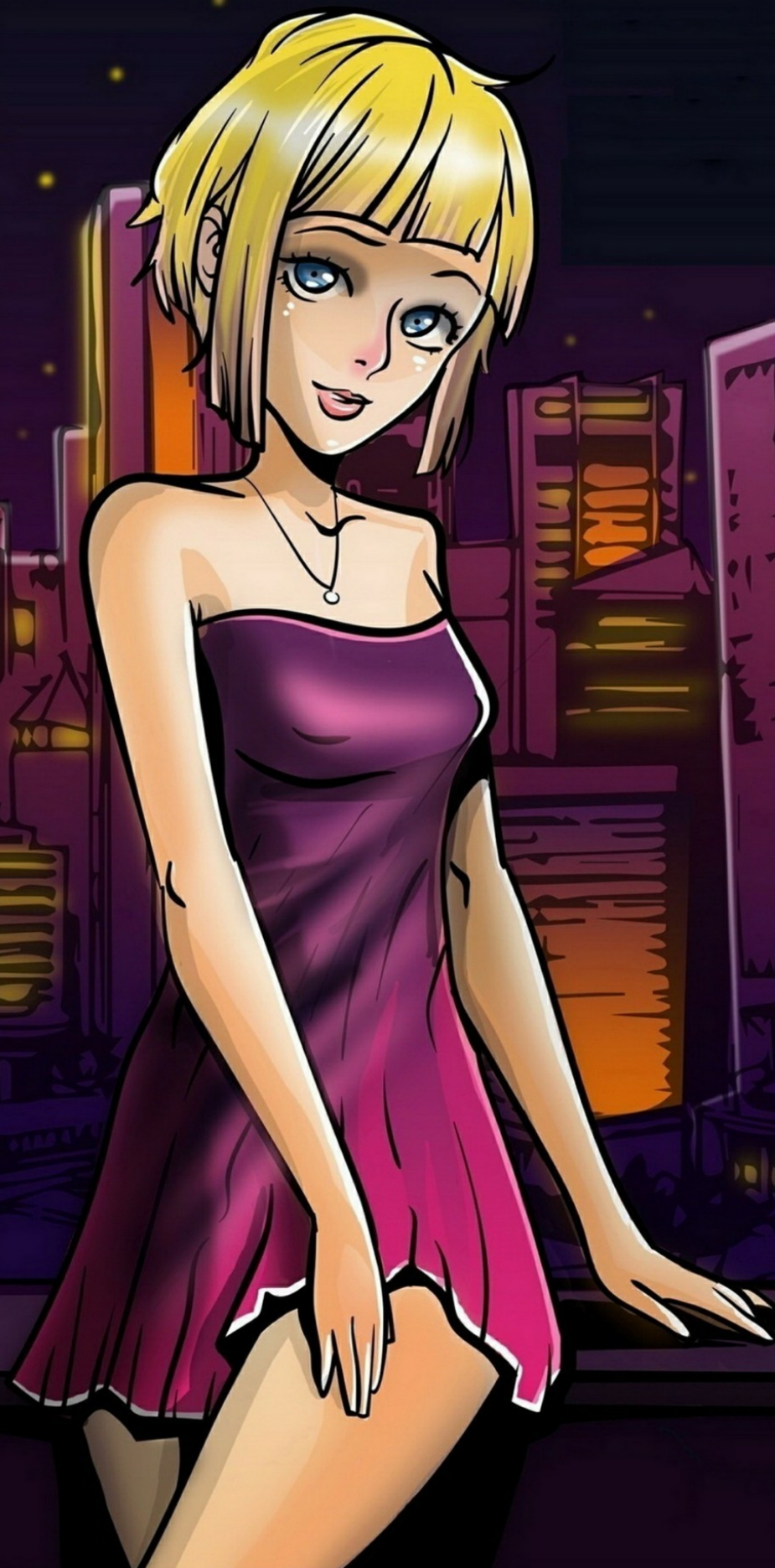


Evgeny Russ
FALL OF MATILDA



18+

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«ЛитРес: Самиздат»

2018

Russ E.

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We do not recommend that you open this book in the morning before you ride to work, - you can significantly late. 'Fall of Matilda', can be read an unlimited number of times, there is also philosophy, history, and psychology, and a tragedy, and humor. This book tells about strong woman and her adventures in the 1990's and 2000's. In the book there are racket, murders, adventures, eroticism, power struggle, sniper's work and the work of special services. Actions take place in Russia, Spain, Morocco, Malta, Australia and the Philippines. The coincidence of historical events and characters can be considered random.

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Fall of Matilda
Eugene Russ

Catastrophe.

The USSR board 75559 stood on the runway of the Pulkovo airport. It was a warm April evening in 1974. Passengers have already taken their seats and some of them have already fastened their seat belts. Most of the cadets of military schools and students were flying. They flew for a short vacation. Among them was a young couple. He was an engineer for the construction of bridges and tunnels Anatoly Ksyushinsky and his young wife Natalia. They flew for family reasons. Natalia was worried about her one-year-old daughter Matilda and was visibly nervous, "well, how she now with her grandmother is? Whole four days!"

"Not four, but three," Anatoly answered her, "I already said, it will be difficult for a one-year-old child to fly a flight. I myself get tired of the flights. And we do not have time for the train. Only three days we will not be. On May Day, we will be home."

The crew of the IL-18 also prepared for take-off and has already taken its places.

"Nikolai, why did the crew from Krasnodar refuse to fly back?" asked the second pilot of the aircraft.

"Eugene, they said there was a vibration of the fourth engine, but after that the board passed the test, no faults were found. I think they are just tired," said the commander of the ship Danilov Nikolai Valerianovich.

"Perhaps, Nikolay. We are a spare crew and this is our job. In vain they called them cowardly pilots."

"I agree that when we turned the board last month after the fire detector worked, we were also called cowardly pilots."

"I remember it was a false alarm."

"Well, Eugene, are we ready for takeoff?"

"Yes, Nicholas."

"Well, we are waiting for the command dispatcher."

"Board 75559, do you hear?"

"The tower, Board 75559, we hear perfectly."

"Board 75559, wind north-west 320°, wind speed 7 meters per second, visibility 20 kilometers, take off is permitted."

A minute later, the stewardess entered the cabin and announced by a loudspeaker – you are welcomed by the crew of the Leningrad Unified Air Squadron and the commander of the ship Danilov Nikolai Valerianovich aboard the IL-18. Please put up the backrests of armchairs in a vertical position and fasten your seat belts.

After a while, the plane began to take off on the runway and pulled away from the ground. Rising to the altitude, the passengers relaxed. Some of them unfastened their seat belts.

"The tower, Board 75559, took off," Danilov said to the ground.

"Board 75559, I pass the conditions of exit from the airport zone."

Conditions were accepted by the crew, and after two and a half minutes IL-18 performed the first turn.

"The tower, Board 75559, the lamps of 'fourth engine fire' panel turned on, a dangerous vibration," reported Danilov unexpectedly.

"Board 75559, make a landing at the nearest military airfield Gorelovo."

"Tower, Board 75559, we return to Pulkovo. Provide a fire truck."

After a while, the voice of the dispatcher came.

"Flight 75559, the approach conditions for Pulkovo landing at the magnetic course of 279°, line 28. The firefighting calculations arrived."

"Tower, Board 75559, the fire was confirmed. The fourth engine in the weathervane is on fire."

"Board 75559, make a landing at the nearest aerodrome. Now this is the airfield of Pushkino!"

"Tower, Board 75559, I will carry out the scheme approach at Pulkovo. Firemen are waiting for us! There are no firefighting calculations in Pushkino."

Danilov already had had a severe reprimand and he was scolded by his superiors twice from executing a quick landing with violations. Other pilots even sometimes called him a coward, and this he perceived quite painfully. This time, Danilov decided to land in accordance with the instructions on the mandatory scheme. The plane quickly approached its landing strip and behind it stretched a huge plume of smoke.

"Tower, Board 75559, the distance of 2500 meters, I enter the glide path", – Danilov said.

A second later the Board 75559 began to enter the right bank, while lowering the nose.

"Tower, Board 75559, we fall, the end of the connection", – these were the last words of the commander of the ship, which were heard from the ground.

"It's good that Matilda is not with us now", – these were the last words of Anatoly Ksyushinsky, who tightly squeezed his young wife's hand.

Grandma Tonya.

The years went by. Matilda grew rapidly and developed rapidly. Her grandmother, Antonina Leonidovna, tried to comprehensively develop and educate her granddaughter. She understood that her age would come to an end, and she wanted to be sure that Matilda could learn, graduate, and get a good job to feed herself.

"I need to live another ten years and put his granddaughter on his feet!" though Antonina Leonidovna.

