

Andrey Prudkovskii



Trilogy of Dhana and the Earth
Book three. Invisible enemy

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«Издательские решения»

Prudkovskii A.

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Two thousand years have passed since the so-called «The end of the World» described in my first book. A thousand years ago, reptilians were defeated. Awakening of the planets' consciousness helped people, after all, the planets have even changed their names. Terra, Dilly, and Masha created the «Union of Three Planets» for protection from external threats. A millennium of peaceful life has come. Why does sadness dominate the planet? The heroes of my new novel will have to deal with it.

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Chapter 1. Where there's the end, there's a start

“Granny! Granny!” granddad Pahom called his wife out, getting off the stove. “We have to go!”

“Don't call me granny, I am too young for you?” his wife said, “I am no more than two hundred. It's too early for us! Here I'll pickle cucumbers, make sour cabbage... And I have to wait for Milochka, I have to tell her everything... Get back to your stove bench and don't get in the way!”

“All right,” granddad Pahom grumbled, “let's wait a bit more. We've been living for too long. The angels are coming to me at night in my dreams, inviting me to the far, unknown way...”

“We have time,” his wife replied. “No one has ever been late there!”

There was a reason that Terra didn't want to discuss it with the old one. He didn't know much about his wife, and the main thing, he didn't know how old she was. It's been a long time ago, about one hundred and fifty years, at least. Pahom buried his first wife. She became ill with some unknown disease and burned down in three days. The next day, Terra appeared, as if she knew where the patient was. She thought she could save her, but she was late.

“I'm sorry, Pahom, I didn't help your wife...”

Therefore, she remained with an inconsolable man, watched so that he did not commit suicide. But then he could not let her go. So a woman with the strange name Terra settled in his house, she became his new wife. But they didn't have children: Terrochka wasn't young either. How old she was, no one asked, but everyone understood the fact that more than she was about half a century. Well, Pahom did not get discouraged, because he had daughters from the first wife, both of them were already married, and each of them had a couple of children: one daughter has sons, the other daughter has daughters, who have their children and grandchildren. Now Terra wanted to wait for the younger great-great-granddaughter Milochka before her last trip.

And Pahom was going through the cases of his life. There were a lot of different things... He is taken home on a cart – the leg was broken with a log on a felling. Terrochka prepares the steam bath, with kvass – she prepared it herself! She waters it with kvass. And then – to the bed, and she speaks whispering, and she strokes his leg... And the pain goes away, away... And Pahom falls asleep. He woke up in the morning – his leg doesn't hurt. “How did that happen, wife? Is it your work?”

“Come on, come on! Everything's alright! You've hurt a little bit! You took a steam bath – it was gone.”

And one night five men of a beastly kind fell into their hut...

“Get up host, feed us, and let your wife dancing and entertaining.”

Terrochka woke up and stared at their chief. And his legs stopped to hold him, he sat down on the floor and whined in a thin voice:

“I'm sorry, mistress! We're not up to that! We just wanted to have fun!”

“Well, that's enough! Go your way!”

The men moved back and disappeared behind the door, and their chief crawled out.

“What's up to them, wife?”

“They'd lost not all of their conscience! So, they went home.”

And neighbors always went to his wife... If anyone in trouble, everyone went to Terra at once. Pahom didn't understand how his wife could help them. Well, they're going to talk to Terra, and what? And they left satisfied.

“Wife, how do you seduce them?” They don't want to talk to me, but they're turning to you!”

“What's so amazing, a man needs affection! What is your caress?”

Pahom thought that anyone could hardly get caress from him. If something is needed to be made of wood – a table, a chest of drawers, a closet – everyone asks Pahom. But consoling sufferings – count him out. Let the wife console them!

But there were no troubles in the village. Where would the sufferings come from?... Except for their children, who flew around the world. Petka, the telepath, sent the post in good faith. And he stopped drinking. By the way, when did he stop drinking? At that time when Terra appeared in their village...

But it can't be! Terra didn't know Petka then. Why did she need to meet with him? His wife has never received any letters. When he asked, she said:

"I don't have any relatives. I'm the only one in the world. That's the only you whom God gave me at the end of my life."

"What's the end?" Pahom was surprised. "We're both young, we've only lived half a century."

Then I had to say that not half a century, but a century... And later it was a hundred and a half...

Pahom got already used to have many centenarians in the village by that time. Terra and he were not the oldest. But lately, something has broken down in Pahom. It's not a disease; it's some kind of fatigue. He saw everything, he had everything. And the neighbors were not cheerful either. They're all right, but they're not happy.

"We have been living for so long," a hundred-and-eighty-year-old neighbor, whom he remembered as a little girl, once told him.

"Really, old woman," Pahom thought. "Old woman! Is it time for us to go?"

"It's time! It's time," his wife said then. "But wait a little bit longer."

"Grandfather! Stop napping! The guests are coming!"

Pahom got up and finally got off from the stove.

"How do you know?"

"Listen!" the quiet ringing of a distant bell broke through the sound of the wind in the crowns of the trees.

"They're coming! Coming!"

Indeed, three-horse carriage flew into the yard. In a familiar covered cart – he did it himself – great-great-granddaughter Bella with his daughter Mila.

They came to visit the elderly more often than others. After all, it was Milocka whom his wife loved more than others. And the girl also always annoyed her mother:

"Let's go! Let's go to grandma Terra!"

What did they find in each other? But when she came – she ran to her beloved grandmother. She sat on a bench at her feet and asked:

"Granny, tell me a story!"

And grandma began to tell about unknown places, about unknown people. And she told in such a way as if she was in these places, she saw those people and knew everything about them.

And now Mila ran to Terra, and Pahom kissed Bella and began to help her unload the cart:

"It's good that granddaughter is here! The old woman and I have already gathered, and there is no one whom I could leave the farm..."

"Don't worry, grandpa, that's why I'm here. My daughter got married, but I'm at odds with my son-in-law. It seems to me that he does everything wrong. When I tell my daughter she bristles: why would you defame my beloved? I decided to go far away. And Milka asked to go with me no matter how her mother dissuaded her... I'm going, she said, that's all! She's stubborn like me!"

Three days passed, cabbage was fermented, cucumbers pickled. Grandmother went to the forest with her darling. They walked all day together, they just got back by night.

"And what? Said goodbye?"

"It's all right," the wife replied. "And you say goodbye to your granddaughter."

"I've already told her everything! They will live in our house. We now need to go to the bathhouse and then to go!"

Granddad increased steam for the last time but the wife screamed and splash herself the cold water. For the last time, they dressed in white clothes, prepared by the wife beforehand. They closed the door and laid down.

“Well, wife, what to do next?”

“You don’t have to do anything special! Let’s fly!”

Pahom looked back and saw that he was already flying high above the village, and his hut was smaller and smaller. And the last light disappeared in the fog.

“Wife! Where are you?”

“I’m sorry, Pahomushka! Fly! I’ll catch up with you later! I still have some things to do here.”

“Did you change your mind about dying? Did you leave me alone?”

“I didn’t change my mind!”

Pahom saw his wife very close to him.

“Are you seeing, I’m flying too! But I can’t leave my granddaughter, she’s small yet! When she grows up, I’ll catch you up! Fly! Fly! Build a house for yourself and me somewhere.”

He could build houses and liked to do it. But where to build?

“Look for it! His wife instructed him. “Look for it!”

And Pahom flew higher and higher...

Chapter 2. Mila

“Oh! Finally, I broke out!”

The cart swayed gently on the bumps. Grandmother Bella dozed near me.

Everything was decided at the last moment. Father and mother grappled because of my father's fate. My mother wanted me to go to the special school but my father insisted on a boarding school for defectives. I didn't like any of these opportunities. My grandmother Bella saved me, as usual.

“While you're sorting out here, let her come with me to grandfather!”

I clung to her skirt. It was there, to my beloved Granny – I called the wife of our great grandfather in such a way when I was a child. Granny, Granny my dear!... I wish I could live my whole life with you! My parents again were engaged in mutual reproaches... Let them do it! Grandmother Bella got into the cart, and I sat there. Petka was already sitting on the high-bench. By the way, he upset me a lot when he teased me in childhood. But now I'm seven, and his teasers are not so frightening for me!

I remember my childhood. I was always shown to one doctor or another. They treated me with bitter medicines and talked, talked... When I was a child, I didn't understand why people talk, because I have already knew the thoughts of all the people around me. I supposed that my thoughts are open to everyone, so why is it necessary to make some incomprehensible sounds? So I would be “dragged” from one doctor to another, one of them even advised me to undergone surgery – not simple, but according to alien's technologies. If I had fallen into his hands I would have turned into an alien sapiens... My beloved Granny saved me. One time she came and asked my parents to leave me with her for five minutes. She looked into my eyes and said to me mentally:

“Open your mouth and say, “Ah!”

