

Ваган Арутюнов

**Сан-Францисская
история.
Синтетик**

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«Издательские решения»

Арутюнов В.

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История о том, что путь достижения цели не менее важен, чем сама цель, дружба — первой подростковой любви. О том, что технологии призваны помочь человеку, а не заменить его.

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SYNTHETIC

The story from San Francisco

*DO YOU THINK
YOUR MUSCLES GROW
BECAUSE YOU SWEAT
IN THE GYM?
NO, IT'S YOUR BRAIN
THAT SENDS A SIGNAL TO YOUR MUSCLES TO GROW.*

SYNTHETIC: SUCCESS DOESN'T COST MORE THAN THE PRICE!!!

Jacob and Barney

Jacob Hanson didn't like when it was noisy at his street. Not that he didn't like fun, no, on the contrary. He simply thought that fun was something that made happy not only him but others as well. Jacob had the credibility both among his peers and among adults. They often asked him what they should do. His answers were accurate, clear and often hit the spot.

Now he was hurrying to interfere in the fight at one of the streets between France and Russian avenue. The boys seemed to get really angry. Like a lion Jacob rushed into the crowd of fighting or more likely attacking people: as it's difficult to call a fight when five attack the one. He got in the middle of the crowd to save poor Barney. That was the nickname given to a new boy whose real name was Benjamin Wagner. He had moved to the street Jacob lived only a week ago and had already fought the local kids twice since then. And it was he himself who provoked the fight. At first he was welcomed but then he out of a sudden thought that he'd become a new boss here and the kids decided to face him down.

And here was Nicole, everyone's favourite. People respected her as she wasn't a prude or a smug like other girls but at the same time she wasn't trying to be like boys. Children liked her very much. Her light-green eyes were shining when she smiled and her light hair was brightening her face as the rays of the sun. She was Jacob's girlfriend. They both were twelve and it seemed to them that they would be together forever. That is how the first love works.

Nicole was impressed by the noble way Jacob offered his hand to Barney who was basing himself on the ground upon one of his hands. It reminded her of a picture she had at home in the hallway. There was an old man offering a hand to a young man.

Barney got up and shook down. The boys surrounded him ready to attack the tease once again. For he was actually teasing them and anyone can get sick and tired of that. Jacob hugged the boy's shoulders and the three of them went to the garage near Jacob's house where the hero of this street had been sitting peacefully just recently.

Boys know that the strongest friendship is born in the fights. Barney and Jacob became sworn friends and then little by little all other friends of Jacob bonded with Barney.

Years went by, the boys grew up but girls at this age develop faster than boys. Nicole turned into a fascinating girl with the curves any model could envy. The boys were flattered by her friendship: as no one could even approach to such a princess. Out of teenage complexes boys tend to create different stories about girls. Girls suffer from their beauty no less. The worries that somebody might think less of them don't let them make the first move. And those whose disapproval they're afraid of could make a whole list. Firstly, the friends, and the closer their friend is the further her advice is

from the real good one, secondly, the boys and, at last, the prince himself... Many girls get tangled in the nets of their own fear and pride like fish.

Just as children are undermined by dark fantasies, exactly the same Barney couldn't take an eye of his best friend's girlfriend. The whole style of Jacob's life haunted his mind and not only the fact that he was always in the center of their friends' attention. Jacob got everything much easier than others and he got only the best. As if the life itself was trying to present him with all its gifts. He wasn't a nerd but he got the best scores. He wasn't a bully but everyone at the streets from his home to the lyceum respected him. Sometimes it seemed to Barney that Jacob was using some special techniques to win everyone's respect and love and especially girls' attention. Those who many boys were afraid even to look in the eyes desperately wanted to be his friends. And his secret was very simple – sincerity. Jacob had a gift of sympathy to others up to self-sacrifice. Everybody knew they could always count on his help.

Many times Barney was a witness and a participator of such events as Jacob often took his friend with him. Once they saved a girl from the next street that some grown-up scoundrels dragged to a disco and made her drunk. Then the poor thing locked herself in the restroom, called Jacob and was hiding there until he came for her. Fearlessness was another trait of Jacob that bugged Barney.

And at last he found an answer to his questions «why him and not me?» It happens to all the idols: when a forest is growing, no one hears that but when a single tree falls down, the noise can be heard all around the forest. Barney decided that his friend was... simply a fool. Yes, that's right! He couldn't even manage the fortune falling into his arms. And, of course, the main part of that were girls. He could have changed them like socks and he was just fuzzing around with them. Of course, Nicole was the reigning beauty of the school but one could set everything so that no one would even know, one couldn't drink only Cola all the time...