Now she was sitting in a chair and knit wool socks. She took them every Sunday to the market and gave to her friend for sale. It was not possible to her to stand in market and sell socks. She couldn't leave the little one Matilda. Antonina Leonidovna had a small pension, only 72 rubles and 30 kopecks. On life them this was enough. Knitting socks was little bit helpful to her pension. This year Matilda must to go to school in the first grade. It was needed to buy uniform, a briefcase, and notebooks. Textbooks were given out at school for free. The house of Grandma Tonya and Matilda already had textbooks. It was an ABC book, textbooks in English and many books. Matilda at five years learned to read, and at six years the grandmother insisted on the study of Matilda of the English language. It was an English textbook for the fifth grade of high school. Twice a week had coming a young English teacher and engaging with Matilda. Grandmother was paying twenty rubles a month for these lessons. After six months of learning English Matilda's grandmother was forced to withdraw from these lessons. The pensions were become not enough. It could not be said that the products were more expensive, but they gradually disappeared from the shelves, and they could be bought at the Bazaar a little more expensive. It was hidden inflation, expressed in a shortage of goods on store shelves. Goods in the country were, and refrigerators of common peoples were at all or almost at all full. Grandma Tonya still remembered those times when 1 gram of gold was always equal to four rubles and forty-five kopecks, and inflation was absent as a concept. At the end of February 1950, she read in Newspapers about the Decision of the USSR Council of Ministers, in which the Soviet ruble was transferred to a permanent gold base and 1 gram of gold equaled to 4 rubles and 45 kopecks. Yes, it was a Gold Standard! Since then, prices for all goods fell, but after 10 years, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers N. Khrushchev abolished the government decree of March 1, 1950 and again tied all money settlements to the dollar. About it not wrote in Newspapers. But later all began to feel it on their wallet. Sometimes neighbor Zina came to Tonya. She was a little younger, and she had a husband who came back alive from the war. Tonya and Zina were one of the few Leningrad women who survived the blockade and survived. Grandma Tonya still remembered those post-war years when Zina's husband was getting drunk on vodka, and if Zina fell under his hot hand, she always got a fist under her eye. With a bruise under the eye Zina proudly went out into the yard, hanging clothes for drying or just went to the bakery. Many women envied her – a bruise under the eye meant that this woman has a man who returned from the war. Now they were already old. The Zina's husband has already stopped to drink vodka and has passed to kefir. It can't be said that he did not drink vodka at all. Sometimes he was drinking on holidays, sometimes without any reason. He often sat in the courtyard and knocked on the dominoes. Grannie Zina had no choice but to go to the bench, where women gatherers, or go to visit hers neighbor Tonya.

On the one floor above lived a grannie Katya. She was not a native Leningrader, but came from the East Kazakhstan region after the war, and was been brought by geologist, for whom she married. Grannie Katya rarely told how she worked in the mine as an ore thrower by shovel during all the war. By a shovel, she threw ore into the carts that the horses were transporting. These horses were blind, and their entire adult life passed in the mine. They lived there. They were not raised to the surface. Grannie Katya was always seen with her old husband. They often went for a walk along the waterfront or together went to the cinema. Left alone, the grannie Katya began to often buy vodka.

Her pension was high, more than a hundred and twenty rubles and she could afford to drink vodka every day. Drunk no one saw her. Closer to the dinner she began to slowly walk down the stairs and for a long time rested on them, leaning on the railing. It was hard for her to go down and it was also hard for her to climb up. With a shopping bag, she walked to the store. Two hours later, she similarly slow step by step he passed through the yard to my porch. All the neighbors saw who and what bought in the store. And grannie Katya was no exception. All saw in a string bag at grannie Katya a bottle of vodka and half a bottle of black bread. A pack of cigarettes Belomorcanal grannie Kate always carried in his pocket.

"Catherine"! – Told her neighbors, "sit down with us on the bench, sit down, news at least listen".

"I have no time to sit with you", answered the woman Katya and went to the entrance. The lifting by steps on the fifth floor took her twenty minutes. Grannie Zina sometimes sat on a bench and discussed the news, but Grandma Tonya on the bench no one has ever seen. She's been busy all day with Matilda and her knitted socks. Matilda often read aloud the poems of Agniya Barto and Samuel Marshak. Sometimes grandma asked her to memorize and tell. Matilda was good at that. Grandma Tonya never had driving Matilda to kindergarten. Matilda usually had playing in the yard with the girls. They were playing ball or hopscotch. In the sandbox, the girls hid candy wrappers and covered them with glass. It was called 'secret'. Boys from small to large hung on a bar or played chess. Adults played dominoes. Sometimes, they sometimes played cards, but when the police car UAZ had driving into the yard, the cards had disappearing somewhere and there was a knock of dominoes. When Matilda was in the third grade, she was already allowed to attend English language extensions for fifth graders, and her grandmother had to take her out of school later. Grandma was glad that Matilda is honors pupil and was sure that the English language is useful to her. When Matilda was in fourth grade, one day she came back from school wearing a red tie. Grandma began to cry.

"Grandma, why are you crying?" asked her Matilda, "you were a pioneer?"

"No, Matilda, I'm even was not a member of the Komsomol because I don't have a worker-peasant origin."

"Who did you work for before the war?"

"Before the war I was a Secretary and typing."

"And during the war?"

"During the war I worked at a sugar factory here in Leningrad. Night, when I was not on shift, he exploded," said Grandma Tonya and stopped crying.

"Is fascists blew it up?"

"No, the powdered sugar exploded, which rose dust in the shops. Ventilation didn't work."

"Does powdered sugar explode?"

"Yes, Matilda, any powder can explosive."

"Will you tell me more about the war?"

"Yes, of course, but first you have to do your homework and learn all the lessons. You know, you need to learn one lesson in advance, and when the teacher will explain a new topic, you will be all clear and you have questions that you can ask the teacher."

Trouble never comes alone.

It was the fifth year of Perestroika. Matilda was already 17 years old, and she has already passed the school final exams. In the middle of summer her grandmother passed away. Matilda was alone and in the tears. But it did not last long. A week later a UAZ police officer drove up to her house. They were employees of the Children's room of the police and representatives of Social Security. Matilda has been showed some orders and said to collect her things and documents. She, like a minor, was to be sent to the orphanage. The apartment was locked with a key in the presence of the district police officer, and he escorted Matilda to the police car. Matilda took with her a school bag and old grandmother's photos. In the backpack was passport, a school's and a birth's certificate. After some time, UAZ drove up to the building, enclosed by a fence made of brick columns and wrought-iron lattice. The gate was opened by the watchman Vasily Petrovich. He was the watchman of this orphanage and was on duty this day after three days of rest. UAZ without stopping drove up to the entrance of the building. Matilda was taken to the teacher's lounge and handed over to director. Then, representatives of the law signed some documents with the director and left. Matilda did not understand what was happening.

"So, girl," said the Director, "where are your passport and birth certificate?"

"Here in the backpack," Matilda said.

"Well, leave the backpack here in the staff room, tomorrow morning we'll wrap it up. Now I'm gonna take you bedroom."

"Am I must to live here?"

"Yes, until you come of age. And not just live. You can even work in a garment factory, as learner, like all our grown-up girls. It is care of the state and you have to be glad," the Director said. It was a middle-aged woman with large sizes. Then in the teacher's lounge was entered the man of thirty years in a sports uniform.

"He is our gym teacher, Andrei," she said to Matilda, "he's on duty today at the orphanage."

The Director then turned to the teacher, "Andrey Andreevich, take her before the dinner in the girls bedroom, let she wait. And I have to run the education Department. Yeah, and don't forget to give her a mattress, blanket, and bedding. That's all, I ran," said Director, and, banging she's heels, withdrew from the teacher's lounge.

"Come on, move your ass!" said the teacher and pulled from his pocket a bunch of keys. Matilda stood up and left the teacher's lounge. Andrei Andreevich closed the teacher's lounge and led her down the hallway past classrooms. Stopping at one door, he picked the key and opened the door.

"Wait here," said he and penetrated in the room. Then he came out with a mattress and a blanket. "Behold! Take it," said the teacher and gave Matilda a rolled up mattress and blanket. Matilda grabbed it with both hands. The teacher returned to the room and took out the sheets and the towel. "Come on," he said, closing the door, and headed further the hall.

Matilda followed him. The bedroom was small. On both sides of the bedroom was a double bed in a row. The windows were facing the gate and the wooden guard house near them.

"Make the bed which not occupied," the teacher said, tossed the sheets and towel on the nearest stool and went out. Matilda found a free seat on the second tier of one of the beds and made a bed for sleep. Then she went to the window, sat down on a stool and began to examine the street behind the fence. It was a wide street with tram tracks. On the other side of the street at a respectable distance from the road were ten-story residential buildings.

"How nice it was to sit next to my grandmother and listen to her stories about the war, about the blockade of Leningrad and about pre-revolutionary times!" thought Matilda. Her memories were interrupted by a physical education teacher – he came back and brought a pillow.

"Here on the wall read the schedule of daily regime," he said and left.

Matilda stared out the window for a long time and did not understand what was happening and why she could not live alone at home. And then she wanted to go out into the garden to the street. She got up, straightened her dress and started to look for a way out.

"Stand! Not move!" Matilda heard, passing by the open door of one of the offices. She stopped. A teacher of physical education came out of the door.

"Where do you go?" he asked.

"I wanted to take a walk in the garden."

"Not allowed. Go back to room," the teacher commanded.

Matilda had no choice but to return to the bedroom. She had habit to obey teachers and treat them respectfully from times of school. Towards evening, girls and boys began to return to the orphanage. They were all from the older group and had the opportunity to leave the orphanage and go to work. Everyone tried to get back on time for supper.

"Rookie!" The girls returned from work were glad.

"Yesterday we have been told they will to lead an excellent pupil of school. So are you really an excellent pupil of school?"

"Yes," Matilda answered.

"Is it means you are cleverest?" asked one of the girls who chewed chewing gum.