“Why?” I thought.

“That's the way it should be! Your parents can't do it any other way!”

“What can't they do?”

“They can't understand you!”

“Ah-ah!”

“Good girl! Now: “Mom.”

“Mom!”

“All right, go and repeat what everyone says! It's very important.”

“Why?”

“And that's why! Once there was a beautiful young girl and an extraordinary story happened to her!”

Then my Granny closed her thoughts from me and continued the fairy tale with words that I did not understand at that time.

“What happened with the girl?”

“When you learn to speak, I'll tell you everything!”

I cried with resentment. Then when my mother opened the door of the room.

“Mom! Mom!” All I could say was, pointing my finger at Granny. “U-u-u!”

“Now she's going to speak,” Granny told to mother.

So it happened. Gradually I learned to understand words, which people pronounced around me although these words contradicted people's thoughts. I tried to speak but did not turn out good. And here is neighbors' boy Petka. When he heard what I said, he laughed and repeated it, twisting in every possible way, so that not only him, but all the guys laugh at me in the street.

A year later, Bella took me with her for a trip to her great-grandfather. That's where I saw Granny again. Then she told me a fairy tale about a girl who received a magic flower with seven

colorful petals... And many other fairy tales were told to me by my beloved Granny. I especially liked the fairy tale about the little flying men.

"I would like to meet them too!"

"You can meet them," Granny replied, "But it's too early for you to play with them! First you have to get smarter, otherwise, you will fly away to unknown distances and forget that you must be a human."

Granny mentally called someone, and the air sparkled above us... Looking closely, I realized that there are small translucent men who are playing in the air.

"You've seen enough! Go away, minxes! Until my granddaughter grows up, don't get close to her!"

"Why I have to be a human?" I asked.

"It's too early for you to know! I promise, in a few years I'll tell you everything! But now, listen to the fairy tale about the princess who found a little wounded dragon and cured him..."

That's a way how our rare meetings with Granny took place. Now I went to her and dreamed of the new fairy tales, to which I would listen for long autumn evenings... I had no idea that this meeting might be the last. I also had to discuss with her the problems with my parents. I didn't want to go to a special school or boarding school. I didn't want to stay among the kids who can only tease me for bad pronunciation. After all, I have not learned how to speak correctly! At night I dreamed that Granny would take me to her...

And here we are. Running to my dear!

"Granny! Granny!" I burrowed my face into the knees of my beloved grandmother.

Granny stroked my head:

"Well, that's enough, that's enough! Let's go to help grandmother Bella!"

"Don't go! Petka helps her there! Granny, I have trouble. My parents want to send me to some school or the boarding school, but I do not want to go there!..."

"Well, don't be upset! You won't be sent anywhere!"

It's not a trouble, it's just some anxieties!

"You don't understand, Granny, everyone laughs at me that I do not say in the right way... I can't speak at all due to it; I even started to stutter..."

"It's because you're thinking too seriously about it. Is it real trouble? You have real troubles ahead of you! Okay, now run, have rest after the drive! Take a watermelon! Can you cut it? Regale Bella and Petka."

That's how I spent my first day with Granny. I also climbed the stove and greeted my grandfather. This time my grandfather was not joking and seemed very sad. Maybe he quarreled with Granny. Maybe, they are like my parents who quarrel every day, and then go to the opposite and keep silent like little ones. Everyone waits for the other to speak first... I have already grown up and understand that they do not hear each other's thoughts; otherwise, they would not quarrel so often.

"Yes, honey, that's it!" Granny thought for me. "But I didn't quarrel with grandfather! We have an important business tomorrow, so he's excited."

"What, Granny?"

"I'll tell you tomorrow!"

Granny called me to walk with her in the forest the next day.

"My girl," Granny began. "Do you remember you asked me what is it to be a human?"

"I remember. Are you going to tell me now?"

"I'll tell you, honey. You know, all animals live and do not think about anything, except urgent things, and every person has some kind of task, which he is obliged to solve, work that he has to do. He can't live his whole life like a cow or a wolf."

"Granny, do you have such a task, too?"

"Yes, my task is to protect our planet and make everyone happy on it."

“All?! How can you do that?”

“It’s necessary, Milochka! Sometimes I felt that I was doing my work well. But now it doesn’t seem to me so. I’m old; it’s time for me to leave. And grandfather Pahom calls me,” Go,” he says. “It’s already the time.”

“Where will you go?”

“Where everyone goes after death.”

“What about me?”

“That’s why I called you. I want to give my work to you.”

“How am I going to cope if even you didn’t?”

“But what else should I do? There is no other human capable of doing it. You needn’t start your work right away. You need to grow up, learn a lot. Maybe I might help you a little bit after my death as well as a planet will prompt and help you in difficult situations. Our planet is called Terra like me!”

“Terra! Terra! Take my deputy!”

“If you don’t mind, Milochka, she’ll always be with you. You can always consult with her and get the help you need.”

“Okay, Granny, let it be!”

“Now I’m always with you!” a loud voice rang through my head.

I shuddered:

“Who are you?”

“I am the planet, Terra. Now I will see everything with your eyes and help you in everything.”

“Terra can do a lot,” Granny added. “She can even teach you to fly. But don’t wait for her help on how to make people happy. You have to invent and try! I couldn’t do this. Perhaps you’ll succeed in this.”

“Why didn’t it work? What’s wrong with our planet?”

“A lot of things are wrong! For example, I could go around the whole planet mentally before, I could see all, repair something if I couldn’t do this, I would ask for help. But now many lands are hidden from me. Even my little helpers can’t get there.”

“What kind of helpers?”

“They’re spinning at the top! You’ve seen them once before. Now they’re going to help you!”

I looked up and saw the little laughing men over the crowns of the trees.

“Let’s fly! Let’s fly with us! Let’s sing and dance!”

“Don’t think about it! These mins will mess you around! You’ll forget all your work and live your life for nothing. But they can still help you, you should not quarrel with them. Remember the main thing: there is sadness, hopeless sadness going on all over the earth now. It seems that people live well, but for some reason, they do not want to live. It’s a sadness which you need to fight with, and you have to defeat it and bring back joy to people.”

“How can I fight something I can’t see or know?”

“No one will answer this question. You’ll have to think about yourself.”

We were walking with Granny all day. It was so great in the autumn forest. Yellow leaves were rustling underneath our feet. We found some boletuses – they will be good for soup. I fell asleep like a dog after walking. I saw Granny in my dream, but she wasn’t old, she was young. She was so funny! She’s flying, laughing... It’s so great!

The morning met me with the tears of my grandmother Bella. “You know, granddaughter,” she said, “Grandfather Pahom and granny Terra died tonight.” Tomorrow we need to bury them. All household is now on us. So now we are not guests in this house, but the owners. You will help me as much as you can and Petka also will help until his parents take him.”

Chapter 3. My school

The last clumps of ground fell on the tomb of Pahom and Terra.

“So my Granny left,” Mila thought, “I had no time to solve all my pressing problems with her.”

“You have enough helpers without me,” the young voice of beloved Granny rang in her head.

“Granny, where are you?” the girl screamed.

“Take it easy, grandma is gone,” granny Bella hugged granddaughter. “Don’t scream, your Granny won’t hear you again!”

“She’ll hear! Hear!”

Bella hugged her sobbing granddaughter by the shoulders and led her to the exit of the cemetery.

“Now we need to clean up and start a new life! You’re going to help me, aren’t you?”

“Of course I will, grandmother Bella! We’re going to live here for a long time.”

“I’m going to stay here forever, but you need to be given to your parents. They’re going to come for Petka, and you’re going to have to come back, too.”

“I’m not going anywhere! I won’t let Petka go! I will be bored without him, because there are no children here, only old people.”

“Don’t play pranks, Milochka, we can’t command! How adults decide, so it will be. However, they will not be able to do differently, because in that case you will be taken away from them.”

“Who will take me?”

“Well, those who make sure that the rights of the child are respected. That he lives in prosperity goes to school in time. And here – what prosperity is there? There are no shops in the village, no refrigerators in the house, only one cellar with potatoes and sauerkraut. And there is no school at all!”

“Bella, could you be a teacher?”

“I could be a granddaughter! I even worked at a junior school in my younger years.”

“Well, can you organize the school here?”

“What a dreamer you are, my girl! Who’s going to let me do this?”

“Why would you need someone’s permission for it?”

“You can’t do this without permission! Clumsy people or, even worse, bad people can take up teaching.”

“But you’re not a bad person! Let them come, make sure you teach correctly, and they will permit you!”

“You’re funny, Milochka! Will they come to us? It’s we who need to go to them for permission.”

