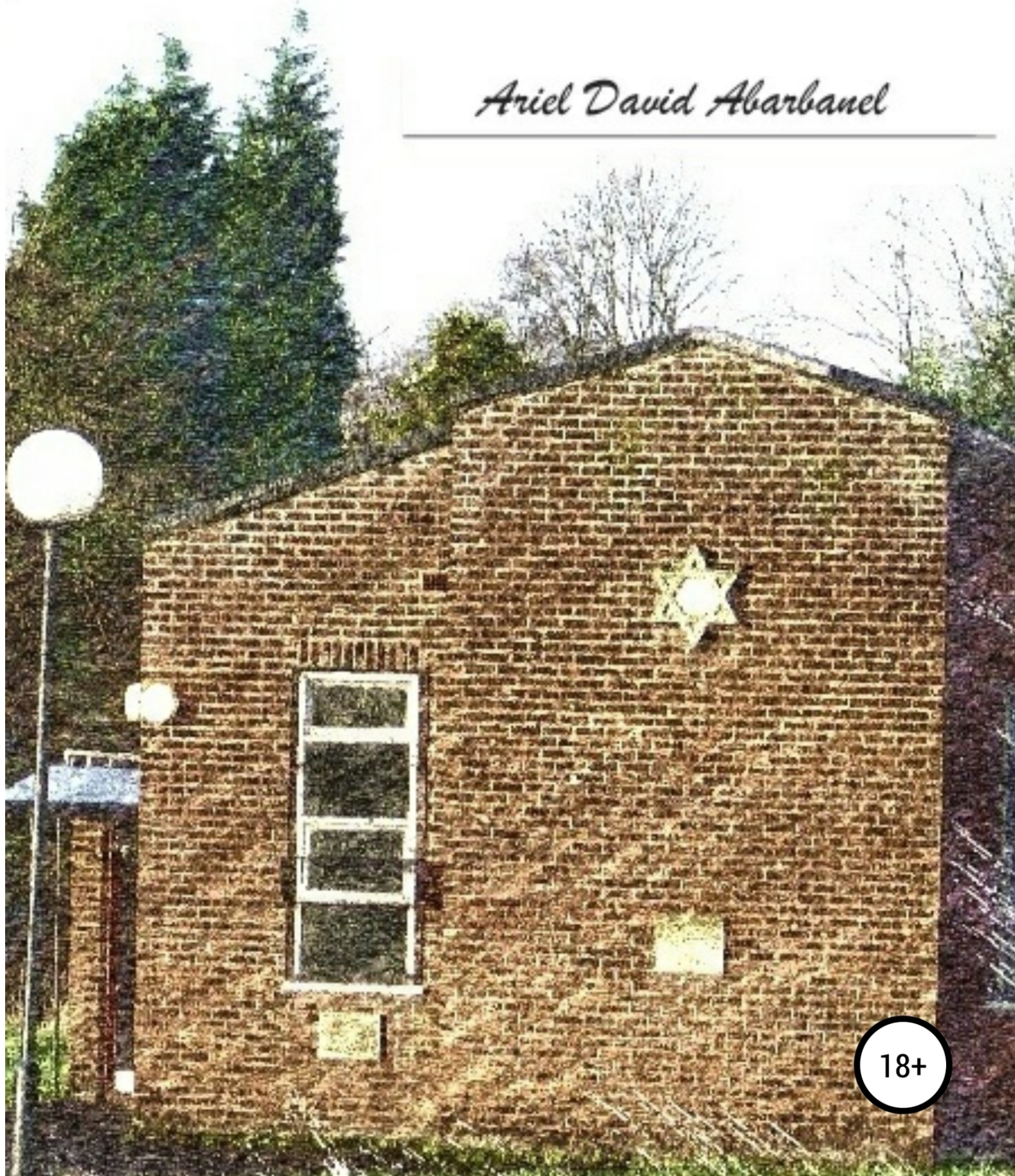


# Manchester Diary

*Ariel David Abarbanel*



18+

Ариель Абарбанель  
**Manchester Diary**

«ЛитРес: Самиздат»

2020

**Абарбанель А. Д.**

Manchester Diary / А. Д. Абарбанель — «ЛитРес: Самиздат»,  
2020

ISBN 978-5-532-04047-2

The story is narrated by a certain Levi - a native of Leningrad, living in the Jewish ghetto of Antwerp. At the Shamesh of the Van den Nest synagogue, Levy asks about the possibility of staying for "a couple of days" with the family of his newly-minted son-in-law to get to know the life of English Jews. Walking the streets of "Jewish" Manchester and "Secular" Manchester, memories of the Leninsky District of Leningrad emerge in his memory and imagination.