Matilda did not know what to answer, and looked at her coevals around her with perplexity.

"You're in addition a quiet pigling!" another girl said.

"We no need rat-snitch here. If anything not wrong, you'll fly straight out the window," the girl with the chewing gum continued, and then she inflates a bubble out.

On the other side of the room Matilda heard an indecent exclamation, which continued with the words, "What the hell! Newcomer will be sleeping here?"

Then from there to Matilda came a girl in tight jeans and with a small ring, threaded through the lower lip on the left side. The left side of her nose had also inserted some small metallic shiny object, similar to a tetrahedron.

"What stared?" said the ringed one, "did you not find another place? Do not you piss at night?"

"Girls, why are you so angry?" Matilda asked, "I did not anything to you."

Matilda was shocked by the behavior of her coevals and did not even know how to talk to them. The position was saved by the physical education teacher who entered the room.

"So, everyone left and goes to dinner, and do not make a noise, otherwise you'll go follow the ranks!" he said, and waited for everyone to leave.

The dining room was roomy, no smaller than the other school cafeterias. In the dining room, the boys also ate. They were also Matilda's peers. Many of them already had specialties, such as turner, welder, assistant auto mechanic and other working specialties. In the dining room they behaved loudly. The boys loudly talked and pronounced indecent words. Matilda did not hear such words, even from the rare school hooligans. She looked around the audience, and began to for dinner. On table was compote, bread, pounded potatoes with a cutlet. Here were no forks. Matilda took a soup spoon and broke off a small piece of cutlet, then sent it to her mouth. The taste of minced meat seemed to Matilda stale, and she laid this piece in her hand. Putting it aside, Matilda little ate pounded potatoes with bread. The potato was tasteless. After drinking compote, she got up, went out of the dining room with obscene whoops of some boys addressed to her and went back to the girls' bedroom. Matilda realized that she did not want and could not stay here. She went to a poster with a schedule of the day and began to read it. The sleeping room was designed for twenty people. On the left and right side of the room were five double beds. Matilda counted the mattresses.

"Means here will sleep fifteen girls, I'm sixteenth," she thought, "no, sleep here I will not, I should try to get out of here. What if the girls will involves me into fight?" thought Matilda, and began to look is whether in a room suitable items to protect herself. In the room there was nothing except

the stools, and nightstands. Near each bed there was a bedside nightstand and two stools. Matilda picked up one of the stools. "Heavy," – she thought, "it will be difficult for me to swing by it and hit."

After a while the girls returned. It was dark outside. Matilda didn't have a watch, and she didn't know what time it was. The girls were divided into small groups, sat on the beds and discussed something. Matilda stood beside the window and looked out. To have acquainted with girls Matilda had no desire. After a while the teacher of physical education entered the room.

"So girls, all stripped and went to bed, then I'll turn off the light," he said, and remained standing in the doorway and watch. Girls, do not hesitate, undressed and lay down in bed, covering up with blankets. They almost all had black pants and white tops.

"What the fuck you are stand? Do you need a special offer for undresses?" said the teacher, turning to Matilda.

"She's shy, modest," said one of the girls and her girlfriends laughed.

"Clearly," said the teacher, and turned off the light, "after five minutes I'll check that all lay in their places."

After that, he went out and closed the door to the room.

"Yeah, he doesn't check, he just always says," said one girl and climb down from her bed. Then to Matilda came a few girls, among them was ringed. Ringed girl on was a stretchy black pants and an expensive bra. There was no curtain in the room, and light from the street lamp penetrated into it.

"If you'll ever just look at my boyfriend, I'll knock out your keekers," said girl with ring in nose.

"I wasn't looking at your boyfriend, I don't need him," Matilda replied.

"I didn't see how you stared at him in the dining room? I'll ruin your scoreboard, no one guy will look at you," threatened ringed girl, and added, grabbing her by the hair, "your skin is too white, will be all scarred."

"Why don't you go to bed?" another girl who had previously inflated bubble gum asked.

"Do not touch her, she's an excellent pupil, let her read us a poem better," shouted one girl from the bed.

"Well, get up on a stool and tell us," said the girl with tetrahedron in nose, and released Matilda's scythe.

"Pushkin, Mtsyri," said the other, smiling slyly.

"What's your name?" the ringed girl asked.

"Matilda."

"Jew?"

"I'm the Russian," thought Matilda and remembered her conversation with her grandmother.

Matilda once asked grandmother, "is it my Russian surname?"

"Your mother was Russian, and your father was Russian too, according to the passport," grandmother replied, "you can be of any nationality, but the main thing is that if you feel Russian in your soul, then you will not be afraid of anything."

Matilda wasn't afraid. She took a stool and smashed by it the window glass. Shards fell. The girls rushed in all directions to their beds. Matilda picked up a small fragment of glass that looked like a knife blade and squeezed it in her hand.

The gym teacher came in and turned on the light.

"She banged on the glass by stool. She wanted cut us," said the ringed girl from bed.

"She's crazy," said the other girl.

"So what's that in your hand? Drop it and come here!" the gym teacher commanded.

Matilda didn't moves. The gym teacher came closer, grabbed her hand which had a piece of glass with his left hand, and grabbed her by the scythe with his right hand.

"Drop it," he said, and turned Matilda's head more tightly, holding her by the scythe. Matilda released the splinter from her hand, and the teacher dragged her by the scythe to the exit.

"I'll kick your ass and you'll be learning undress," – the teacher said and dragged her into his office.

"You better fuck her on the table," the girls shouted after her and laughed.

The teacher pushed Matilda into the middle of his office and followed her. Behind him appeared watchman Vasily Petrovich.

"What happened here?" he asked, "there the glass fell out."

"Here, the newcomer did not want to go to bed, broke the glass with a stool. I led her to a preventive conversation," the teacher replied.

The palm of Matilda's right hand was cut and blood bleed from it.

She lean her hand at the dress on the waist and said to the watchman, "my blood oozes, it hurts, maybe the liver damage. Call, please, an ambulance."

A red spot appeared on the dress under Matilda's arm.

"Well, can you go?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Come with me," the watchman said and led Matilda to his lodge. Then he dialed 03 and called the Ambulance.

"I'll need a passport there. It's in my backpack and closed in teacher's lounge."

"Well, I'll bring it right away," the watchman said and left.

"Andrei Andreevich, it will be necessary the passport for an ambulance, open the teacher's lounge please, the passport there in her backpack," said the watchman.

The teacher and the watchman went into the teacher's lounge, the watchman easily found a bright backpack.

"I will not rummage in it, I'll take the whole backpack," said he to the teacher and left the office.

The ambulance did not have to wait long. The watchman opened the gate. Into the watchman's lodge entered the doctor with a suitcase and a young girl – an assistant.

"So, what's here? Let me take off your dress and see," said the doctor.

– No, I'm not going to take off my dress here, drive me to the hospital, the wound is not too deep.

"Well, can you go?" the doctor asked.

"Yes," answered Matilda and went to the ambulance, taking her backpack.

Ambulance drove through the city with included beacons. The doctor and his assistant were very polite.

"At last I broke free," thought Matilda.

"I cut my hand too, could you see it and bandage it?" she asked the doctor.

The doctor examined her hand and processed it with hydrogen peroxide.

"The wound is not terrible, a small cut," he said. A young girl, the doctor's assistant, cleverly bandaged her hand.

Arriving at the hospital, the car drove up to the reception. The doctor took Matilda to the department and handed it to the attendant. Then he said goodbye to Matilda, wished her a speedy recovery and left. He already had to go to another challenge.

"So, what have you got here?" asked the attendant.

"I cut my hand with glass, I was treated in the car, the doctor stitched wound and bandaged. The doctor said that you need to registry me in your journal and then I can go home. He said me to come to your clinic tomorrow," Matilda lied.

"Okay, passport with you?"

"Yes, of course," said Matilda and handed in her passport.

The attendant made the necessary entries in the journal and returned the passport to Matilda. Then Matilda said goodbye and went out into the courtyard of the polyclinic.

"I forgot to give her pass to the exit," the attendant thought, "well, nothing, she'll be right now back, and I'll write out."

At the exit from the polyclinic's gates was a guard.

"Girl, what hospital room are you from?" he asked.

"I'm not from a hospital room. I accompanied my sister to the ambulance, now I'm coming back."

"Ah, got it. Well, come on," he said, and went back to the security guard cabin and the automatic gates opened. "Maybe I can help you to get a taxi?" the guard asked after Matilda.

"Thank you, I'll catch it myself," answered Matilda and moved away.

It was about ten in the evening, and the city did not sleep. Matilda straightened her backpack behind her shoulders and headed toward her house. It was far to go. On the way Matilda met no one hooligan. There were strolling couples, were also married couples with baby carriages. As always, there were a lot of idle tourists and hurrying people in the city. Matilda reached her house at midnight. Entering the entrance and climbing till her apartment, Matilda did not know what to do. She did not have the keys. After standing a little at the door, she went down into the courtyard and went to the nearest kindergarten. There were no children in the kindergarten. They were ordinarily taken there early in the morning, and in the evening they were taken away.

"Perhaps there is a watchman here," thought Matilda, "I don't need to run into him."

She tried to find some place in the fence to penetrate the territory of the kindergarten. Then she went to the gate. The gate, was like a fence, was made from a forged rods. She slipped her hand through the bars and pushed back the bolt, and then closed the wicket behind her.