“No, you adults are funny! And the rules you have are strange...”

A week passed. Petka and I ran into the forest for mushrooms. Granny Bella frightened us that we can get lost, that the bear can attack us. But I didn’t afraid of no one because my little invisible friends were always with me – little airy men who always tell me the way to my home. And we saw the bear once. It went far from us burying nose into the ground, perhaps he was searching for a den. Petka was very scared but I wasn’t afraid at all! After that, Petka started to respect me and he stopped teasing me since then.

Free life has finished when Petka’s parents arrived and ordered us to collect things. I must go with them too... My parents have written that I was already accepted to the boarding school and they are waiting for me there in a week.

“What am I going to do?” I asked my new friends, “I don’t want to leave this place!”

The air flickered with their dancing and laughter above me:

“What a funny girl you are, if you don’t want, just tell us. We’re going to do everything to keep you here.”

“Can Petka be left?”

“Yes, you can leave Petka!”

What are the braggarts! What can they do? Meanwhile, Bella packed all my things and put me in a cart. Petka sat on high-bench again, his father sat with him. Petka's mother sat next to me.

"Go!" and we moved away from the village. The ribbon of the road ran fast, and the first traces of a man in the forest, and another village... The horses got up, and Petka's father grunted amazedly.

"Where did we arrive?" the horse was standing next to our house which we left this morning.

"I see it!" Petka said. "But we didn't turn anywhere, we were only going straight!"

"We chose some roundabout road," Petka's father summed up. "What to do, we'll rest and have dinner, and we'll be more careful tomorrow."

But we left this place neither tomorrow nor the day after tomorrow... Eventually, Petka's mom said to his dad:

"Let's explore the road first without us, and then we'll all go with you. There's no need to torment us every day."

So Petka and I went to the forest again for mushrooms, but Petka's father left and never came back. Our village telepath came and brought a telegram in the evening: "I got to the place, everything is fine, but I couldn't come back for you."

Petka's mother did not like telegram very much:

"Why couldn't come back? What does he mean?"

"Aunt Frosya," I said, "is it clear, isn't it? He came to his home, but he couldn't find a way back to us! We have a dense forest here —one can easily get lost!"

"That's all right, they'll call the placers and they'll take us out of here! However, it will be expensive! But there's nothing else that can be done! I didn't know how it would turn out when I let Petka go with you."

A day later, indeed, a spaceship arrived which was driven by sapiens. It was the first time I saw them. Two were dressed in grey flight jumpsuits with lots of pockets. We plunged in a plate and flew into the night autumn sky.

"Will not you get lost?" I asked the pilot cautiously.

"Sapiens never wander, we have a navigator," the pilot said and pointed to a flickering map on the panel.

We flew for a long time and finally landed. I was not surprised to see a familiar house of my beloved Granny. Sapiens swore for a long time with quiet voices, then they unloaded us from the spaceship, said that it is faulty; therefore they have no right to carry passengers. After that, the spaceship disappeared in the night fog and did not return.

Three days later, Petka's father Pavel returned on his horse. He hugged his wife, Frosya, and said:

"I can't live without you! There is a madhouse there. All run and want something. They require money for the rent of the spaceship. But I didn't give them anything! I said that they didn't bring my wife because of the compass breakdown, I'm not responsible for the breakage. What is going on: 'You interrupt studying process! You have two children in the wild forest! We will deprive you of your parental rights!' I let it all hang out and came to you. As you can see, I got there without any problems."

"Pavel," I asked. "Could you teach the children at school?"

"I think I could!" he replied. "I'm still a Doctor of Physical and Mathematical Sciences," he said.

"That's good," I continued. "You will be the headmaster of our rural school!"

Paul smiled and patted my head.

"If it was possible, girl, I'd love to do this. But who's going to let me run a school for you and my Petka here."

"I think other children will come here soon. You know, relatives are going to come to all neighbors in the autumn, for the harvest, and to see their older. Children will surely be with them."

By that time, I had already believed my little friends and ordered them:

“Let the children who come here stay here! And those who want to take them from here getaway themselves!”

A month passed, and everything turned to be as I planned. There were already ten children of different ages. Paul organized something like a school on the veranda of our house. Frosya helped him. And my grandmother Bella taught me how to read and write.

A month later, the commission arrived. A big fat man explained to us why our school is illegal, that its certificates will not be valid anywhere and we need to urgently get home. He ordered all the children to sit in his spaceship. The spaceship was big! It was much bigger than that one which flew the first time. We all sat down, but the flying saucer didn't take off.

“Mister,” I said. “We're all too heavy for this spaceship! It can't take off! It will lift you easily.”

“It's ridiculous, girl,” the mister replied. “Spaceships just sometimes break. Now the sapiens will look and fix everything. Mister climbed into the spaceship to see how it was being repaired. The spaceship took off! It never came back to us again.

Then the snowy winter came! Everyone has forgotten about us, as the flying saucers did not come to us anymore. The telepath postman gave us a congratulatory telegram from my parents in the New Year time:

Happy New Year! How are you going there? Is everyone healthy?”

Granny Bella said that we are all right, all are healthy, the girl goes to school.

Nothing more remarkable happened. I made friends with all the children. No one laughed at me, perhaps because it was getting easier and easier for me to talk to people every day. Even when I spoke to that fat man, I wasn't worried at all. I even laughed at him in my heart.”

In the following years, our lives were without much change. Our school was admitted unexpectedly. Even a music teacher was sent to us. New children came, and those, who had graduated from school, went to the big world. My parents came a couple of times, but they were always late somewhere. They had children besides me – two of my older brothers, whom they had to help in arranging their life.

I often went alone into the forest and alone talked to Terra there. Once I asked to show me how I can fly. And Terra showed me. And my beloved Granny used to talk to me a lot in my dreams. She soothed me and asked me not to tell anyone, even my grandmother Bella. She also gave me the task of teaching all the local children how to talk mentally.

I turned to our village postman telepath to give a few lessons at school. At first, he refused, because he needed special permission, but then he agreed. So, telepathic joint trainings began in the evenings. We tried to merge our thoughts with our teacher and then tell everything about his thoughts. It wasn't hard for me, but I tried not to stand out and sometimes made mistakes deliberately.

Chapter 4. Summer

"Nice!" Mila stretched blissfully and wiggled her toes. A hungry mosquito took off.

"Mila! It's unfair! Why mosquitoes bite me and not you!"

"Zina! Um, how can I explain it to you? If you read my mind, I could show you. Unfortunately, it can't be showed with words."

"And who showed you?"

"My beloved Granny- she is my great-grandmother, she died when I was seven."

"Did she teach you to read thoughts?"

"No, I could read thoughts since childhood."

"I wish I could do that."

Two girls stretched on the hay and sleepy listened to the bells ringing. Today at school they were asked to herd cows all day long. Unlike other children, Mila loved this activity, although it was not easy to herd cows in the wood. Of course, if all the cows grazed quietly in the meadow, there wouldn't be any problems... Unfortunately, the mushroom season started for the cows, and it was impossible to forbid them to eat mushrooms. In search of the cows got into the middle of nowhere, got stuck in thorn bushes and ravines, and wandered into the unknown distance. It is good that Mila had invisible assistants who could instantly find any lost cow.

What to do with telepathy classes? The postman Petr Andreevich, despite all his efforts and belief in success, failed to pass on his gift to any of the pupils.

"Terra! What can be done in this case?" I asked the planet in my mind.

"I was looking through your ancient myths. There was such a country as India. So, there, to open up a telepathic gift, a man was drilled a small hole on his forehead and washed the inner space. In doing so the gift of telepathy usually opened. Then the hole was covered with a wooden plug. This gift is connected with the presence of space under the cranial bone on the forehead. It works like a resonator and an antenna. If this space is filled with slime, a person cannot accept thoughts."

"Terra, do I have to drill heads of all my friends?"

"It is not necessary to drill. You can try to dry this place with your hands. Let's try at least on your friend. Maybe, it will work out?"

"But how?"

"Put your hands on Zina's forehead, and I will help with the energy flows."

"Zina! Let me try to transfer to you my gift of telepathy!"

"Will you be able to do it?"

"I don't know, but maybe I will."

I put my hands on my friend's forehead and felt the heat flow through my hands.

"Oh! You'll fry my brain!" Zina squealed, reeling back to the side.

"Hang on a little longer! Something seems to be working out!"

Mentally I suddenly saw the one cavity in Zina's forehead. The fluid in this cavity under the influence of the warmth was thickening and settling by layer on the walls. Now the cavity is free.

"Zina, can you hear me?" I asked a friend in my mind.

"I hear you!" She answered with surprise.