ISBN 978-5-532-04047-2

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## Содержание

February 08, 2005 Trip to Manchester	7
School 268	8
Sunday February 6th. Manchester	9
Seryozha Kunder	11
February 7th. Manchester	13
Misha Burov	16
February 8, 2005. Manchester	18
Valera Lustik	22
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	25

### Introduction

The thick tires of a small children's bike rustle on the cracked asphalt of Courland Street. Most likely, the month of April began – the sun is not only shining, but also warming pleasantly. Blackened snow with frosty heaps lies along the wide sidewalk, slowly evaporating and melting. Pleasant cold freshness penetrates through the nostrils and mouth into the lungs, dizzy joyfully. Yellow houses are approaching the boy from above, left and right, and a bicycle with thick tires inexorably carries him forward, towards the long-ago covered with sand and earth of the Tarakanovka river. The boy boldly pedals and a bicycle with a picture of a bear on the frame sleeve carries him towards the future, which has opened its arms. He deftly manages to keep his balance on the remaining two wheels, despite the fact that the other two, auxiliary, were dismantled only a few minutes ago. The child rolls and holds in the saddle as if he was born with this bike.

Early morning. This may be the beginning of the summer of St. Petersburg – early sunrises in the light sky that does not know at this time of sunset. The so-called “White Nights”. The hands of the clock move somewhere at four in the morning, but the boy can no longer sleep. He looks out the window at a blue and white sky with delicate pink brush strokes against his background, pastel strokes from the awakening sun. The boy cannot sleep, and he is overwhelmed by a warm unfamiliar delight and a feeling of deep happiness: in the corridor is his brand new bicycle “Eaglet”, his mother bought him yesterday, and finally, having accumulated a large sum for his engineer’s salary. The frame of the bicycle is dark blue, and the wings are nickel-plated, reflecting in themselves, like in a mirror, grass, cars, everything around. The boy, dressed quietly and sneaking into the corridor so as not to wake his mom and grandmother asleep, takes his new bike to the landing, hangs it on his shoulder, and with a light jog goes down from the fifth floor to his well-yard. There, riding an iron skate named “Eaglet”, he rolls it through cloudy yards, smiling restraintly at him with a pinkish dawn, onto Courland Street, and rushes towards the June wind, the freshness of which fills his lungs through his nose and mouth, circling his head joyfully and fervently. This dizzying wind is woven from the smells of stored malt at the neighboring Stepan Razin factory, from the fragrant components of the perfume factory located opposite the Shipbuilding College and from flowering poplars, which are planted in abundance all the alleys and streets of the district.

\* \* \*

A strong wind bursts under the jacket at the throat and at the sleeves, hugging the whole body with prickly goosebumps. A chilling wind through the nose and mouth fills the lungs and dizzy. The teenage boy joyfully and enthusiastically continues to pedal, despite the rather steep climb of the Lieutenant Schmidt bridge. A brand-new adult bicycle brand "Ukraine" shines with black paint on the frame, wings and, most notably, two luggage racks, front and rear. The grown up boy cleverly maneuvers on this skate between other “horses”, rather dangerous heavyweights-trucks and light vehicles. If his mother saw how he is alone between cars like this drives on the road! She would have immediately and completely covered herself with gray hair, and would have locked her son under lock and key until he himself grew old and peacefully turned gray. All boys, and indeed all children, once bring anxiety and anxiety to their caring loving mothers. Probably, until the end of life, residents of Ogorodnikov Avenue will be heard the inhuman cry of one of the mothers who did not follow their boy named Yura. Probably, all mothers will try to monitor their children, boys and girls even more closely. Then this five-year-old boy, Yura, remained alive, but the sleeve of his jacket remained forever empty, thrust into his pocket unattended and lonely. The car driver, seeing this child’s hand lying on the rails, probably quit her job and never got into the tram cabin again.

“One-armed, one-armed,” one boy called out in revenge against the insult, responding to the aggression and anger of a disabled child with this cruel, thoughtless insult, later regretting it all his life, regretting his own restraint, about these evil words.

The descent from the bridge was easy, and the enthusiastic, grown-up boy did not look around and did not even think about the iron smoking monsters surrounding him. A black-glossy, now fully grown-up, bicycle with two luggage carriers carried him forward and forward, as he thought, into a bright and cloudless future. On both sides of the bridge the northern Neva crawled, filling and permeating the grown child with its stern breath.

## **February 08, 2005 Trip to Manchester**

It was the day before yesterday. Shamesh of the Central Synagogue of the City of Antwerp promised everything and promised Levi to send him to Manchester – England to look, to look at the English Jews and at their way of life. The day of the trip shifted each time in one or another circumstance: either the right person left somewhere, then his grandson was suddenly born and many other life events. After almost a year of “broaching,” he approached, at the end of the morning service, to Levi Shamesh by the name Bezborody and informed him:

– Well, now in February you can go.