"I need to sleep somewhere until the morning," thought tired Matilda and headed to the playground. She climbed into the small hut on the chicken legs, sat down on the wooden floor and fell asleep.

Do you speak English?

Matilda woke from the cold, she was trembling violently. It was already six in the morning. She got out of the hut and went back to her house. Usually at seven in the morning the neighbors were already awake. Matilda went into her porch, and without taking off her backpack, she began doing squats to keep warm. After a while, the chill went away. She no longer shook, but Matilda needed to keep warm.

"Yes," she thought, "a cup of hot coffee would not hurt." Continuing to do sit-ups, Matilda waited seven in the morning. She had no hours, and from time to time she left the entrance and looked at the neighbors' windows. The light caught fire in the window of the old woman Zina. Matilda went up to her apartment and rang the doorbell.

"Oh!" exclaimed the old woman Zina, "Matilda, what's the matter with you? Come on, come in. My old man is still sleeping. Come into the kitchen, I'll make you tea," said Zina and led Matilda to the kitchen.

"You did not spend the night at home! Neighbors said you were taken by cops to the orphanage. Poor little soul! Did you escape? What happened with your arm?"

At tea Matilda told how she managed to escape from the orphanage and that there was only a small cut on her hand.

"Now I'll prepare for you another sandwich. Do you want me to warm up the soup?"

"Thank you, Zina! I'm already full. And can I have some hot tea?"

"Tea is not food. Now I'll warm up the soup on gas quickly. Hot bouillon is very salutary," said Zina, took out of fridge the pan with soup and put it on the stove. "My old man still sleeping, yesterday watched football to midnight. If you want, stay with us. Only don't show yourself to neighbors. Evil tongues can inform cops. You'd better not see cops. And my old man does not like these cops, he calls them garbage!"

The old woman Zina fed Matilda by hot soup. She spoke without stopping. It was her professional quality – in her younger years she worked as a teacher.

"Let me bring you a dressing gown, and I'll wash the dress. The blood just can't be washed."

"Thank you, Zina, but I have to go."

"Where will you go, my dear?"

"I'll go look for work."

"Where will you sleep? Come to us."

"Thank you, Zina, but really I shouldn't appearance here. Okay, shall I go? Is good?" said Matilda, got up and headed for the door, "thank you for not allowed me to freeze."

"Wait, do not go away, I'm right now," said Zina, and went out into the room. Matilda stood and waited for her at the front door.

"Here, take some money, you'll need it. We're old, and no need money," said Zina, and slipped several bank notes into Matilda's hand.

"But there are many, I would have enough only to travel around the city."

"Take it, take it."

"Thank you, Zina. I will refund the money when I will can. But when – I do not know."

"Don't worry. We have money with my old man. We wait for you in this evening, come to sleep here. Wait, I'll bring a shawl now."

"Why should I have a shawl?" Matilda asked, but Zina went out to the room again.

Returning, she brought a thin woolen beige scarf. He was with a fringe. Then Zina tied a scarf around Matilda's waist. "So, the blood on dress will not be visible," she said.

Matilda once again thanked, said goodbye and left. She ran down the stairs, came out from the entrance, and, trying not to meet with neighbors, headed towards the street.

After several hours of walking around the city and looking for work, she stopped at the building with the inscription "Business Center Lingua." The lesson of English at school was Matilda's favorite lesson. Her teacher – Fonarina Darya Antonovna, was delighted with Matilda's successes and always gave her extra assignments and books in English. Matilda's pronunciation was perfect. Sometimes after the lessons, Matilda stayed at school and came to the English class room. There she could talk with Darya Antonovna in English. They discussed Matilda's books, sometimes Matilda retold them. Matilda felt confident in English and entered the building. In the front entrance hall towards Matilda came a guard. He was wearing a black suit and tie. An antique chair with bent legs stood behind him.

"Do you want something?" he asked.

"Yes, I'm translator and come to ask about job."

The guard examined Matilda. She wore a cheap dress and a tied scarf around her waist. The dress did not hide the wide hips and her feminine figure. Proper facial features and too white skin gave out her aristocratic origin and young age. The guard noticed cheap shoes with low heels, and a cheap school backpack behind her back. Matilda looked around for some reason and looked up. The video surveillance camera was staring at her.

"Well, wait here, I'll find out right now," the guard said and left. After a while he returned and invited her to go into the office. Passing Matilda into the office of chief, the guard returned to the front entrance hall. A middle-aged man was sitting at the table. "35-40," thought Matilda. At Matilda's entrance, he stood up and greeted her in pure English, "hello! How do you do?"

"Fine, thanks!" answered Matilda, and smiled.

Then they acquaintance, and all their conversation continued in English. The head of the company was Arthur Khananovich. Convinced that Matilda speaks English fluently and competently, Arthur Khananovich suggested that she translate into Russian the text the contract that lies on his table. Matilda read the English text with ease and translated it into Russian aloud. Arthur Khananovich liked it very much.

"Now let's try the synchronous translation," he said, and turned on the television set in his office. On TV screen from the rostrum spoke Vladimir Wolfowicz, well-known for many, and he scolded the Communists.

"Begin please, we need a synchronous translation," said Arthur Khananovich to Matilda.

Five minutes later Arthur Khananovich turned off the TV. He was amazed at the ease with which Matilda synchronously translated what she heard and with accuracy passed all the expressions of the speaker's not normative vocabulary. Matilda's thin voice did not drown out of speech Vladimir Wolfowicz. It was easy to listen to her and listen to the speaker's speech at the same time.

"Well. We will formalize you to work. Do you have a passport?"

"Yes, certainly," said Matilda, took off her backpack and handed the passport to Arthur Khananovich.

"But you're not eighteen yet!" exclaimed Arthur Khananovich.

"Yes, but it will be soon."

"You know what... I can take you to work, but not officially. Do you agree?"

"I think yes," Matilda answered.

"Will it suit you \$ 700 a month?"

Matilda thought about it. She had counting this sum in her mind for rubles.

"Perhaps," she answered.

"Well, that's just for starters," said Arthur Khananovich, looking at Matilda's registration. She was registered in a prestigious area in the center of the city.

"It's strange, why she dresses so simply, as if from a poor family! Probably, this is such a newfangled enthusiasm for children of wealthy parents," Arthur Khananovich thought.

"I think, soon you will raise your salary to a thousand, and a thousand and a half is not the limit too. Everything will depend on you," added Arthur Khananovich.

"Well, do we wait you tomorrow at work?" he asked.

"What time I need to come?"

"It is desirable by nine in the morning, but not later than ten. Usually our customers do not arrive until ten. We have a special hall for negotiations. Here meets businessmen from different countries, including our directors of factories and large enterprises with their foreign colleagues. We provide them with simultaneous interpretation during the negotiations, and also we help to draft contracts in accordance with our laws. We also have the lawyers for this in our staff."

"It is interesting! Such work, I hope, I like it," said Matilda, not hiding her joy.

"All right, I'll see you at nine tomorrow."

"I forgot to say, my parents left, they rest in Cuba now. They will not arrive soon. I stayed at home alone. In general, it so happened that I needed money. I do not want to talk about this, how it all happened. So I decided to look for a job. Prepayment now would not prevent for me."

"Ah, of course," Arthur Khananovich suddenly remembered, and reached with his hand into his pocket for the purse, but then decided that paying an advance from a purse would be highly indecent. "So, where's the key?" he said.

Then Arthur Khananovich opened the drawer of the table, took the key and went to the safe. He was ready to pay Matilda two and three thousand dollars a month, but was afraid that she might not go to work. It was impossible to miss such luck as Matilda, but also to give a large sum at once Arthur Khananovich could not by virtue of his worldview. He opened the safe, took out three banknotes of one hundred dollars each and handed them to Matilda.

"I think this is enough to begin with, because you have not started working yet," he said.

"Yes, thank you, you helped me out."

"Now, do not forget your passport."

"Yes thank you. Can I go?"

"Yes, of course," said Arthur Khananovich and smiled goodbye. It was a kind smile of a man who looks at a cute baby.

Severe labor weekdays.

On the same day Matilda went shopping, she chose a black business suit and a white blouse. The long narrowed skirt to the ankles with a slit and a short jacket well emphasized the figure and hid its white legs from unnecessary looks. Matilda's stockings were also black. To go with such a skirt Matilda could only take small steps. Selected her high-heeled shoes and brooch Matilda left her bloody dress in the store. Before leaving the store, she still for a while turned around the big mirror, and tried to walk in small steps with the gait of the model. She liked it. The costume was sewed by the factory 'Bolshevichka' and Matilda still had a lot of money. She had already chosen a handbag for her dress, but then changed her mind and bought a briefcase of black leather. But most importantly, she decided to go to the hairdresser.

"Make me the same hairstyle as has Mireille Mathieu," Matilda told the hairdresser and pointed to the photo of her favorite singer, who was hanging on the wall.