"Congratulations on a successful experiment," the planet's hollow voice sounded in my head.

"Thanks for the advice," I told Terra, "and doesn't Zina hear our talking?"

"No, because you and I are not talking telepathically, it's as if I live in you and think by you... And you've been able to protect your thoughts from outside interference since childhood. Your beloved Granny has put protection for you."

"Oh, we played too long," I remembered, "it's already noon, it's time to milk the cows. Fedka will come with cans right now."

Fortunately, today there were a lot of mushrooms, and the cows did not want to go far. When the cows were round up, Fedka appeared on the cart with buckets and cans. While he was idling, Zina and I were milking cows and pouring milk through butter cloth into cans. We also poured a liter mug for our lunch. Fedka took the milk away, and we again stretched out on the hay, lazily sipping the fresh milk and then having a bite of bread. The milk was thick and smelled of mushrooms. Nice!

"Nice!" Zinka answered in her mind. "Do you like Fedka?"

"I don't know, I didn't think about this," I said to her mentally too.

"I would marry him, not now, of course, but in a couple of years, when we will be sixteen..."

"I can't do it yet!" I responded. "Granny before her death had bequeathed to me taking care of all people around me so that everyone would be happy..."

"It's good to be happy! But is it possible to make everyone happy?" Zina was surprised.

"I also think it's impossible, but I can try it! After all, I promised."

"Then I will help you!"

"Thank you, Zina! I think I cannot cope with such a difficult task alone."

"Of course! You and I will make everyone happy!" Zinka jumped up and deftly flipped the whip. The nearest cow, having pulled up the tail, went away into the woods with fright.

"Let's go swimming!" I shouted to Zinka and ran down to the lake.

All the cows were already here, standing knell-deep in the water and drinking. We ran around the lake, take our clothes off, and got into the lake from the other side, where bushes were growing on a cliff. Then we were drying, and I was showing Zina mentally how to protect her skin from mosquitoes. It was so good to lie naked on the grass on a hot day, not afraid of mosquitos and ticks!

In the evening we brought the herd home and gave it to the people on duty for milking. Being tired, I couldn't fall asleep for a long time, and kept thinking how it all worked out so well? Because, we were not allowed to have a school in the village, but for some reason, we obtained the permission. Even the teacher of music and singing came to us. How many folk songs we have learned with her! And nobody tells us what lessons children need. Tomorrow, for example, Zina and I will have a weaving lesson, the day after tomorrow we will take care of kids in a kindergarten. And the next day Pavel Andreevich will show us interesting experiments and teach us physics and mathematics...

"Terra! Why is everything really enjoyable for us? Do you remember how that angry fat man wanted to take all of us away on his spaceship? He's probably some kind of boss, isn't he?"

"Yes, Milochka! This is Anatoliy Semenovich, the head of children's education in the region. He permitted to open a school in your village."

"It is surprising because it seemed to me that he didn't want it. Did he turn out to be so good, and I was wrong, considering him bad?"

"No, Milochka, you weren't wrong! He was really against opening a school here, but he had to do it because he didn't want to tell anyone that he hadn't been able to bring the children in a spaceship to the city. He didn't want to be laughed at, so he pretended to approve your idea."

Oh, how hard it is to predict the actions of adults? It seems to be the enemy in front of you, but he may easily be on your side if he is configured properly.

"Terra! Tell me a little bit about my Granny. When and where was she born, what did she do?"

"Well, listen! Your Granny was born 989 years ago in a dense forest. Her father and mother were taken away by placers and the grandmother brought her up. And also she had a wonderful friend in childhood who grew up with her."

"Just like my Zina?"

"Not exactly! Granny's friend just looked like a human, but she was the last triad, the one that survived on our planet. Her name was Bess."

"So, the dryads exist?" I was surprised. "And I thought they can be encountered only in fairy tales."

"Dryads still live in the woods. If you want, you can meet them. But you won't meet Bess. She lives on the planet Masha today, far away from us."

"And what was Granny's work?"

"Granny was a housewife all her life, she had five children and a good loving husband, and she was elected the ruler of the whole planet, and she had to take care of everyone."

"But if she handed over all her work to me, then should I be the ruler of the planet, too?"

"That's right, Mila! You should try to become the ruler of this planet, but you are not ready yet. I'm not talking about the knowledge of the customs of all the people who live on this planet, but you also have to take the exam."

"Which one, Terra?"

"You have to complete the mission that Granny gave you before her death. Understand why the hopeless sadness walks around the earth and how to get rid of it."

"But here, in our village, I do not see any sadness. In my opinion, everyone is happy."

"Yes, you are right! Your little friends protect you from the unkind people, and there, in a big world – everything is wrong! Well, you can see it when your parents come to visit. How do you think, are they happy?"

"No! They always come forworn and tired, and after a couple of days, they already strive to leave, because they are waiting for some unpleasant things... It turns out that it is not my fate to stay in my native village. I will have to leave for the big world to understand how people live there and how I can help them."

"You can't cope with it alone!" Terra's voice came out. "Form a team of friends to help you."

Over the next few days, Mila was meeting with her peers one by one and, with Terra's help, "revealed" their ability to telepathy.

From now on, Sunday classes with Petr Andreevich have brought much more fun. Mila secretly looked into the teacher's thoughts and realized that he was very proud of the success of his students. After all, he was considered the weakest in the telepathic courses, and after graduation he was made go to working as a postman in the distant village, where at the time lived only the old people. And now he, although without permission, has managed to open and develop telepathic abilities in a whole group of children. Mila, of course, did not dissuade him and asked her friends not to tell him anything.

Chapter 5. Telepathy

"Petr Andreevich", Zina asked, "could you tell us how you work – all the time or at certain times? Where and who sends you the telepathograms? How do you set yourself up for it?"

"Zina", answered the teacher, "I think all of you can see how I work. It will be not only interesting but also useful. Maybe one of you will graduate from postal courses after school and work just like me. Come all to my house at 10 p.m."

So, by ten o'clock in the evening, we all gathered on the porch of our village post office. Petr Andreevich opened the door, and we carefully entered his small house.

"To the right is the kitchen", the master pointed to the door on the right, "to the left is my bedroom, straight is my office. It's that way for us."

In the office, the first thing that struck the eye was a huge chair with an openwork helmet for the head, a table with a computer and printer was on the left, and a bookcase was on the right.

"During my work" explained Petr Andreevich, "my brain plays the role of a transmitter and a network server. The helmet provides reliable telepathic communication with other post offices and strengthens my own signals. I can use the same helmet to send the necessary information to a computer for storage and for printing."

"Could I try it?" asked the curious Zina again.

"Unfortunately, I have to refuse," the teacher answered, "to hand over the helmet to unprepared people is strictly forbidden. Now let me walk all of you to the door: I'll have a session now, and I cannot be disturbed."

"It's a pity we can't get into the global information network," Zina complained. "The network is available everywhere in the city, and here we are all separated from the world. Only Petr Andreevich can enter the network using his helmet."

"It is interesting; can Terra organize access into the telepathic space of a planet for us?" Mila thought.

"Of course, I can," Terra said in her head, "only my help isn't really needed, it's enough for all of you to unite mentally."

"How?"

"Let me explain! This is an ancient technique of "connection of the four", developed on another planet, which used to be called Dhana, and now is called Dilly."

And Terra showed me how to organize a mental "concert of the four". However, another number of participants, multiple of four, was also suitable for the concert. There were eight of us: me, Zina, Petya, Fedya, Marusya, Lena, Sergey, and Kolya. I explained everything to my friends without mentioning the way I know it. In the first four I appointed myself as the leader, in the second one – Kolya; Fedya and Marusya, as the fattest, were appointed by me, so to speak, as sources of energy; Petya and Lena had to conduct a melody of joy and love, and Zina and Sergey were at the forefront of our acceptance – transmission complex. For better contact, I suggested that everyone sit in a circle and hold hands.

All this action was decided to take place on the porch of our house without delay.

"Terra! And who controls the people on the planet now? After all, my Granny has left, and I still can't do anything."

"Girl, people are so small to really control everything. However, there is a control system consisting of people, each of whom does only their small job. That's how your postman – he is also part of the communication system necessary for control", the planet answered me in this way.

"But has somebody to follow up on the work of the whole system?"

"Yes," Terra replied, 'traditionally this work is done by the immortal Gilk, who lives on the island-cosmodrome. He also carries out a connection with representatives of people on other planets of our union – Dilly, and Masha."

"And I thought that you were the main person here, Terra."

The first time I heard the planet laugh.

"How can I be the main in your society? In the society of babies, whom I can't even see without your help. How can I know your – " babies' " – needs and problems? It's your own affair, though if you ask me for help, I can do something, of course."