They were going on the road for a long, long time. They measured and rechecked the route, the duration of the trip. Finally, the decision was made – to go to Rotterdam, to Europoort, from there to Gul, and from there to Manchester with respect and hand in hand. All the pleasure of two hundred and six euros, and approximately five hundred kilometers round trip.

## School 268

Leninsky district of the city of Leningrad, where from one street you can go to another and the third, using only the gates and passage yards. Not far from the Sovetskaya Hotel, among these courtyards there is a large rectangular courtyard, which houses a rectangular pink building with white columns. This is a two hundred and sixty-eighth school. At some point, all the students of school number two hundred seventy-one were transferred to this school quite arbitrarily, because someone from the City Department of Education apparently needed this nice building with a good location. For a whole year Levy had to go to this “building with a good location” and sit in it for lessons where no one taught and no one studied. Pupils smoked in the classroom, played cards, scolded teachers, even abusively most often, teachers cried. After the lessons were over, it was impossible to get out of the building without passing by a half-old dropout who, like a security guard, stood at the door and demanded to give a trifle from all who came out – he was shaking. He shook this trifle on the subsequent purchase of booze and cigarettes. Each such exit from this school was accompanied either by a short fight, or, in any case, a spoiled mood.

Levy was alone. He had no friends, no friends. Some passersby, the defendants, surrounded him. Since childhood, Levy was fond of learning languages and one of his classmates found out about it.

– Can you please translate what is written on this disc? – asked his classmate.

Levy translated. Then this young man came up more than once, asking him to translate texts from various overseas packages, texts of foreign songs. They then got closer a little and after school they returned home together. This classmate lived in a house on the corner of Ogorodnikov Avenue on the road toward the left-wing house. Having reached this dark gray monumental building, covered with plaster, like goosebumps, one guy went up to his apartment, the other went on to his house. That guy's name was not entirely in Russian – Seryozha Kunder.

## Sunday February 6th. Manchester

A ticket is ordered, things are packed in a bag, but there's no way to put your heart in it! Neither in a suitcase nor in a bag. She does not want to part with either her family or the house. Levy lay on the couch and in one pose, and in the other – but we must go. I left the house once, went back. Again and again. But now he is already sitting behind the wheel of a car, waving to everyone who has stuck to the windows and standing on the porch: let's go!

The sun was shining. The weather was not February at all, but the spring. Today is Sunday. There are no traffic jams at all. For now, it seemed that the endless Haringsfleetbridge through Willimstad was left behind, and the gaping mouth of the underground dragon – the Jaenord tunnel – was waiting ahead. The Levy's motorway leads first around Rotterdam, and then along endless refineries and the navigable river Maas. Which harbor number did I need?

– 5870. So this is it.

– Hallo! Your passport, please, the official nods.

– You are welcome. Here is the passport. Here is a Visa card. Is there no storm at sea? Not? Good. Then we go further.

– Hallo! Open, your trunk, please, – the gendarmes contact me.

– You are welcome.

The gendarmes, having not found there twenty or even at least some frozen Chinese or Indians, regretfully slam the trunk lid and point further towards the ship.

To get into his womb, you need to drive along an incredibly steep hill-climb, this womb continues to absorb and absorb the moving stream of cars, like sacrificial animals for a predatory gluttonous dragon. The name of the dragon liner is “Pryde of Rotterdam”.

Levy with a car in the womb of this dragon, in a cargo hold. He closes the car and steps to the counter, where he is handed the “key” from the cabin.

Standing on the right deck, Ari opened the door with a paper key card. I went inside. Two lower places are already occupied by more agile fellow passengers. Well, upstairs have a good place too. Settled. The co-passengers are completely taciturn – one German named Thomas Schuler, studying, for some reason, in England, and the other – it is not known who and where from – did not utter a word for this whole sea trip.

The hair of the head of the “other” and the tail of his beard were painted white, his face was decorated with earrings and piercings, he slept all the time while Levy was awake, and only informed him of the stink coming from him, declaring his love for alcohol and tobacco. Leaving this small colorful team, Levy left the cabin and went down to the lower deck into a spacious hall. Slot machines in rows, like soldiers in a parade, lined up on both sides of this hall. There were still others covered with covers, preparing to fire and defeat anyone who dared to approach them, guns, tables, roulettes. Steamboat-casino – rightly concluded Levy and went on, looking at and studying the insides and sights of the “Rotterdam Pride”. The farther he moved, the less he was surrounded by anything worthy of attention: numerous tables, bent under the weight of different-sized bottles, half-drunken imposing faces, reclining on burgundy plush sofas. At the end of the hall there were ship shops, clogged with a kind of weapon of mass destruction and objects of fleeting vicious pleasures: tobacco and alcohol products, piles of magazines with naked white-toothed beauties on their covers.