When you put the first grain on the scale of the bad thoughts, you should be ready that this scale pan will soon be full and you'll soak to the very bottom. At first you do that only in your thoughts and devil's advocate will be consoling himself that these are nothing but innocent fantasies. But actually every fantasy of such kind is drawing you closer to him like a fish on a hook, like an old man his marling and he won't leave you alone anymore. That is why when you're going to swallow the hook you have to think whether you want to become this fisherman's dinner... But... Youth and reason like day and night are on the different poles of life. The luckiest man is the one the starlight shows the right way and those who can't read these signs are to be regretted.

Synthetic

On a warm October evening Jacob in a good mood came out to the yard where Barney and Nicole were waiting for him. Pleasant light wind was freshening the air removing the heat from the pavement.

«Have you seen that commercial?» he asked his friends, «You don't have to sweat in the gym to make your abs great! – Huh! So you can become just like Arnold without any working out? And what happens when they'll learn to put the knowledge into the heads without any effort of their owners? Huh? Can you imagine, the years of suffering – just like that...» he loudly clicked his fingers.

«Why would you need that?» Nicole asked, «You are in a great shape.»

«That costs a mint of money so it's not for everyone, get it?» Barney said.

Jacob's family was having a tough time: his father didn't have any concerts recently, his family was supported by his mother who was a doctor in a hospital. She got nice money and the family wasn't lacking the necessities but Jacob wouldn't take the money for his own need from his mothers, he had part time jobs either as a home help for an old professor of biology or delivering the groceries to the lonely old people. All of them were very willing to use his services: he wouldn't simply deliver the products and then go away. Oh, no, he would have a seat, tell about news in the world and in the

city... In short, he bought his jeans and phone himself but Synthetic that was being promoting on every street corner was too pricey for his pocket.

Barney's family, on the contrary, was doing better and better. He didn't mention that but his father was one of the co-owners of this new start-up but when the commercial for Synthetic started going throughout the city Barney got a new life and as it usually happens new opportunities often open the doors the demons that were sleeping out of weakness.

Barney started setting up parties for his friends. Of course, Jacob was the first to be invited but he was usually busy in the evenings and couldn't let himself partying. And the level of these parties would go higher and higher as Barney didn't spare any efforts to conquer the hearts. He finally found a way to get ahead of his friend's popularity and also he took Synthetic and now he was boasting whenever possible his sporty body that one could use to study the muscles.

Once when he was coming home from work, Jacob saw Barney accompanying Nicole to her porch. It didn't seem surprising: Jacob wasn't with them that evening and it was already late. Jacob wanted to call for his friends but at that very moment he saw Barney taking the girl by her shoulders and kissing her and she didn't resist. Jacob waited for them to part and when Barney went towards the place he was standing at, he quickly hid in the bushes between the houses.

That night Jacob couldn't fall asleep for a long time. This must be the way the adult life begins when you are quickly skinned of all your childhood and its illusions. And betrayal is one of the toughest experiences in a life and Jacob had to pass it.

Out of all hobbies the boys from the street used to share was still left the «weight room» – that was how they called the gym that owned old bodybuilder Sylvester. Once he was famous all over the West Coast. He was well-known in the Hollywood as well and he even had parts in some episodes of popular films of those times. There were his photos with the «stars» on the walls of the gym. Jacob was flattered by the friendship of the old coach, and for everybody else he was someone like Master Edo, that was how they secretly called him.

But the time passed and one by one the boys started leaving old coach. The commercial for Synthetic was rattling from everywhere and there were few of those who wanted to waste precious time in the «weight room», sweating in the dusty gym when one could simply take a course of Synthetic and get a body you will never get with physical exercise. One way or another everybody found money and soon the promotional advertisements and special offers were hanging in every gym like autumn leaves, and then came the notices about gyms closing and being sold.

Synthetic stepped both onto the East Cost and across the ocean. The company expanded building a skyscraper in the City for itself. Barney's family moved to a luxurious district of the city and now it was there where friends came partying. Barney could have also changed the lyceum but he didn't want to mingle with the same children of the rich who managed to hit the big time. He enjoyed his superiority among his old friends with which the memory of Jacob was little by little fading away. Sometimes guys would remember about him on their own during holidays but no one spoke his name when Barney was around. Nicole became Barney's girlfriend and those five that once attacked the arrogant newcomer now became his best friends. Jacob was still loved at school and on the street but now it was Barney who became a role-model for everyone.

One evening Jacob was coming home from his part-time job and suddenly met Nicole. He was so astonished by the girl's beauty that he couldn't take his eyes from her.

«Hi, how are you?» the guy smiled, «You look just like a Hollywood star.»

Nicole smiled to him at first but then lowered her eyes. She felt herself a traitor and deep in her heart she understood that she had betrayed her childhood friend, her first love. She didn't even have enough time to realise how that happened: Jacob suddenly disappeared from her life and Barney took his place. He was a generous one but Nicole felt that he was simply buying everything around just as he had bought his muscles. And wouldn't she turn out to be for him just the same purchase as well? Jacob was different but he wasn't nearby for such a long time...

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