Toward evening Matilda already settled in the student dormitory as a university entrant. Despite her St. Petersburg registration and the availability of an apartment according her passport, nobody had the right to refuse her provide the student dormitory. In the column, Matilda wrote the workplace her father – the director of the state farm "Kommuner". The institute decided that the girl wanted to live separately from her parents. Looking at her registration and the position of father, the workers of the institute decided not to violate the law and provide the girl with a student dormitory. Matilda chose this institution not from her personal interests, but from the proximity of the institute's hostel to hers first place of work. Matilda passed the school certificate to the institute. There were assessments only 'excellent', but only one assessment by astronomy was 'good'. Why she was rated 'good' in the fourth quarter, and brought out assessment 'good' for the year, she did not know. Her classmate and daughter of the head of the City Department of Public Education received a gold medal. Matilda did not get the gold medal. Until early September, Matilda lived in a student dormitory and went to work every day. She asked several times for Arthur Khananovich to leave a job and took the entrance examinations. From the beginning of September she lived in a hostel already in the company of two girls. In late November, Matilda was expelled from the Institute by reason of her absence. However, by that time the building of the institute had already been privatized by the dormitory administrator and by the beginning of the next year it was intended to use it completely as a hotel. Already empty rooms were being rented and at very low prices. In comparison with hotels in the city, the price of a room in a student dormitory was five times cheaper. Initially, the rooms were designed for three peoples, and each room had a shower and toilet. Matilda took advantage of this and began to rent a separate room. The salary of Matilda was enough to afford live in a posh hotel, but she had not a habit for squander and continued to live in a student dormitory for a small fee. For her it was already a paid hostel, but most importantly, it was not far from her place of work. Now Matilda's salary was already three thousand dollars at month, and Arthur Khananovich told her that from next month her salary would be five thousand dollars. First, Arthur Khananovich was afraid that Matilda could be taken away by some new millionaire and owner of the plant. Such high-class specialists were needed by many. Privatization was in full swing. There were appeared more and more nouveaux riches. Secondly, Arthur Khananovich realized that Matilda with this level of knowledge could work as an interpreter at the UN and receive twenty thousand dollars a month for such work. This calmed himself. She had the all personal traits for work in the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs or in the government, but Matilda did not have an interpreter diploma. Who her parents were, Arthur Khananovich did not know and did not dare to ask her tactless questions. In any case, he was glad that Matilda was the pearl of his Business Center. There were a lot of clients, and they gave positive recommendations to their friends. Clients were all from the government, there were also former communist and Komsomol leaders, the first and second secretaries of city and district committees. There were absent only the third

secretaries of the city and district committees of the Komsomol. Earlier, the Communists – the mind, honor and conscience of this era, used the third secretaries of the Komsomol, usually for serve tea and perform small tasks. However, among the former third secretaries of the Komsomol there were also many privatizers of small state property – small poultry farms or pig farms. Of course, director of a pig farm did not need to conduct any negotiations with foreign partners. Having shares of pig farm, it was difficult to find a foreign buyer of these shares. All foreign investors stood in queue for shares of the largest metallurgical enterprises and enterprises of the mining complex. Arthur Khananovich and his 'Business Center Lingua' earned a lot of money, providing a conference room for negotiations and accompanying them with simultaneous interpretation. Customers trusted the 'Business Center Lingua' for confidentiality in the negotiations. However, before the talks began, security personnel at the enterprises always checked the lack of listening devices in the conference room with special equipment. During all the negotiations, only Matilda was present. She knew a lot of secrets, but she did not intend to share it with anyone. In the hostel, Matilda's night table kept countless business cards of heads of the largest enterprises from all over the Union. One day, in the middle of February, the surprise was waiting for Matilda at the 'Business Center Lingua'. It was the middle of February 1991 year. More precisely, it was on February 14, 1991. Matilda came to work, as always, by nine o'clock in the morning. She went to her office, not finding a single employee in her workplace. All were absent. At the beginning of the ten o'clock, she got up from the table, put down the documents and went to the office to Arthur Khananovich. Arthur Khananovich dryly said, "Hello Matilda, I have news, and one of them is good. What news should I start with? I do not know what news is better."

"Start with a good one."

"The good news is that our 'Lingua Business Center' is grateful to you for your work for eight months".

"And what is bad news?"

"Well, go to the conference room," said Arthur Khananovich and followed Matilda. Having overtaken her at the door of the conference hall, Arthur Khananovich opened the door and gestured to Matilda to enter first. It was dark in the hall. The windows in this room were missing, and the light could only be from a few crystal chandeliers located high above the ceiling. Arthur Khananovich entered and closed the door. There was complete darkness.

"I'll tell you the bad news, Matilda," Arthur Khananovich said aloud, "you've add to old age a one year!"

At that moment the chandeliers were lit, claps of firecrackers. Matilda was showered with paper beads. Everyone clapped their hands and sang a song in English 'Happy Birthday to You'. Then everyone gave Matilda gifts and congratulated. On table were a large cake, a tea set, and a large porcelain teapot with tea. It was a nice tea-party. Matilda completely forgot about her birthday, but in the 'Business Center Lingua' she was reminded of this. Remembered Matilda and about her Petersburg apartment. Now she was of age, and not a single cop could take her to the orphanage. By eleven o'clock, the tea-party was over. The staff prepared premises for meeting guests from Norway and guests from the marble open pit of Karelia. Matilda returned to her office. Today after work, she was intending to visit her apartment, call a locksmith, change the lock and settle on legal grounds. The money for hire a lawyer, if it was necessary, Matilda had more than enough. She kept the money in the St. Petersburg branch of 'Inkombank' and in January she already started using a plastic Visa card. After receiving permission to finish the work earlier than usual, at four o'clock in the afternoon she was already standing at the door of her apartment. The lock and door were the other. Not the same as before. The door was made of oak and encrusted with mahogany veneer. Matilda rang the doorbell. The door was opened by a tall, elderly man with glasses and a Chekhov beard. He wore light pants and slippers. From under the dark terry dressing gown, a light knitted shirt was peeking out. In his left hand he held a steaming smoking pipe, which was made from the briar.

"You must have been mistaken," he said to Matilda, without inviting her to enter. The aroma from the briar smoking pipe, spread everywhere on the entrance hall.

"No, I was not mistaken. This is my apartment and I'm registered here!" answered Matilda.

"Dearie, you do not look like a crook. What brings you here? Couldn't you show your passport?"

"Here, please, look," said Matilda, flipped through her passport, and showed the stranger a seal with a registration at this address.

"Dearie, I bought this apartment legally. I bought from the captain of the police. I do not intend to inform you of his position and name. At least, I do not have to. Previously, I studied all the documents for the apartment. It apartment was privatized by captain of police. Yes, indeed, before him was registered a minor girl, but then she was deprived of registration for this apartment by the guardianship authorities and then was registered in the Children's Shelter. Probably, it was you. It seems that registration in your passport is now not valid, and you can't reproach me with anything. I am a conscientious home buyer. Encumbrances to the apartment at the time of purchase were not, I have all the relevant documents. In court, you can only rely on the payment of compensation from the state. I hope I will not see you again. Otherwise, I'll have to call a police squad."

During a conversation with a stranger, Matilda noticed through an open door that there was nothing left of her former life in the apartment. The floors were now parquet, on the ceiling appeared an elaborate stucco and expensive furniture in the hallway.

"I understood everything," said dumbfounded Matilda, and retreated. She wanted to cry. She stood for a while in the stairwell and looked at the railing, familiar to her tears, the staircase that she went down to school every day. Matilda wanted to see old lady Zina, and she called her door. The door was also different, it was metal and with a door peephole. Matilda just now paid attention to this. A minute later the door opened and a vulgar woman of about thirty appeared on the threshold.

"Hello! And where is the old lady Zina?" Matilda asked.

"There's no Zina here. We bought them an apartment in new buildings and exchanged it with surcharge."

"And can you tell me their new address?"

"I don't remember the address," the woman said and slammed the door.

Matilda had no choice but to leave the entrance and return to her dormitory. On the way, she went to the law firm. Having told the situation to the lawyer, Matilda showed her passport and registration on the address.

"Yes, indeed, the situation is complicated. So do you say the captain of the police privatized your apartment?" the lady lawyer asked.

"It turns out that yes. This is true."

"As much as we can do for you, it's a small compensation from the state. You will not get too expensive outlay. If you want to get an apartment back, I can give you an attorney's address. He has connections in tribunal, and he will solve your question positively. This is an expensive lawyer and its services will be worth as much as your elite apartment. The court will not find the error of the guardianship authorities or the police, because they could consider you missing. It will be even harder to get compensation from them and pay for the lawyer's work on the return of your apartment. In this case, this affair will take only a novice lawyer."

"I understood. How much do I owe you?"

"Not at all. In fact, I did not render any services to you."

"Thank you. It was nice to talk with you," said Matilda, and said goodbye.