Meanwhile, we got to my house and sat right on the porch floor. I reminded each of the children of their function once again, and we started. The first result was terrible, I almost passed out from a series of images in my head, Marusya and Fedya grabbed their heads in pain, and Zinka fainted. The rest of us didn't look better either.

"You can't do that," Terra told me, 'firstly put all your thoughts away, then slowly get in touch with your friends without thinking about anything else. The main idea in the "concert" should be led by only one person, i.e. you, Mila. Kolya should only pick up your thought and transmit it to Sergey, just as you should transmit it to Zina. The rest should not think about anything, but only support what you do".

I explained all this when Zina woke up. But we decided to postpone the "concert" for tomorrow.

The next day, I explained to my friends that we didn't just play telepaths; we had an important task to do – to help all people find happiness.

"Zinka has already told us all this," Fedya confessed.

"And we've been training with wooden swords for a month now," Sergey added. "What if we will have to fight evil."

But, really:

"Terra! What can we fight with if we are attacked?"

"Anyway, not with swords," the planet answered, "it is possible to kill somebody by accident. The ancient sages, wandering around the world, always had wooden crooks with them, and they fought with these crooks."

I retold all this to my friends.

"And I will fight with my whip," Zinka added.

"You can use a whip," I decided.

"So," I said when everybody sat down on the porch floor again. "Firstly, we put our hands in front of our breasts and take away all the other thoughts. Those who are ready put their hands on the floor. When all hands will be on the floor, hold hands and start. Today our task is to talk to the immortal Gilk, the key person on our planet. If anyone has any other suggestions, we will fulfill them next time.

This time we made everything work at once. Terra gave me the image of Gilk, and using it as a key; I easily reached Gilk, who was not surprised at my calling.

"I was warned by your great-great-grandmother that she had found a successor, her granddaughter Mila," he said, 'and I see you already have a great group of telepathic friends. That's good, you'll work together and help me."

"Grandma said that there are problems with sadness on the planet now. What do you know about it, Gilk? "

"I think," Gilk answered, 'these problems were related to the grandmother herself because now there is a complete order on the planet. There have been no wars for a thousand years, and the average life expectancy of people has now reached an unprecedented maximum in a hundred and thirty-three years. However, travel and take a look for yourself. If you need my help, please contact me. I will help!"

So our first session of communication was held. Everyone was happy, except Zinka.

"I want to get into the world network and look at my sites," she said.

If she wants, we'll help her, decided all of us. This time Zinka was the main one. We all connected and, to my surprise, easily got in the world network without a computer. Zinka moved the invisible mouse and knocked on the invisible keyboard. And around us, there were red warnings about unauthorized intrusion into the network, about the work of an unknown dangerous virus that could damage computers.

I thought I could really ruin any computer on the network if I wanted to. Before Zinka enjoyed her sites, the World Wide Web began to clot, and one by one the servers were going out against the danger of unknown threats. Thousands and thousands of anti-virus programs were falling on our heads, which were blinking, like mosquito clouds, but couldn't do anything. Finally, we had to interrupt the session when the web completely turned off.

In the morning, the angry Petr Andreevich came to us. It turns out that we were disclosed, but all the blame was laid on him. Now the order to dismiss him has come.

"Don't worry," I said, "you won't be fired, and everything will be fine."

"Girl, you don't understand how serious this is!"

"Wait until tomorrow," I replied, "they must have rushed. The order to dismiss you, I think, will be canceled tomorrow."

I contacted Gilk immediately. Actually, now it was easy for me to do it alone, without the help of my friends. Gilk promised to help. So the next day our teacher was smiling and said that he was not blamed for our hooliganism in the network. Moreover, he was ordered to keep a close eye on underage telepaths and to prevent them from taking any more unauthorized actions.

"This means," he said, "that all your telepathic games should be under my supervision. And telepathic access beyond the borders of the settlement will be carried out only after the appropriate permission from the city."

"What's the point?" I asked. "After all, we do no cause harm to anyone."

"because", Petr Andreevich answered "that everything should be in order. And you don't have the appropriate diplomas of telepaths yet, so you have no right to engage in telepathic activities."

All this was for me and my friends above our understanding. I asked Terra what to do.

"It's simple," Terra replied, "engage in your telepathy in a different range. Try to feel the trees think. You can also talk to them. And then no one will bother you. But don't tell Petr Andreevich about it, because he is obliged to report everything to his superiors."

"You can also talk to them"; the air above was flickering with the laughter of little people.

"Who is this?" Petya asked with surprise.

"Look how beautiful they are!" Zina was delighted.

"We see and understand them," Kolya added.

"And the rest don't see and don't hear us, though they are called telepaths," laughed the little men flying over us, "if you play with us, and we will help you!"

Chapter 6. Petka

I was very unlucky in childhood. My father beat me very often and so painfully. I remember some situations especially clear. Here I am sitting on my father's desk and making the little planes from the papers that lie there. Dad comes in and pulls up my pants. I'm already used to it: no matter what I do, it all ends up the same way. Here I'm on the floor making a small lake of stationery glue and a beautiful ink island on it. Dad comes into a room and without looking at my lake squishes it. Then everything is as usual.

If I had time, I was hiding in my mom's skirts. She was kind and didn't let my father beat me. Sometimes she took offense at me too. One summer I caught a beautiful grasshopper bigger than my palm. I couldn't help but bring home such beauty to show my beloved mother. Unfortunately, mom went to bed after lunch, and I let the grasshopper to play on the window net. I went to the kitchen to see what was edible there. Before I had time to eat half of the sausage, I heard my mother scream. It turns out that the grasshopper sat on her nose and woke her up. Was it worth shouting? Besides, she really crushed the grasshopper... I let him go, would he survive? And my mother didn't talk to me that day. I guess she was offended. I wonder if she was offended by me or by the grasshopper.

When Mom got tired to keep an eye at what I did in the house, she kicked me outside. There I had a dog called Bulka, with whom we used to run through the streets of the city. Most of all, we were attracted by abandoned wastelands and ravines "on the backside" of houses and streets. The ravines were full of weeds above my height, there were big green grasshoppers loudly chirping in the evenings, and Bulka found a large pile of garbage nearby. He liked to dig in it, and I watched with interest what he dug up. He liked the bones, and I liked the green glasses... A little further, on the first floor of one of the houses, lived an amusing girl who said all the words in the wrong way. It was so funny! Sometimes I remembered what she said and I, singing it in different ways, was running down the street and making friends laugh.

One day, my parents kicked me out again:

"At least, give us a day or two of rest," my beloved mother told me.

So, I saw real horses and carts at the girl's house. The girl's grandmother, who she called Bella, was packing their things, and the girl was already sitting in a cart. I made up my mind, came up and asked:

"Where are you going?"

The girl turned her back and didn't answer, but her grandmother said in a gentle voice that they were going to visit her great-great-grandmother.

"I don't have a grandmother," I said sadly, 'and all my parents want to do is take a break from me. Can I go with you?"

"Ask your mother: if she allows it, you can."

I ran quickly to my house and called my mother. It turned out that she and father were just discussing where to send me while they were doing some re-registration. This was the most important event that changed my whole subsequent life.

The cart first drove through the streets of the city, then turned towards the forest and drove for a long time along the edge of it and the field, then turned into a thick forest. All the way the girl turned away from me diligently, and her grandmother handled the horses. At some point she said:

"Then the horses know the way, I'll take a nap, and you can hold the reins. Just don't stretch them too hard!"

The last part of the way I drove the cart, although I did not understand why horses sometimes turned from one forest road to another at the intersections.

That's how my new life began. There were no kids in the village we came to. I had to play with a little girl who deformed all the words so ridiculously. Soon I found out that her name was Mila.

I went with her to the scary dense forest for mushrooms and berries and was always afraid to get lost, but Mila always knew the right way home. I was also afraid of wild animals, and Mila wasn't afraid at all, even when we really saw a huge bear on the other side of the meadow. After that, I began to treat Mila quite differently. One evening I even caught a big green grasshopper for Mila.

"What a beauty," she said when I put it in her palm. Then the grasshopper flew into the bush, and we were listening for a long time for his chirping with other grasshoppers.

Yes, I didn't write of how adults tried to get us out of this village, and how they failed to do this. Instead of taking me back to the city, my parents came to live with us in the village. Mila and her grandmother had a big four-room house, so they offered us two extra rooms. My dad set up a real school on the huge porch. Then relatives came to the neighbors, their children came with them and stayed in our village. Somehow it happened that I went everywhere with Mila, and then other children of our age joined us. Mila didn't pay much attention to me, she probably remembered me teasing her in the city, but I wasn't offended by her. She was always interesting anyway. And after she taught all of us how to listen to each other's thoughts, things became even more interesting. Now we all had no secrets from each other. Everybody already knew that Zinka loved Fedka, and Fedka, surprised to hear about it, seemed to agree. But nobody could read Mila's thoughts. And I'd like to know how she treated me!