“Vanity and chasing after the wind,” Levy thought, “with the wind in his head and in his wallet.”

He went to the huge oval porthole window. A bottomless darkness silently looked at him in response. Waves not visible and not heard, not visible

and you cannot hear the stars and the moon. This is usually the night of the North Sea. Levy stood still a moment before this empty silent giant eye socket.

He stood, whispering his unpretentious requests with his lips – pleas for a safe trip, for blessing, for a good departure and return. He whispered, said “Amen,” and went to his retirement, on his own, this night, cabin 10218, whose iron lock was opened with a paper key.

On the upper left bunk was a sign: “Use the stairs”.

Levy hoped for his height and “sportiness”, climbed, but could not beat the climb the first time, jumped back to the floor, and then, the second time, still having overcome, rolled onto his back and sighed in relief:

– Well, the day has run out.

In another situation, it would not be easy to fall asleep in such a solid iron box, sloppy painted in a hospital-white color, like a real archaic safe, but the tiredness of the day, impressions, family twists and turns, moved so powerfully forever that he almost immediately plunged into a deep sea dream, similar to the last view from the porthole – the black, impenetrable mess of the sea and sky, ominously toothless and silent, and fell asleep. Till tomorrow.

## Seryozha Kunder

– Seryozha Kunder called you.

– Yes mom. For a long time nothing was heard about him. What did he want?

– He said that he was discharged from a psychiatric hospital, where he was under examination and treatment. There he was diagnosed with Schizophrenia and was given the second group of disability.

Now he won't have to work, as he had once dreamed of as a child, Levy thought sadly.

“What did he want, mom?”

– Nothing. Just wondered where you are and how you are doing.

– We must go to him.

– Is it necessary?

Mom always protected Levy from unfavorable, as it seemed to her, acquaintances. Absolutely right. But she still failed to save everyone. Of the entire class of that ill-fated school number two hundred sixty-eight, Serezha was probably the best candidate for a friend, but only against the background of the students of this school. He did not want to study and do any kind of work. In a three-room apartment, his grandmother, mother and brother lived with him. My brother toiled for a long time in search of work, but then he nevertheless got a job as a collector on the Railway. He married, gave birth to a girl and died, at an early age for this common stomach disease. Sergei was left alone with his mother and grandmother. He brought rare records from the black market, put them on his gramophone, and at full volume with an open window he listened for days on end to the “space music” of various foreign artists. Levy occasionally came to him, called to walk around the city:

– Come, Seryoga, why sit at home? Look, the weather is so wonderful in the courtyard!

At first Sergey was going to take a walk, put on his sneakers, but at the last moment he changed his mind:

– You know, come on another time? Now I listen to music a little better.

They had not seen each other for a very long time, and now, now this is a bleak message. Levy came to his mother from abroad, where he had been for many years. Not much joyful happened during this time in St. Petersburg, in “their” area – mostly disappointing and sad things. And not only in the Kunder's family.

Nevertheless, you need to visit a guy without saying aloud so as not to upset your mother, Levy thought.

The top floor of the deaf Petersburg front door of a gray well-house. The bell at the red-painted door:

– Who's there?

– Hello!

Further beyond the door you hear animation and a smoky voice unmistakably names the exact Levi's data, up to the home address and phone. Then the door swings open and Seryozha, easily recognizable, invites Levi inside with his tongue twister:

– How glad I am! How glad i am! Come in, come in! Do you want to smoke a cigarette or listen to music, for example, “Electric Light Orchestra” or “Prompter's Box”?

On the table in the middle of the room rises a mountain of packs of cheap cigarettes – Baltic, Prima. The room is covered with smoke. Seryozha has almost no teeth left, he smokes a cigarette one after another. Hair covered with smoked yellow gray hair, earthy skin color, puffy face.

Leo doesn't understand anything in such music, and answers:

– No, thank you.

– Do you want to take a plate for memory?

Levy nods his head.

“Can I do something for you?” Here I have some tidy, still solid things, can they come in handy?

Sergei willingly picks up the bag. Thanks indifferently. In the room to the noise of the conversation of old friends enter the aged mother of Sergei. She still remembers and immediately recognizes Levy.

“Would you like to buy us some vegetables?”