This year was a year of upheaval not only for Matilda, but for all the inhabitants of her vast country. There was a deliberate disintegration of the Soviet Union. Despite the fact that at the March referendum on the fate of the country, almost the entire population voted for the integrity of the USSR, the collapse could not be avoided. Was defeated and the Emergency Committee. From the hostel Matilda moved to a rented apartment in the same area and continued to go to work. These

were hard working days. Not having an own apartment, Matilda often visited the city Tver and always bought a real estates. Literally from one salary she could buy a two-room apartment in Tver. The average price of an apartment was 5 thousand dollars. Already in the 93rd year the flow of customers to the "Business Center Lingua" has significantly decreased. For all this time Arthur Khananovich got necessary connections, good acquaintances and even friends. He was going to do some other business with his new partners. In August, Arthur Khananovich announced to employees about the company's imminent closure. It was planned to close the company 'Business Center Lingua' by mid-December. Matilda during her time has gained a lot of experience with the owners of large and medium-sized businesses. She had many job offers. Matilda kept all the business cards of the nouveaux riches. She remembered everyone with whom she had to communicate and the topic of negotiations. Business cards were not only from her immense homeland, but also from many parts of the world. Matilda did not attach much importance to these acquaintances. Now she did not like being an employee. She wanted and could start her own business. Early next year, Matilda moved to Tver in one of her apartments. This, perhaps, was one of her best apartments. She was on the embankment of Stepan Razin. From the windows there was a view of the Volga River, and Tvertsa River, flowing into it, a view of the river station, to which large multi decked ships and pleasure boats with hydrofoils were approaching. The berth for private yachts was also located near the river station, but already at the mouth of river Tvertsa. Years of work in the company 'Business Center Lingua' did not pass for Matilda in vain. These were hard working days. In the New Year, Matilda began a new life.

New life.

One of the old two-story buildings on the embankment of the river Volga and was the new home of Matilda. The whole second floor was occupied by her apartment. The cabinet was in the back of the apartment. There was a table, near the wall, on the table was a large monitor with a flat screen, the size of an average TV set, a writing set, a keyboard and a small table lamp. The computer was next on the dresser. There was a printer and a scanner. Above the chest of drawers on the wall, the old grandmother's photographs in the Italian baguette had found their shelter. There were not many of them. With St. Petersburg Matilda did not have already anything connections, only memories of childhood and school. The house where her childhood passed was not the same as before. The stolen apartment of her childhood was now a stranger, the neighbors too, almost all were others. It was 1994, and today Matilda celebrated her birthday in her posh apartment with a view of the Volga River. Matilda was sitting in a comfortable beech chair, wrapped in a blanket. Outside the window blow a cold wind and broke rare snowflakes on the window. On a low table in front of Matilda was a bottle of dry wine, an empty glass and a pot of cactus. Cactus replaced flowers for Matilda, buy them at this time in Tver was problematic. Also on the table was a saucer with young cheese, green olives with seeds in a green cup and a saucer with onions cut into large pieces.

"The older the wine, the younger the cheese," thought Matilda, sipped a little wine from the goblet, then broke off a piece of cheese with a fork and sent it into her mouth. She was alone, and she was not bored alone with her thoughts. "It would be nice to have a cat or a dog, or even better, a real man," she thought, but then deflected those thoughts.

"I cannot take this responsibility now," decided Matilda, "I need to think about my education and go to college. Probably, it is better for me to choose an economic faculty." She reasoned, "It would be very interesting to work as a financier in an international company or in a bank. It is necessary to enter the institute in absentia, and try yourself as an entrepreneur. Starting tomorrow, I will register my activities. The realtor agency is what I need." Matilda thought, "Especially since I have several apartments for sale and one office space, I will use it for my company office."

Outside the window, on the thin ice of the river Volga the fishermen were already winding fishing rods. Matilda took the olive with her fingers and bit into it. After the olives, a slice of onions and a slice of black bread were sent on the taste buds and absorption.

"What a poor little soul I am! I'm drinking an expired wine," thought Matilda with a smile, and added to the goblet a dry wine from the cellars of the 1982 Ijevan Wine Plant. Getting out from under the blanket, Matilda went to the cabinet and brought a fresh issue of the magazine 'Around the World'. Then she also settled comfortably into an armchair and wrapped up in a blanket. The articles were interesting. Matilda read it slowly, enjoying the reading and illustrations.

Tver goats.

It was 1999 year. There were few visitors. To attract visitors, at the entrance to the building Matilda placed a glowing in the evening billboard with huge letters 'Real Estate Agency'. It was a small room of one hundred square meters on the first floor. The windows faced the courtyard of the building and the main square of the city – the Lenin square. Matilda did not seek proposals for the sale of apartments in newspapers and did not offer other people's apartments for resale. This was distinguished by her real estate agency from everyone else in this city. For five years, she managed to sell only seven of their apartments and she had two more small apartments for sale. The office was also in her property. Simultaneously with the rise in prices and the dollar, Matilda was forced to raise the price of her apartments for sale. It would be more correct to say that there was a rapid devaluation of the ruble and a fall in its rate to the rest of the world's currencies, but the media chose more appropriate expressions. At the beginning of its activity, Matilda assumed that with money from the sold apartments she would look for ads about cheap apartments in good areas of the city, and then resell them is already more expensive. But from the very first attempt to buy such an apartment, Matilda refused this idea. To deceive the poor tenants and say that their apartment is worthless, Matilda could not. The clients were an unemployed young man of 27 years and his pregnant wife. They expected to sell the apartment, which they inherited and then to rent some dwelling. This young head of the family was unemployed, and he had a rare profession – a refrigeration engineer. Matilda told them about the true value of their property and advised the young man to look for a job in Moscow. She handed a hundred dollar bill to the pair with the words, "you do not have to return it, but you have to call me and tell me when you find a job in Moscow. I want to be sure that I helped you." Matilda was born in the USSR and capitalist ideology was alien to her. In her heart she was a Komsomol member. But people in her saw only an athlete, a young lady and just a beauty.

Once, she exchanged a small apartment from her fund with an additional payment for a larger one. Subsequently, Matilda hardly sold this large four-room apartment, but eventually returned the money spent on it. Since then, she began to store her money on a foreign currency account in one of the Moscow banks. She also decided to finish with the business, finish the institute successfully and find a good job in Moscow. Her teachers could give good advices.

"Perhaps I will work in the government and can to change the economic situation in the country," suggested Matilda.

In one of the days, one might say, by the will of the case, a deputy of the municipal дума with her assistant came to her real estate office. Most likely, the location of her office played. She, as usual, sat in her working chair and studied one of her textbooks on economics, which she took in the library of All-Union Correspondence Financial Economic Institute. Black Bentley drove up to the office door. First the passenger of the front seat come out and opened the door to the passenger of the rear seat. "An important person," thought Matilda. She got up, left the table and greeted the guest.

"Dobronravov Arnold Veniaminovich, a deputy of the City Duma," introduced the guest. He had a large size and shapeless body. Rather, the body had the shape of a whirlwind expanding to the center of the body.

"Very pleased," Matilda answered, and she introduced herself too, "I heard that you are the owner Company 'Volga-Stroy Invest'. So how can I help you?"

"Evil tongues say so, I'm only a deputy and servant of the people," Dobronravov said, and began to look for a place where he could drop his heavy body.

"Sit on the couch, please," suggested Matilda.

"Thank you," said Dobronravov, and, sitting down, continued, "I'm interested in office real estate."

"Unfortunately, I do not have such real estate, except for my office," said Matilda, then for some reason she returned to the table with her smooth and confident gait, took a powder compact with a mirror from the table, opened it and lightly powdered her nose. Then she closed the box, took her business card, and approached the servant of the people with such graceful and unhurried gait so close that he had to look at Matilda from the bottom up. Matilda handed him her business card with the words, "I can give you my office, and it will be cost you five to six times more than similar offices in this quarter. There is a lot of parking space in front of the office, and most importantly, the building of the Regional Administration is nearby. Not everyone can buy such a neighborhood."

Arnold Veniaminovich looked at Matilda without taking his eyes off her. Matilda smiled and asked, "Would you like a cup of coffee?"

Dobronravov was silent and wanted to say something, but Matilda added, "I think that for such man as you, this money will not be of much importance. I think you are the man who knows how to make money and get what he wants as a result."

"Well, I'll think about it," said Dobronravov, "now I need to go, we'll have coffee next time, will not we?"

"I'll be glad to see you," Matilda said, and smiled at him again.

Saying goodbye, Arnold Veniaminovich was going to leave, but Matilda, instead of words of farewell, said, "Only in this case, I will remain without office and without work. I have to leave this beautiful city to Moscow. There I had suggestions for work in the Ministry of Finance. I'll graduate this year from the All-Russian Correspondence Financial Economic Institute and the teachers have already recommended me as the best student of the course to my colleagues in the Ministry of Finance. It is a pity to leave this city. I liked it so much!"

"Well, I'll think about it, too," said Dobronravov and left.

A man in a black suit, waiting Dobronravov at the door, went to the car and opened the door to the servant of the people. The servant of the people sank into the car seat and now his thoughts were not about the company 'Volga-Stroy Invest', but about his people, and specifically about this cute, intelligent and sincere girl with the figure of Aphrodite. Dobronravov fell in love with Matilda like a schoolboy. All day he caught himself thinking that he only thinks about her.

Even late at night, falling asleep, Dobronravov decided that he could use Matilda in his company 'Volga-Stroy Invest' and could invite her to the position of the general director, not lower, but it is necessary to limit its functions and duties. "Moreover, there is an executive director who will sign all the necessary documents, including those that Matilda will not have to see," the servant of the people thought, falling asleep with thoughts of his people.

Sledgehammer.

Sledgehammer was furious. One beginner merchant refused to pay tribute.

"Lame," Sledgehammer asked, "and did you politely explain to the huckster, who is the boss in Zavolzhsky district? And tell me, how did he knock you out with one blow?"

"He is rabid," answered Lame, "it is impossible to talk with him. He must be just beaten."

"Indeed? You've already beaten him, I see," Sledgehammer smirked, "and what's the name of store?"

"Everything for fishing and hunting," Lame replied.