Then Mila taught everyone how to connect mentally, and Zinka got into the computer network. A month later, a flying saucer flew from the city with the commission, which was very eager to meet Zinka. Mila invited us all to her house and asked Zina not to tell the commission about her. That's where I got stuck:

"Don't talk about me either!" I decided that I would always do the same as Mila. The edited Mila's story looked like this:

"We were taught telepathy by the postman Petr Andreevich. One day the six of us were sitting next to each other on the porch, holding hands, and Zinka wanted to get into the network and look at her site, and she suddenly did it".

This story was remembered by all our friends, who were questioned by the commission.

Then Zinka came running to us:

"Mila," she said really fast, "we are all invited to learn telepathy somewhere, and we will have free access to any sites there... Can we go with this commission?"

"Well, if you all really want it, you can do it," Mila replied, "go!"

"And then, when you come to the city, will you find us?" Zina added in apologizing tone.

"Of course I will!" Mila answered. "We just need to put a mark on all of you."

"Which mark?" Zinka was afraid. "Does it hurt?"

"It doesn't hurt," Mila replied, "everybody is invited to the farewell dinner."

The dinner was sad: we were letting our friends to the big world and we didn't know if we could meet them again. When everyone left, I asked Mila:

"And what about the mark you wanted to put on us?"

"Everything's fine with the mark," she replied, "Terra put on the marks, and now I'll always find my friends."

But Mila didn't tell me who Terra was.

Everyone's gone; it was just the two of us with Mila. Mila was sad without friends, and I was even glad she was spending all her free time with me. I went skiing with her to the forest to listen to those, who couldn't be heard in the village. I didn't hear anything, but Mila said she could. One day she even grabbed my hand:

"Look! Look!"

A branch of bushes on my left swung, and something big and furry flashed and disappeared.

"It's not a bear!" Mila said. "The bears are all sleeping!"

Then it was summer. Mila and I went into the forest together. Mila said that we don't have to take our food with us because long ago all the people on our planet were instilled a culture of alien bacteria, which allows us to eat any kind of greenery growing in the forest. Mila said we need to find dryads in the woods. That she knows where to go, but she doesn't know how to convince the dryads to make friends with us yet. It was just amazing! Mila was walking ahead, and I was looking and looking... I was looking at her little legs, skillfully jumping from the root to root, at back and head with a long braid hidden under the headscarf... So, imperceptibly, it slipped under the feet, and we were already jumping from bump to bump.

"No, that won't do,' finally my companion said, 'we'll have to fly."

"How can we fly?" I was surprised.

"That's it,' my friend replied, 'imagine that you can do it! Let's go!

Mila slowly went up in the air. I had no choice but to try to do the same. To my surprise, I followed Mila.

"And here are our friends," Mila pointed to the clear sky above our heads, sparkling with the sun's rays.

"Probably, she is overheated,' I thought, and here, among the sparkling air currents, I saw little laughing men, 'Unfortunately, I am overheated too."

We sat down on a high hill under the big tall pines. My head kept fizzing and I clearly felt bad.

"It's just because you are not used to that,' Mila reassured me, 'have a rest, everything will be fine."

I put my head on her lap and really fell asleep. I dreamt I was lying on Mila's lap, and little funny people were playing and singing around us. And then I dreamt that a walking bush came out of the forest, came up to us and extended a hand-branch to Mila. I wanted to reach out to him too, but I couldn't do it.

"He's very tired and sleeping," Mila said " let him have a rest; he's already got impressions more than enough". I really fell asleep, so I haven't seen anything else. I woke up from a gentle swing. A big strong man was carrying me like a little child.

"Say hello,' said Mila, 'this is Kubess the Seventh. And behind him is his girlfriend, Besska the Fifth. Get used to them, they're not people, they're dryads, but nobody should know about it besides you and me. We will just call them Kubess and Besska. Let's say we met them in the forest, and they helped us to cross the swamp. From now on they will also live with us in our village.

How Mila persuaded her grandmother, I don't know, but Kubess and Besska really stayed to live in their half of the house. However, most of the day and night, as Mila told me, they spent in the garden near the house. My parents were even happy to have garden assistants. This summer made us happy with an unprecedented harvest.

Chapter 7. Pavel ivanovich

How great and successfully my adult life began. The winner of the school competitions, then an excellent student at the institute, interesting work, defense of a doctoral thesis... And in my personal life, I also have luck, I met my dear Frosenka. Even if she is just a teacher of literature at school and cannot participate in my studies, but so much heat comes from her large body! And she loves me! The first year after the wedding was a year of absolute happiness! This year I proved a theorem that made me famous throughout the scientific world.

But, as always happens, then a losing streak began. Firstly, Frosya has had an unsuccessful pregnancy, after which the doctors said that she would no longer have children. And she wanted a son very much! I thought that it was nothing serious, it would be over, and Frosya would become the same. But it didn't work out: Frosya sank further and further into despair. I decided to take the child from the orphanage. It turned out to be very difficult, I had been getting the necessary documents for more than a year, and Frosya left work and came down with an unknown illness. I came home from work, fed her from a spoon. Finally, we were allowed to take a boy at the age of one and a half, the name of the child was Petya. When I brought the child home, Frosya got out of bed for the first time and was fussed with the housework. I was happy because my wife was babbling with happiness. Possible approaches to solving another mathematical problem were already swarming in my head, but it turned out that my notes were cooked in soup. Frosya didn't see how our son put them in a pan and cooked me a soup along with math. Unfortunately, this was only the first reminder that now our life has changed dramatically. Most importantly, our son never did the same, I and Frosya was waiting for something new and unexpected every day.

Especially I remember the case when I, happy, came from work: I finally managed to prove the theorem that the others could not. I threw the drafts with proof on the table and went to have dinner in the kitchen. Having back in the room, I found Petka sitting on my desk, making airplanes out of my sheets and letting them through the window outside. I lost control here and I slapped him hard on his ass. Then I got a hit for it from Frosya. I couldn't renew the missing proof. Technically, the solution was a trivial one. The entrance to and exit from the "labyrinth" was known. From the entrance and exit fled paths – branched chains of formulas. Each chain (without branches) was easy to write out – only 6—7 pages. Taking into account two dozen branches, it was already two in the twentieth, that is, about a million chains. A million variants of chains from the entrance, and towards them is a million from the exit. I had to prove the hypothesis that somewhere in the middle, at least, one of the chains of entry meets with the chain of exit. I would use computer-assisted variants here, but how could I explain to the computer the most complicated logic of the task and the construction of the chains? Sometimes it seemed to me that in those missing fourteen pages I found this unique pair of chains, and then I started sorting the possible variants again... And sometimes I said to myself: "Get over it because on those pages there could have been a mistake". Then I forgot about the problem for a while and had a quiet life a bit of time...

I also remember slipping on a puddle of black inked glue! It was not easy to clean up the suit. There were a lot of other things... That's how we put up with it until our home monster turned six years old. A year later he had to go to school, but there was no thought of giving him to a public school because our Petenka could not sit still for two minutes. Of course, he could not read or write.

Then we received the summon to appear before the Child Rights Protection Committee. This summon completely hit my wife because it was clear that we had failed, and Petka would probably be taken to a boarding school for the underdeveloped. Visiting the committee had a bad impact on my beloved Frosya. We were told that we couldn't cope with the child's upbringing, that he always ran around in the street, and that the neighbors heard that we punished him harshly. Now we had to pack his things for three days and bring him to the appropriate children's institution.

When we returned home, Frosya was just desperate.

"Let's hide him," the wife suggested, "is the last way out".

"Frosenka, where can we hide him?" I objected. "Alien technology allows to find anyone!"

Here our conversation was interrupted by our Petka:

"Mom, can I go with aunt Bella?"

"Where, my honey?"

"They're going to visit their great-grandmother in the woods."

"Go! Go, my dear!" Frosya answered and went to see him off.

Happy Petka left.

"What have you done, wife?" I said when the happy Frosya returned. "You know we'll have to pay a fine for every day we're late."

"What's more precious for you? Child or money? Let him have a rest before this boarding school for a while!"

This way our life has changed once again completely.

As you know, we never managed to bring Petka back to the city, and I with my wife stayed in a forest village for years... At the beginning I was desperate. I had to quit my job. There was no salary! How to feed a family? The neighbor girl Mila offered me to set up a school for her and Petya. At first, I took her offer as a joke. However, the real situation made me look at this offer seriously. After all, I lived in Mila's house, my family ate food from their supply, so I had to work! At least without a salary. To my surprise, six months later, the school was recognized and my salary was started to be paid.