Levy does not refuse, and with a carefully given out list and hunt, she goes first to the pharmacy and then to the food store. When he returns with purchases, Seryozha's mother asks him to repeat this procurement trip again. Levy does not refuse again and soon returns again loaded with packets. On the third attempt of an older but more energetic mother of a friend to send Levy to the next shopping trip, Levy addresses both of them:

– My dear! I am very glad that we saw each other, that I could at least help you a little. I apologize, urgent business is waiting for me and people to whom I can also be, maybe, a little useful.

The tacit consent, painted with slight disappointment, spreads over the hallway – the visit is over.

Seryozha, closing the opening speech for Levi, escorts him with his machine-gun speech line:

– Come again! Be sure to come in! We'll listen to the music, or we'll take a walk somewhere and walk around the city.

– Of course! I'll definitely come! – Levy sends her words already from the bottom of the stairs, standing in front of the barred elevator car. The old box on iron cables lazily and creakily lowers it down to the first floor, which pours Levi with the musty smell of the old building, the smells of cheap cooked food, escaping from several apartments at once and mixing with each other on the ground floor. Levy tries to hold his breath and goes towards the light and a clean stream of air, seeping through the ajar front door. He jerks it open, and is surrounded by the walls of a stone gray well. A hole gapes from above, from which the same gray as the walls of houses looks, the sky, from the torn slits of which golden azure flows, which is like a precious the hiding place is hidden behind the clouds. Levi inhales deeply and lightly this fresh, fertile air of the street:

– Glory to Gd! The important visit of the day is over! Keeps them all Gd!

## February 7th. Manchester

Levy woke up, and immediately felt himself on the ship in an iron safe and in time close to six, the rise time. He felt the switch on the wall of the safe and pressed it. He gurgled, blinked, and white neon light flashed.

– I thank you for the fact that through your great mercy you have returned my soul to me. Your confidence in me is great,” Levy whispered, feeling alive and realizing that he had been given a new day. So he began a new day: the seventh day of February.

The safe-cabin is so small, without windows, that there was no question of at least somehow pushing it out and invigorating the half-awakened body with charging. It was possible to take a shower, and Levy used this opportunity to the maximum, enjoying first hot and then cold jets of water. He dressed quickly and went upstairs to the wardroom while the fenders were still sleeping. He never saw them again. Velvet darkness enveloped the ship. Levy stood at the sheathed table and asked, whispering the wish for a good day, a good road. He finished and looked around: the shops were already shining with lamps and the sluggish movement of staff and customers, trying to sell their goods even more before arriving at the port. Levy went over to the Dutch-speaking receptionist and asked in her language:

“Madam, excuse me when we arrive?”

“Already approached,” the lady replied, “we must wait for the immigration authorities.” Coming soon. The authorities really did not keep themselves waiting while Levi sat in the children's room and looked at the sweet love story of brown Pocahontas. A signal sounded, and a voice in four languages invited me to the deck to my cars.

At the same steep and winding exit as during the arrival, Levy drove along with other motorists to a wide pier and stood in one of the rows. These rows lined up on a large platform awaiting entry into this island country called Great Britain.

The engines hummed and the movement began. At the exit gate stood people in jackets with yellow reflective stripes. Near them it was necessary to slow down and show the passport so that you could leave the port. Here an anthracite tape of a high-speed road – Motor way – was tangled between low, but noble mountains. On the right, every now and then, peered gray, shrouded in light gray furs, fogs restless sea. It was possible to understand the frequent fogs by special signs located in the middle of the road. In their black frames, bulbs burned in the three-letter word “FOG”. A very long distance, almost to Manchester itself, Levy accompanied these “FOG”. The road was completely confusing, it went straight to Leed, and through it to Manchester. One hundred eighty kilometers from the port. Nonsense, by European standards. Here is the congress and highways, and immediately the right area – Salford. This is a good sign. But how to find the right Brun Lane street now, because there is no map, no navigation. Levy looks in the dictionary: broome – broom, lane – track. It is necessary, therefore, to search for the “path”. Only, in order not to search too long, it is better to ask, Levy decides and enters the first large store with his own parking and a sign on the roof of the Kopi. There are few customers in the basement. Behind the cash register are nosy women in wigs. Levy shows them a piece of paper with an address.

“Everything is straight and straight, and at the Net store to the left, and there again to the left – you will find or ask again,” the women instruct.

Lancaster Street repeatedly rose and fell, raising and lowering Levy, rocking him in his typewriter. He had to repeatedly ask passers-by to understand at what turn this “Panic Path” would be. That's the number you need. Mezuzah on the door jamb. Levy pressed the bell button. A short, round, like a barrel, woman with a straw-colored wig on her head opened the door:

– Who you are?

“Hello, my last name is Taube,” said Levy, “your spouse and I agreed on my arrival by phone before the Shabbat.”

– Ah. Now the husband is not at home, – the woman was about to close the door.

“And when will he be back?”