Sledgehammer pulled a new Glock 17 out of his pocket, took out the store and stared stupidly at the cartridges.

"Call out Fix," said Sledgehammer, "I do not want to kill anyone, we'll go parrot the boy."

At the same time, Sledgehammer returned the magazine to the clip and hid the gun in the inside pocket of the jacket.

After half an hour a tinted jeep with three daredevils rolled along the embankment of the Volga River, making a couple of turns, and stopped sharply near the new store "Everything for fishing and hunting". At the entrance to the store the group stopped – Sledgehammer was interested in a sign near the door.

"Literacy for that is – to read signboard very ease," said Sledgehammer, quoting the Russian poet Mayakovsky. Behind his shoulders were the full 10 classes of Soviet high school. "Entrepreneur Khlipko O.V." read aloud Sledgehammer.

"Well, let's go and see what this Khlipko is like," said Sledgehammer with a smirk, and, feeling a surge of energy, went with the comrades inside the store.

"Just don't fire unnecessarily, you have the iron fist, ram him between his horns once," Lame said, trying to not show out the fright.

"Not pee in pants, Lame, we'll just talk. And you, Fix, don't touch the gun," Sledgehammer turned to his second comrade, "if need be I'll pull out."

Entering the store, Fix silently looked around, spit out the chewing gum on the floor and said, "Where is this flimsy guy?"

Then, seeing the one old visitor of the store, Fix said, "hey, Antiques, the store closed for tax audit, get out."

"Fix, you didn't have been learned the politeness to talking with old men?" Sledgehammer said indignantly. Then he went up to old man, patted him on the shoulder and said, "Excuse him, sir, this dude is crazy. Do you want to buy something for fishing?"

"No, I just went to look, a light expensive here," said old man and slowly went out.

There were posters, fishing tackles on the walls, tents, sleeping bags, inflatable boats and various utensils on the shelves, hand-made hunting knives was lying under glass showcase. It was knives with multilayered steel with embossed leather covers to them. Sledgehammer was examining the knives and only now noticed the little dude about thirty-five years old, coming out of the cabinet. This was an entrepreneur Oleg Khlipko.

"Hello," said Oleg Viktorovich, "how can I help you?"

Oleg and Sledgehammer's views met. Sledgehammer, as an experienced boxer, instantly appreciated the opponent.

"He is sinewy and swift," thought Sledgehammer, "the second average weight, the protruding joints of his fists identified him as a fist fighter. No wondered he knocked out the Lame with one blow."

However, feeling his superiority in weight, growth and the number of battles conducted in the ring and street, Sledgehammer did not confuse the calm and confident eye look of the store's owner.

"Are you asking how to help? By money," Sledgehammer answered cheerfully, and he and his companions began to laugh loudly.

"Are you from the Bank?" Oleg Viktorovich asked.

"From the bank 'Sledgehammer'," said Lame and everyone giggle again.

Oleg looked at Lame and recognized in him today's visitor, which had tried to extort the money. "It's good that them is not from the Bank," Oleg thought, and this calmed him even more.

"Good humor," Oleg said, not hiding his joy, "but what concretely did you want?"

"For short," Sledgehammer began his speech, "you will give me money every month for our man. Just if you want your business work and make a profit. You'll pay to us, we provide your safety. If you pay regularly, you will not have the visitors from epidemiological service, firemen, cops or other bastards. How much will you pay – we'll now determine," looking at the goods, finished his speech Sledgehammer.

Fix took out his pistol, smashed the glass showcase with a handle, and took the knife he liked in an embossed leather cover. "A good knife, thank you, bastard," said Fix, and smile.

"It's not funny anymore. It's sad," said Oleg Viktorovich to Sledgehammer and continued, "you will no need money, the Ambulance will come for free."

"Dude, you probably don't understand who you're talking to," said Sledgehammer and approached Oleg at arm's length. Sledgehammer was half a head taller and once again felt his superiority.

"Well, Sledgehammer, why do you talking to him? Hit him between his eyes," Lame intervened in the conversation, standing three meters to the right of Sledgehammer.

"Lame, did I let you to speak?" slightly turning the body to the right asked Sledgehammer. And instantly from this position, he made a blow his Crown Knocking Hook on the right. But before Sledgehammer's fist reached its goal, as at this very moment, Sledgehammer felt a sharp pain in the left temporal bone below the temple. How Sledgehammer was falling, he could not remember. Sledgehammer usually was able to withstand the blows, but now he came to his senses only in a minute. Slowly rising, Sledgehammer found the enemy by his eyes, but did not hurry to move towards him. As if from afar he could hear the screams and curses of Fix. And Fix at the same time held the pistol on his outstretched hand in the direction of the Oleg. Oleg was completely calm, and this made Fix even more nervous. Then Oleg began to slowly raise his hands to the top to the level of his shoulders and slowly approach Fix. "And where were they only taught to hold the pistol on his outstretched hand?" thought Oleg, moving closer to Fix and depicting his own defeat.

"Probably he taught from movies, Hollywood," thought Oleg and spoke loudly and calmly, "you won, you're a tough guy!"

The gun rested against Oleg's forehead. In such situations, Oleg were more than once, and not only in training, but also in real combat operations, while serving in hot spots and in the intelligence battalion. "You won, you're a tough guy," once again heard Fix, and at that very moment, there was a lot of pain in the brush area, and also suddenly his own gun pointed at his left eye appeared in the face. Fix looked at the muzzle of the gun and realized the futility of his life, which would take several grams of lead. Fix knew perfectly well what a shot head looked like, and with horror presented his own head with an inlet and an exit aperture of a bullet.

"When my brains will fly apart, where will I be?" thought Fix. He began to retreat to the door and tried to say something like "do not shoot," but he could not find the words. Then Oleg unnoticeably turned the lever of the safety lock, since he did not intend to shoot, and habitually lowered the gun to his hip at the level of the belt. He was in some confusion too.

"Put the knife on place," Oleg said quietly. Fix complied. Returning the knife, Fix felt better.

"Now he will not kill," realized Fix.

Usually, Oleg killed the enemy in any convenient way for himself and had moved to a certain point on the map. Now, he could not kill his enemies and quit his business – at home wife and little daughter waiting for him.

Sledgehammer disturbed the pause, "everything in the car! He clearly ordered, and, continuing to retreat to the exit, extended his index finger in the direction of Oleg.

"You're cadaver," Sledgehammer confidently said to Oleg and, without looking back, moved with his comrades to the car.

"Get behind the wheel," – said Sledgehammer to Lame, "you're the chauffeur today."

"Where we go?" Lame asked.

"To your home," Sledgehammer replied, "we need to think about," he added, and sat down in the backseat.

Oleg returned to his small office at the end of the trading floor. All this time the young saleswoman-cashier Svetlana was hiding there. She was terribly frightened. Before the visit of suspicious guests, which Oleg saw in the monitor of a street surveillance camera, he invited Svetlana into the office and asked to stay there for a while. Now, seeing the monitor that the uninvited guests have left, Oleg Vladimirovich said, "Svetlana Vitalyevna, you are clever, did not utter a word. Now you can go home and tomorrow you have a paid day off. Remember, you did not see anything and did not hear, you had a break, and you sat in headphones and listened music. This is in case the cops have any questions."

"Okay, Oleg Vladimirovich. Can I go?"

"Yes, of course, Svetlana, and do not worry, everything will be fine."

Oleg was a debtor of the bank "Narodny", with a loan and high interest. The store was rented by Khlipko in his name, with the right of subsequent repurchase from the construction company 'Volga-Stroy Invest', owned by Mr. Dobronravov, who simultaneously dealt with affordable housing as a deputy of the Tver City Duma. In Oleg's office, there was a desk with a computer, two armchairs, a monitor for two hidden surveillance cameras, operating in continuous recording mode, an electric kettle and several cups. Oleg took a small towel, carefully wiped Makarov pistol Makarov, and quickly disassembled it into small parts, while wiping every detail of the gun, putting all the details in a common heap in the center of the towel. When he had finished, he wrapped the details in a towel and put it in the briefcase.

Then he took out a sheet of A-4 and wrote a handwritten statement about his finding details which looked like a details of pistol. – A statement to the Police department? – Oleg thought about the cap of the statement. – No! He would have to walk across the bridge, but the Police department was on this side of the Volga. So it's on the way to the Prosecutor's Office across the bridge.

Oleg was an inconspicuous lean man and did not arouse suspicion among the cops, he put on his jacket without wasting time and left. Closing the door, Oleg lowered the jalousies by remote control and moved toward the River Station along the waterfront. It was getting dark. Turning to the bridge and passing a few meters in the center of the bridge over the river, Oleg took out a towel from the briefcase with the details, stopped and threw the details into the Volga River. Then he crumpled the towel and threw it following into the river too.

"The next affair tomorrow," thought Oleg, and leisurely went home, where his wife, daughter, and cherry pie were already waiting.

In the meantime, Lame had already uncorked a bottle of vodka and poured in little glasses.

"For some reason, I do not want to drink," Sledgehammer said and tipped little glass to his throat.

"And what is the reason of drink?" Fix asked.

"For commemorate your pistol Makarov," Lame said, and laughed.

"It's good that the pistol was left for dude," said Sledgehammer, turning to Fix, "I gave you gun to you get rid of it, but not for your cakewalk two weeks with it."

"It would be nice if the cops make a search in the store of a dude and find a gun," Lame said, wrapping a cigar with marijuana.