And now let me tell about the son. The change of residence has had a miraculous effect on Petka. He followed Mila everywhere, and he simply did not have time for disgusting behavior. The discipline at our school was not monitored at all: if Petka left the class, nobody paid attention to it. But Petya got used to being with his friend all the time, and Mila did not skip lessons. So he had to sit and listen to his teachers too. Over time, other children came to the village, so our robber walked around the village with seven more of the same brats. I tried to leave them as little free time as possible. In summer I set up the agricultural disciplines at school: care of pets (cows, goats, pigs, chickens...), care of vegetable gardens, fields, gathering berries, mushrooms... There were also lessons in weaving and knitting – for girls, carpentry and construction work – for boys. All this, except for usual school disciplines – physics, chemistry, mathematics, literature, music... Strange to say, though no one made them study, the children coped with it and did not skip lessons for no reason. In many ways, it was connected with little Mila. Somehow it turned out that everything around this girl was getting the way she wanted. And she wanted to learn! And this desire she spread to all her friends.

One miserable day, Mila got it in her head that all her friends had to become telepaths. I knew it was an empty wish; one must be born a telepath. Otherwise, officials wouldn't be looking for telepathic children for special training in all the towns and villages, otherwise, they could have taught anyone. And my Petka is far from the telepathy, he can't hear my words, even when I shout in his ear. So, Petka and the group of friends started going to our postman's telepathic lessons. Of course, it was illegal, but I didn't mind because I knew they wouldn't make it.

One day Petka came home happy and said:

"Dad! We did it! I'm a telepath now!"

"It can't be!" I didn't believe it.

Petka kept silent for a while and looked at me as strangely as he'd never looked:

"Dad! I know now why you don't love me! I'm not your own son. But I forgive you because you can't love anyone by force. Mila doesn't love me either, but I still feel good with her."

I just fell numb and didn't know what to say. Now I knew exactly what my son became a telepath. Where would that lead? Maybe even for the better? Well, they'll take him to a special school! He will get a good salary because telepaths are valued!

A month later, the commission came to us from the city and picked up all the telepaths-children for further study. Only Petya and Mila stayed in the village.

"Petka! Why didn't they take you and Mila? Aren't you telepaths?"

"Dad! Mila didn't want to fly with the commission, and I didn't want to fly away from her. We didn't tell the commission that we were telepaths, too."

"What have you done, son? You won't have a diploma of telepath without study in a special school, you won't be able to work as a telepath and get a big salary."

"Dad, it doesn't matter! The main thing is that I stay close to Mila! Let my life be just like hers."

Oh! How small and dummy they are! They don't know life at all! What to do, everyone should make mistakes in his own way. I can't help my son here!

I told about all my dear Frosya, and she just smiled:

"It is so good that Petenka did not fly away, but stayed with us!"

Well, what should I do with them! They don't understand anything!

In two years, in any case, we will have to take Petya and Mila to the city to take the final exams for the school course. I will try to prepare them, although I feel insecure about it. School curriculums are always changing, and I am not aware of the latest changes. Although the last year's test papers are always available. Maybe, that will be enough?

Chapter 8. School graduating

This is the last year of our school studies. In spring we will go to the city to take the exams. We have to prepare – and not only for exams. By nightfall, I called the dryads to the forest with me. Petka, of course, went with us. This time I decided to talk to Gilk again: you never know ahead of time what will happen and who you will ask for help. Of course, I could have contacted Gilk alone, but I wanted to introduce him to our shrunk team. Besides, I wanted to make sure that Gilk could receive messages on the dryad's frequency. I thought it would make our connectionless accessible to other telepaths. At the same time, Petka should have gotten to know our new assistants better.

We settled in a meadow in the forest. Kubess and Besska immediately began their usual transformation before our eyes, turning into two huge bushes with roots that immediately disappeared underground. A couple of branches at each bush formed the similarity of two wicker chairs for me and Petya. He looked at these transformations with his mouth agape.

"That's it," I said, "get used to it. We're going to work together with them."

With these words, I fell down on one of the chairs. Petka sat down carefully on the second one. We held hands and started to connect mentally. I immediately called Gilk, to my surprise, he immediately answered as if he was waiting.

"Yes, I was really waiting," Gilk said, "just at this time when you have a late-night, and we have the morning, I'm going to my office, putting on a helmet intensifying thoughts, and starting my daily communication session. I've been waiting for you, Mila, for a long time, because I'm not aware of your plans yet. I am obliged to help you in all your endeavors. If you need money for this, just tell me, the resources of all humanity are at your disposal."

"No, Gilk, I don't need money. They will only prevent me from understanding the difficulties of an ordinary person. Nobody should know who I am yet. In spring, I'm going to the city, where I'll learn how ordinary people live. Before that, I wanted to ask you a few questions. You said that everything was okay on the planet, life expectancy had increased, but you didn't say anything about the birth rate, population growth."

"Yes, Mila, you know how to hit the nail on the head!" Gilk answered. "Birth rates getting worse and worse, the population growth is negative. But the work in this direction is being done, the work in the committees for the protection of children's rights has been strengthened, children's medicine is being developed, financial incentives for pregnant women have been introduced... I can't list all at once!"

"So, it is clear!" I continued. "I see, Gilk, it doesn't bother you at all that we are now talking on the frequency of dryads."

"No, this frequency has long been a part of my helmet setup," Gilk replied, "since I was chasing the father of your new friends, dryad Kum. Now, this Kum and his wife Bess are on the planet Masha."

"My new friends ask if it is possible to fly there for visiting."

"Once a year, Masha is supplied with everything necessary for terraforming the planet. You can easily fly there if you want."

"We will necessarily fly, but so far I have things to do here. Now the second question: how telepathic communication in the cities is conducted now? My friends moved out to the city since then I have never been able to contact them."

"Yeah, that's a problem, my sapiens are struggling over, too. Long-distance telepathic communication in the cities is now almost impossible, because of which all post offices with telepathic communication have to be arranged at some distance from the city, which is very inconvenient. Or, there is a way, to put in a city powerful strengthening stations, but it badly affects the feeling of citizens."

"The situation is clear," I answered "so let's make a deal: if I have any questions to you, I will contact you on this frequency, about the same time. Thank you, Gilk, stay in touch!"

"Be good!"

Petka and I said goodbye to our dendritic assistants and went home, and Kubess and Besska stayed overnight in the forest as they used to. Petka kept silent, absorbing the information, and I was silent too, what can I talk about? Now we will come home, and his father Pavel would ask me where I was. I would snuggle to him and tell him that his son and I were walking in the forest. Maybe he'll be delighted, maybe even think that Petka and I have love...

When did it begin? Probably, the first time he came to our village and came into our house. I remember how hard he hugged me by the shoulders. No one had ever hugged me like that before. I repent, I immediately looked into his mind and saw that just such a daughter he wanted. I wanted to have a real father and mother, too, not the two shut-in people who sometimes come to visit me because of their duty. Since then, this ritual has been firmly entrenched in my life. Every time I'd come to him before bed, he took me by the shoulders and say, "Good night, Milochka!"

"Good night, Uncle Pavel," I used to say.

Sometimes I thought how lucky Petka was that he had such beautiful parents. How they love each other! I am sure that Uncle Pavel will give his life for his Frosya! And Frosya can do it too... From afar she looks like a giant ball, glowing of love. Come and get warm! But Petka doesn't understand anything; it's more interesting for him to make up some stupid prank. I still remember how he offered to pick off all the underripe apples at Aunt Frosya's trees and arrange a shoot-out of these apples because they are so suitable to throw. I barely managed to convince him not to do that...

So we are at home. Uncle Pavel, of course, does not sleep, meets us on the bench near the house.

"I love," he says "to see the stars at night".

But I know he's just waiting for us to return from our walk and he's worried about us lost in the night forest. He still doesn't believe that I just can't get lost...

"Where are your new friends?"

"They, Uncle Pavel, stayed overnight to admire the forest."

"Where did they come from?" I asked Kubess, and he said so strangely, "Ask Mila."

"It's really hard for them to answer your question. They spent their whole lives in the forest and never stayed in the same place for long. I could say they are from everywhere, from all the never-ending forest."

"It is strange," said Uncle Pavel, "Is it really possible to live like that?"

"Good night, Uncle Pavel," I snuggled to his side as usual and stayed for a minute... So good! I would like to stand here forever! Pavel smelled of freshly planed planks, and he must have made some furniture for the house again.

"Good night, Milochka!" Uncle Pavel hugged me by the shoulders and snuggled me even harder. "Good night, girl!"