“An hour later,” the woman thought for a moment, “Taube, Taube ... Yeah!” Come inside. You really agreed.

Levy entered the house. The usual house. Not small, but could have been bigger. The woman was bustling funny:

– Follow me.

She, often breathing, climbed a rather steep staircase, upholstered by the carpet.

“Here, your little room,” she opened the door to a small but bright booth.

“It's not an iron safe,” Levy thought, but said out loud:

– Fine. Very lovely.

The woman went out, and Levy laid out his things on the bed and went down after her into the kitchen. Out of the kitchen window, he saw a large nine hundred and forty Volvo carriage entering. A bearded man in a hat and glasses came out and entered the house. He held out his hand to Levy, and he – to him, and they shook them together, at the same time introducing themselves.

“I already gave him the keys to the house,” the woman in a straw wig grated.

“Good, good,” her husband only said.

After a little standing, everyone sat down at the table together. They took and ate a piece of bread, anointing it with some kind of yellow paste from a can with a large seal and the inscription “Kosher”. After such a short meal, they all began to read “Thanksgiving for food and for the earth” together, and when finished, they said together and in chorus “Amen ve Amen” – so be it. They said “Amen” and all, as if by magic, disappeared. Mr. Lightner ran to his job, and Mrs. returned to her endless economy. Levy, tired of the road, left to himself. But how can one sit still and lose time when everything around is so exciting and interesting?!

For the sake of chronology and justice, it should be mentioned that before the mini-meal Mr. Lightner Levy drove to the nearest yeshiva, where he and many youth students prayed the afternoon prayer of Minch.

The yeshiva's building was like a palace, and it struck Levi's imagination, as did the service. At the entrance to the yeshiva building, on the windows of the right and left wing, white drying shirts hung in clusters. Until this day, Levy has never been in such a huge room, crowded with young men in black suits and hats, in snow-white shirts. Everyone swayed to the beat of prayer and repeated in chorus: “Baruch – Blessed” and “Amen, amen.”

The impression from this action was much stronger than from the sight of the wizard students in black caps at school in the Harry Potter book.

And so, only after this episode was followed by a yellow paste-grease for bread, after the meal of which Levy was left alone.

– I'm going to walk. I'll inspect this nearest street, thought Levy, dressed, went out the door and went. He walked and walked along this bouncing road up and down, but he never met any sights. Only a few wretched Jewish shops and a couple of flocks of “peysatiks” in glossy komzols, like evening shadows, sailed past. There were women in wigs, pushing huge strollers and pulling one or two or three children. Levy moved, as if drawn by an invisible magnet, to the center of the city. He had completely passed Lancaster Street and ran into another street. He turned right, walked a decent distance and, seeing high-rise buildings, turned left. This road led first between garages, and then along a very, very high wall and an even higher tower. Frightened by curiosity and a desire to confirm his guess, Levy turned to the workers scurrying around the wall, busy splitting the tree:

– Sorry, it's a prison?

“Yes, yes, it's prison,” the working peasant in a colored helmet nodded.

“Wow, a prison with such a huge fence that it's probably three times as many as the St. Petersburg Crosses,” he marveled at the sheer size of Levy's building.

Walking down this street, Levy met a brewery. And besides this plant, there are shops, shops, shops with large signboards on the doors on the right and left: “Entrance is forbidden for the private public. Only for wholesalers.” Having overcome such a distance on foot, Levy was rewarded – the road became more interesting. Here is an old bridge of black and gray granite blocks, here is a church, here is a fortress, and there are skyscrapers and a Ferris wheel shining with lights in the distance.

“That's another matter!” Levy perked up. His legs got a second wind and joyfully rushed forward to meet new impressions and discoveries.

“But you will also have to go the same way back!” Intervened on the move, trying to slow down the move of the zealous legs, always such a reasonably cool mind. But the thirst for novelty carried Levy all forward and forth, without looking back and thinking about returning. Despite neither fatigue nor the long road, Levi liked the city. All he had heard about him before was just how gray, boring, always rainy.

“It is as if England itself is so sunny and joyful,” Levy stood up in defense of Manchester in his mind, enjoying new unfamiliar views.

– Imagine that London is sunny, it tried to speculatively compare two cities.

Levy walked around Manchester, absorbing the atmosphere of these streets and buildings. Once Levy was in London, and now, walking around Manchester, he could call him the younger brother of the English capital, so they looked like him in his eyes.