"And will you going inform to cops or who will do it?" Sledgehammer asked, looking at Lame.

"You have the ace among the cops there, the cop whom you saved," hinted Lama, lit a bush and took a deep dragged on.

"So, I didn't understand, do you suggesting me to blow the whistle?" Sledgehammer asked.

Lame, coughed, he realized that he said too much. This conversation could be end badly for him. He had been selling drugs for a long time in the district and enjoyed authority, only because he was often seen in the company with Sledgehammer.

"No," said Lame, clearing his throat with cough, "I mean that you shot Chub with Elephant, and did not touch the cop, although he saw you."

"Well, he did not inform the cops about, as we agreed, but now he tosses information to me. When I shot the bastards, I did not know that they had a cop attached to a chair in another room. What? Did I have to kill the innocent, just because he's a cop?" asked Sledgehammer.

Lame, trying to change the topic of the conversation continued, "So it was not without reason as he was tied to a chair and tortured. The money not found still. The TV said that all the criminals were killed while robbing the bank, and then garbage said that the two criminals managed to leave. So may be Chub and Elephant were these bastards, and they just have the money stashed away? And you killed them, and everyone knows about it. On the street, people say that you have money, and everyone knows that you have killed these freaks."

"Knows everything, but can't to prove it," said Sledgehammer, "you're not only lame, and you're also stupid as all the nares. Look, if the Chub and Elephant had this money, they would be tortured in the police. And here just the opposite is obtained – they themselves tortured garbage and wanted to know something. So, who has this money? Somebody of garbage has this money."

Fix got tired of listening to smart conversations, and sparkling his fixed tooth in smile, he said, "Sledgehammer, you can't eat bacon, it's pork."

"I myself decide with what laws I should live," replied Sledgehammer.

"Well, what did you decide about the dude? Will we throw him a couple of grenades tomorrow?"

"Couple? We have only a couple of them. One will enough," said Sledgehammer, "by the way, where did you hide them?"

"I did not hide it anywhere, there are in the glove compartment," Fix said.

"Well, it's funny," said Sledgehammer, "you bought a nice jeep, but you didn't have enough money to buy a brain."

"So what about the dude then?" asked Fix.

"I'll talk to him myself tomorrow. If he does not agree, we will explode his store in the evening. For short," continued Sledgehammer, turning to the Lame, "you're walking around the district in the morning, looking for some VAZ vehicle without signaling, in the evening it may be necessary. And we will ride with Fix to dude. We'll throw a grenade in the evening, when there will not be a dude. We will not blow up dude. Just a store. Understood? Yes?"

"I understand, Sledgehammer, you always discourse correctly," Fix said and turned to Lame, "Well, you sit there, let's pour it, you see, my wrist is swollen."

"Yes, for hit the woman at her face your wrist is not swollen, but for pour vodka the wrist is swollen," sarcastically said Lame, spilling the remains of the first bottle in little glasses.

"What the woman?" asked Sledgehammer.

"Well when we took vodka in the store, Fix hit a woman at her face," said Lame.

"So she hit me, I did not want to beat her. Instinctively I gave her kick riposte, and she fell from her hooves," said Fix for self-justify.

"Come on, let's go into more detail," Sledgehammer said.

Fix was not eager to talk and his silence was interrupted by Lame, "we stand next to the ticket office, in front of us is a sympathetic chick, Fix approaches her, takes her boobs by hands and says, 'what a cool boobs! Let's go with us to rest culturally'."

Sledgehammer stops laughing for a second and asks, "so what then?"

"And then what? Then chick with a turn of her palm struck on the Fix's beak. I thought the Fix's fixed tooth will fly out," answers Lame and continues to laugh.

Finished laughing, Sledgehammer lights a cigarette, makes two deep puffs, then with disgust kills the cigarette in ashtray. He silently looks at Fix at close-range, as if he sees him for the first time and asks, "Fix, and why are you not laughing? Everyone laughs, but you do not have fun?"

Fix wanted to say something, but Sledgehammer continued, "Probably you want people thinks in the district that my people are scumbags? Are you on the team, or are you on your own? So say then that you are an honest freier. Maybe you want people tell on the street that sledgehammer's people live not according to the concepts?"

The silence reigned. Then Sledgehammer continued, "And if somebody will touch a tits of yours sister, and then he hits her on the face, will you like it? I will not surprise if tomorrow any freier move a blade to yours throat."

"Well, I was wrong, let's forget," said Fix, and handed the second bottle of vodka to the Lame, "let's, open it, and pour it into the glasses.

"It is enough for me," said Sledgehammer. "Don't sit behind the wheel drunk," he said to Fix, "spend the night at the Lame's home. Now I'll go home. In the morning, come to me at 11 or 12 to Bald's cafe. I'll be there."

"So let me call a taxi," Lame suggested.

"No, I want to take a walk. I got breathed with your cigarettes. Well, good-bye," said Sledgehammer and left.

Everyone knew that Sledgehammer rented an apartment on Schmidt Boulevard and was temporarily registered in it, but where Sledgehammer spends the nights, no one knew.

Friday.

Matilda woke up due to a loud phone call. The sun shone brightly through the curtains. Matilda looked at her watch – it was 10am. She stretched and wanted another ten minutes to luxuriate in bed, but the loud sounds of the phone were against her wishes. Matilda got out of bed, put on her robe, and without hurrying went to the bathroom. She looked in the mirror for a long time, then sat down on the edge of the bathroom and cried. It did not last long, in a few seconds Matilda pulled herself together, washed herself and put herself in order. When she returned to the bedroom, the phone was silent. Matilda sat down to the dressing table and looking in the mirror began to think what she could do now in this situation. Matilda was already 26, but in the reflection of the mirror on Matilda looked a pretty young twenty-three-year-old blonde with a swollen upper lip. "Yes," Matilda thought, "it's hard to fix something here and three days will not have to leave the house."

The meditation was interrupted by a loud phone call. Matilda picked up the phone, "hello."

In response, she heard, "hello, Matilda, dear, what happened?" We have an hour, later in the company meeting with us, deputies, here the TV anchorman. The journalists have already gathered, the press, so to speak."

"Arnold Veniaminovich, I'm sick. By Monday I will be healthy. Now I feel bad."

Arnold Veniaminovich realized that something had happened. Matilda could not suddenly fall ill, and never did he see her sick, weak or in a bad mood.

"Well, I will postpone the event for Monday, or even better for Tuesday. If there is no general director of the company, then the meeting with deputies is postponed, this is normal. Now I want to see you. Now I'll come," – and Arnold Veniaminovich hung up.

Arnold Veniaminovich Dobronravov was married, had three children and the reputation of a good family man. Arnold Veniaminovich has long wanted to take the chair of the Governor of the region, Mr. Zalepin, but it did not depend on Dobronravov, but only on his connections in Moscow. He did not even put forward his candidacy for the upcoming elections. At first he was to be recommended in the Kremlin as soon as possible. Still he had no this opportunity. Now Dobronravov was just an ordinary deputy of the City Duma, and as a deputy dealing with problems of affordable housing, he visited office of company 'Volga-Stroy Invest'. This was exactly the former office of Matilda Real Estate Agency. Everyone knew that Dobronravov personally owns the company, but officially, 'Volga-Stroy Invest' was established by the Cyprus Company DBC Construction Development Inc. The director was Stanislav Sukhorukov – unknown to anyone a young man and nephew of Arnold Dobronravov. DBC Construction Development Inc. had a representative office in Moscow. Sukhorukov appointed on post of executive director of the representative office his comrade and former classmate Viktor Gulyaev.

Matilda hung up the phone, but immediately took it off again and rang the governess, "Olga Nikolaevna, can you come right now? It is very urgent. Come by taxi, please."

"Yes, my dear," answered Olga Nikolayevna.

She was an elderly single woman, retired and a former teacher of French. Olga Nikolayevna did not have friends and girlfriends, and she liked to communicate only with Matilda, loved to take care of her, prepare dinner and help with housework. Olga Nikolaevna had an adult daughter, but she lived in Murmansk and was married to a midshipman of a submarine. They were seen each other very rarely. Every week Olga Nikolayevna wrote a letter to her daughter and carried it to the post office. Her daughter wrote rarely, she often called mama by phone. Last year, Olga Nikolayevna with her daughter and son-in-law was resting in Cuba, so the entire sideboard was filled with Havana's photos and Cuban souvenirs. Near the table where the phone was, two portraits hung – a photograph of her husband, also a military sailor, who died early, and a picture of her father who had not returned from the Great Patriotic War. The French language was not useful to Olga Nikolaevna. She always

dreamed that one of her students, after finishing school, will go to the Institute of Foreign Languages, will learn and work as an interpreter in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and benefit the Motherland. Now she did not know where they live and what her graduates are doing. She sincerely believed that French language would be useful to them in life. She was a native inhabitant of Sevastopol, but by will of fate she was in Tver. She lived in the hope of returning to her city, but eventually all her hopes were destroyed. Olga Nikolaevna always tried to live modestly. The life alone without husband, in a large four-room apartment was painful for her. She met Matilda when she wanted to exchange her four-room apartment for a small one-room apartment with an additional payment. Now, as in her youth, Olga Nikolaevna did not experience any problems with money, but she did not have enough pleasant communication, and in Matilda's face she found an interesting companion.

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