"Good night, Daddy," Petka murmured and ran to his room, and I went to mine. I must say good night to my grandmother Bella... When I was falling asleep, I heard Terra's voice:

"Is everything all right, Mila?"

"Everything is all right! Will, you be able to talk to me in the city?"

"Of course I will, we are not talking telepathically."

Tomorrow morning, we'll grind the question cards again. Oh, I'm tired of this stupid activity. Why do I have to remember something that can be thrown out of my memory in six months and forgotten forever? But Uncle Pavel says, "You have to!" and I obey. He knows the city better than I do. Maybe it is necessary for us.

Winter has passed, and now there are five of us in a cart going to the city – me and Uncle Pavel, Petka and Kubess with Besska. Uncle Pavel asked if they had any documents, and Kubess answered

that they did not need any documents with Besska, which stumped him very much. Aunt Frosya did not come with us. She stayed to renovate her new home. Oh, I did not write that Uncle Pavel had built a new wooden house for his family last summer, and they with Frosya and Petka had been furnishing it all winter. Men made furniture, wardrobes, and shelves, Frosya decorated the house with pictures, embroidery, painted benches with flowers. In my opinion, Frosya is a real artist. I just envy her, because I can't draw like that. We came to the city. Parents were not happy, because there were not enough rooms to place me in the flat. Recently, my older brother got married and took the last room available. I wasn't upset, because Uncle Pavel had assumed something like that in advance and said that I could live in his flat for the time being. So, wishing my parents all the best, I ran away to Uncle Pavel and Petka. Petka was happy with my moving. Uncle Pavel asked me where our friends, Kubess and Besska, were staying. I replied that they had a place to live. I couldn't tell him that two huge bushes had grown in one night in the nearest ravine.

A couple of days later, Uncle Pavel arranged for secondary school exams. Petka and I were not worried about it. We passed all the C-levels. We got our diplomas. It is good that we got over it, though Uncle Pavel was very dissatisfied, because with the C-level diplomas, as he said, we don't have a chance. Now we can start searching for our friends. But Uncle Pavel was out of his mind last time. I asked him.

"Milochka," he replied, "you and Petka will probably have to live without me now."

"What's the matter?"

"The fact is that many years ago I didn't give my son to the Committee for the Protection of Children's Rights. In the time I missed, a quite big fine ran up. I can't pay this fine. Even if I sell my flat, there won't be enough money. The flat, however, will have to be sold anyway! I don't know where you and Petya will live. Perhaps it is better for you to go to Frosya."

"What about you, Uncle Pavel?"

"And I'm going to go to jail and work for the rest of the fine. Tomorrow there will be a trial."

"Petya and I can come to court to listen."

"If you want, you can, but you can't do anything about it."

The next day, we were in court. Everything went so quickly. Ten minutes later he got a verdict. Uncle Pavel had to pay off the debt to the state in the amount of two million galaxies (this is such a common alien currency). If he can't pay, he will have to spend a year of forced labor for every thousand galaxies. We came home very sad.

"Uncle, is there anything else you can do?"

"What can I do now, girl? Can I appeal to the city court? But they will only confirm the result of the district court."

"No matter, Uncle, just do it, maybe we shall invent something else..."

"Well, if you advise I will, I'll appeal tomorrow," my uncle hopelessly snuggled to me and went to his room."

"What are we going to do now?" Petka asked.

"We're going to have to work this night!" I answered. "We must save your father!"

Chapter 9. Court

Together with Petka we made our way to the ravine where our dryads settled down. Comfortably spread out on wicker seats, we joined hands and tried to call Gilk. Alas, for the first time nothing happened. Maybe the signal strength is not enough? Mentally, I turned to Terra for help. Terra did not answer, but energy suddenly surged. I felt Petya and both dryads stiffen, letting through the power unusual for them. Gilk answered this time, and I outlined the situation to him.

“It is not so hopeless,” he answered, “first of all, do your opponents have a receipt confirming the notification obtainment of the child transfer to the committee for the protection of his right.”

“No, I am sure that Pavel did not receive any written notifications and did not sign receipts, however, I’ll ask him tomorrow. The order was given to him verbally, and he admitted it.”

“To impose such a large fine an oral statement is not enough, a written document is needed. To file an appeal, and then we’ll see what we should do.”

“Thanks, Gilk, we will do it.”

“Mila, are you still refusing money? After all, paying this fine is not so difficult.”

“Money will put an end to the whole mission that I was bequeathed. I have to refuse taking money!”

“Well, good luck! Talk to you tomorrow at the same time.”

“Be good!”

Petka and I arrived home when it was already after midnight, he asked in a puzzled way:

“Can you really pay dad’s fine?”

“This can be done through Gilk,” I replied, “but only in case if we lose. But we should not lose.”

In the morning, I asked Uncle Pavel if he had given a receipt confirming the notification obtainment of the child transfer to the committee. Uncle Pavel assured me that he did not sign any receipts and did not receive any written notice. After that, I explained to him that the appeal in his case was not useless since, without any written document, officials did not have the right to impose such a heavy fine on him.

“But what about my confession that I knew about such an order.”

“Verbal confession is not taken into account here. Firstly, you are not obliged to testify against yourself, and secondly, the human memory is unreliable: you could have been mistaken.”

“Well, girl,” Pavel said in surprise, “you should be a lawyer! I did not expect this from you!”

He gratefully and tightly hugged me:

“Today I’ll file the appeal.”

Uncle Pavel appealed, and we were waiting for three weeks, then we were invited to court again. This time the court was in the center of the city, in a large beautiful building. Uncle Pavel set forth all his arguments in court. The judge pondered for a while, then ordered the assistants to search for the files in the folder and, to our surprise, found there a receipt signed by Uncle Pavel. Uncle Pavel asked to look at the receipt and said with confidence:

“This is not my signature! I demand a handwriting examination!”

“All this is superfluous,” the judge issued the verdict, “no one here would have faked your signature. I think that on formal grounds you want to avoid punishment because you confessed at the last hearing that you were aware of the notification.”

“I could be wrong,” Uncle Pavel tried to fix the matter.

“I uphold the verdict of the court and add to the amount of the fine the costs of conducting the court of appeal.”

This was the end of the case. Pavel was given a week to arrange his affairs and was released on his own recognizance.

“Well,” he told me in a murdered voice on his way back, “it’s all useless. I shouldn’t have to start this additional trial...”

“No,” I replied, “now you can appeal to the single supreme court of our planet. The main thing is to take the official text of the verdict tomorrow!”

Pavel grinned:

“That’s what I like about you, girl! You will never admit your loss! Well, I have nothing to lose; tomorrow I will take my verdict and appeal to the supreme court of the planet, although I know that this is also useless. What do you think, how long will I have to wait until there is time for me among the many planetary cases in the Supreme Court? People have been waiting for such cases to be considered for years!”

The next day, Uncle Pavel brought home the text of the sentence and a receipt confirming that he filed an appeal with the supreme court of the planet.

“Taking my papers,” my uncle said, “the official simply burst out laughing: “Do you know for how long the papers go through the Supreme Court? You will grow old at this time! In addition, while the decision of the city court is in force, would you please execute it! In six days you should be here with your staff. So arrange your financial affairs and don’t particularly hope for help from the central authorities of the planet!”

That evening, we contacted Gilk again and described the situation in detail. In response, he promised to send experts to solve our case.

“It seems that there are obvious abuses of the judiciary,” he said, “my specialists will quickly deal with this. And when you win the case, you can demand compensation for moral damage – at least a thousand galaxies at the expense of the judges.” I didn’t reassure Uncle Pavel but asked him not to sell the apartment as of yet. After all, Petya and I can sell it later, and now we all need to live somewhere. Uncle Pavel agreed.

Two days later, on several flying saucers, a judicial commission from the center arrived in the city. Apparently, Gilk did not break his promise. Uncle Paul was summoned to court again. He was gone for three days. Petka and I were worried, walked around the streets, ate ice cream (we forgot how it tastes when we were in the forest) and wondered how his father’s cause would end. We met my parents. Mom asked me to come back home because she heard that Uncle Pavel went against the chief judge, and such a thing could not end in anything good.

“I want to protect you, girl, from troubles of that you don’t even guess,” she said.

I refused! Wow, when everything is going well with me, they are almost alarmed! And what about the troubles? The trouble will certainly be on the path that I have chosen.

On the third day, Uncle Pavel returned.

“We won the case,” he said, hugging me, “all as a result of your confidence in victory. I myself would never have made up my mind to such actions.”

“Well, did you get compensation for moral damage?” I asked.

“They paid two thousand galaxies. In addition, they opened a criminal case against many court officials, including the chief judge. This turned out to be a big surprise for the judges because over the past century this is the first case on the planet when the judges themselves are judged.”

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