The sky turned gray, and then blackened. Stars were not visible due to overhanging crowded clouds. But now, neon lamps lit, illuminating the buildings,

streets and all the action around in general, turning the picture of the city into even more attractive and interesting than it was during the day. A slowly spinning Ferris Wheel hung over the buildings, snow-white and shining from the many lit neon bulbs. The city did not let go, I wanted to drink, soak up the meeting with him as fully as possible, but the lead night covered the sky, my back was bent from fatigue, and Levy, fortunately remembering the way back to architectural landmarks, stumbled to his room in Salford. The return road, as often happens, was shorter and did not ruin the already exhausted walking guy who woke up from his thoughts in surprise and stood in front of the house on the Metelochnaya trail – Broom Line – the house of his overnight. Mr. Lightner was already waiting for him. He put him in a car and they drove to the next street to the Beit Knesset Assembly House, to sway again with other people to thank the Master of the Universe for everything, including a well-spent and spent day. Upon returning to Broom line there was a hot pumpkin soup with the likeness of crackers, such small yellow pillows, overcooked meat and potatoes. Having risen in the cell allotted to him, Levi lay down on the bed and gently enveloping a dream immediately took him with him on his incomprehensible, unthinkable journey.

## Misha Burov

Everything is painfully familiar, everything is dusty, mothballed, as if you are in some kind of antique junk shop on the outskirts of a big city: dusty houses with crumbling plaster, dusty streets with asphalt in wide deep cracks, dusty trees through which dust glimpses a dull summer for a short summer emerald frosted leaves. Leninsky district, now Admiralty, and in antiquity in general a Finnish village, province. Levy moves toward the house along Riga, then deviates from the course, wanting to deviate from the noise of passing cars, from the hustle and bustle, looking for silence, turning onto one of the Krasnoarmeysky streets. Legs are floating on the asphalt, and eyes are on the walls, roofs of old houses. Everything is familiar, nostalgic, sad. The symphony is in stone, a requiem of human life, like a flower that managed to break through the thickness of the asphalt, but never managed to bloom, blossom, turned gray and finally withered.

On his left hand, towards Levi's house, his eyes meet familiar windows. There is dim light in the windows. The windows are large, but unwashed, the curtains behind the glasses are burnt out, wrinkled. Whose windows are these?

Memories of stormy fun festivities pop up in my head. Misha Burov! Yes, Misha Burov lived there with his wife Irina. They seemed to have

daughter, but both of them or from the previous relationship of Irina herself, is unknown. Irina is Jewish by birth, business, thrifty and patient. She has thick hair, a typical Jewish nose according to others, sensual puffy lips. A pretty, charming woman. It seems that, as in most such marriages, what Misha had, he should have been grateful to his wife. She was a real smart girl.

1981 year. Snowy Peter. Snow knee-deep and chest. At that time, when only Zhiguli or an old Moskvich stood in the yard for twenty Soviet families, Misha had a minibus from Japan, brilliant, with a right-hand drive. Misha, how a child was happy with his typewriter.

“Let's go to the restaurant,” he suggested to Levy.

Misha managed to spend almost every evening in restaurants, despite the fact that the cost of one lunch there was equal to the cost of the average monthly salary. It was forbidden by law to have connections with foreign citizens outside the state, but those who dared to deal with them, bought and sold, made good profits, could afford a daily lunch in a restaurant and a brilliant bus of non-domestic production.

The restaurant, where they went the whole campaign, was not far from the city. His huge hall was almost completely filled with idle people. It was unbearably noisy and stuffy. It was remembered that gypsies performed on stage all evening. They sang, danced. The visitors drank, ate and drank again. Misha raised his hand with a protruding elbow and the little finger laid aside, and poured, stack after stack, a clear liquid into his fireproof innards.

– Too late. Maybe let's go back home?

Misha did not argue, and at about two or three in the morning they, fortunately, left this country restaurant.

Misha is not tall, with a dark bushy beard, constantly jokes and talks a lot. Cute joker. He speaks with his mouth and all ten fingers. He justifies his name very well because he really looks like a brown bear.

The patience of Misha's wife is angelic. She not only endured endless drinking of the missus, but also his weakness for the female sex, of which, of course, she could not know. Misha, using his charm, speaks with a woman he likes on the street, showers her with compliments, promises all sorts of benefits. Unspoiled by men's attention and gallantry, Russian women draw various fantasies for themselves about the possible development of “serious relations”, they believe Misha, peck at his

promises and go on a visit. These “guests” occur at his home, if, of course, the spouse is absent, but more often in a cheap hotel where you can rent a room without presenting documents and just for an “hour”. The first impromptu date takes place with a simple snack and a drink. Apparently, due to the frequent change of partners and constant alcoholization, Misha

cannot be satisfied, like an ordinary man, and forces a woman to pervert. A woman hesitates, does not want, a little resistance, she is hurt and she screams. Misha insists. Levy involuntarily witnessed such scenes when he went to Misha, as to his neighbor and on some minor commercial matters. Misha either had no embarrassment or lost him with impunity over time. Not wanting to continue to be a spectator of these inappropriate scenes, Levy said: “Misha, I need to go” and simply slammed the door behind him.

Once, a certain friend of Levi with a funny nickname Raccoon, a hefty good-natured bastard and the same guy as Misha, answered his question if he had heard anything about our mutual acquaintance:

– You know. Now Misha has a little freaked out. Before that, in general, I went on a gurney, and Ira fed him from a spoon.

– What happened to him?!

“Yes, you know Misha,” the acquaintance calmly continued his story, “he picked up some heifers, sat with them in a cafe, they drank there and poured a glass of clafelin into him. Praise Gd that he woke up altogether. True with a broken head and empty pockets. And the money at that time, according to rumors, was considerable. Until now, Irina leads him by the handle as a grandfather, and he – “I remember there, I don’t remember there.”

Levy walks past this old gray smoked house with crumbling plaster, due to the dull glass that breaks through the dim light and, as if he hears the cry of seduced, invited guests and girls and women:  
Misha, don’t! Painfully! I do not want! Please don’t!

## February 8, 2005. Manchester

In front of the left nose there was an alarm clock with large, glowing, red numbers. Inside Levi himself was also an alarm clock, which allowed to distinguish day from night and helping to get up at the planned time. The alarm clock is incomprehensible in its simplicity and wisdom.

Through a torn dream, Levi looked at the alarm clock with red eyes, numbers, and he was at it. And when the transformation of the numbers 3,4,5 were replaced by six, Levi got up. Having performed his entire ritual quickly from washing his hands to charging his body and ice shower, Levi went downstairs to the living room and was already waiting for the master of the house to go with him to the House of Exercise for Gratitude and Tephillin imposition, such preserved boxes on his head and hand magic words. There was a note under the door of the room, where it was not very intelligible, but still partially readable, it was notified that Mr. Lightner had left the house earlier than usual and that Levi would spend the morning with his son Rafael, who had come to visit Israel.

This morning, the synagogue of the Beltsky Hasidim was on the agenda for participating in the morning prayer of Shahrit. A huge building filled with peysat and bearded Jews in white golf. Everything went smoothly, quickly and dynamically. After the prayer house everyone returned home and after a short lunch, everyone went about his business. Levi was given a note with addresses and a letter of introduction so that he could go and look for a job and a place to live right now, since there are plenty of dependents of his own. Instructions are issued and Levi, without delay, headed for the first item on the Lightner list. Mr. Salzman, Halperns Shop. But before that, it was imperative to visit Mr. Wilkin in the Aguda office, and simply in the Security Office. Streets, streets. Houses and houses. The houses are luxurious and dilapidated, most with mezuzahs on the doors. There is the right room – Aguda office. The door is closed. Communication through the intercom – “who-where-where”. Clear. Come on in.

– You do not have an apartment – meeting?! Then sit and wait!

Levi is sitting and waiting. Mr. Pajkis continues to explain to the little woman dressed in a large oversized coat, with glasses with thick glasses on his face, a wig on his side, the wisdom of some kind of computer program in the classroom. It takes more than half an hour. The doorbell rings. Inside the cylinder squeezes, red beard, coat:

– Hello, I called you

“Ah, yes, yes, come through, please,” Mr. Wilkin points out with his hand, inviting me to his office, which is located opposite the classroom.

“This one,” the bowler shows at me, “the“ before ”came to me.

Before not before, and the appointment is an appointment and we must wait.

“This gentleman – that is, Levi – will wait,” Mr. Wilkin throws in his direction, and they both leave in a deep office.

So Levi sits between two slightly opened doors, from one of which a puzzled little face in a hung wig looks out, glancing at the computer screen, perplexedly slamming his eyes. From the slit of another door, the conspiratorial voice of Ginger's beard continually rustles. But here Beard released all his rustling and rustling and crouched slipped out of the wagon, solidly called the "office".

Mr. Wilkin called Levi into his office. On the table were several open IBM brand notebooks. Mr. Wilkin brought Levi's data to one of them for upcoming English courses. Then he picked up the phone, began to call somewhere:

– Here you go. Have you a job. Mr. Saltzman. A very good person. His supermarket is on Lancaster Street. He is now at Minch's afternoon prayer, and after half past two he is waiting for you.

“Good luck,” Mr. Wilkin held out his hand toward Levi, and hurried to his discouraged computer student.

\* \* \*

“Well,” pondered, leaving Levi's carriage office, “he spent an hour and a half to be directed to the same Salzman. It seems that the whole of Manchester, he is the only one who has a job and at least some work.

Here it is the right store with the desired sign. A shop, like a shop, not a Passage, of course, not a super neat, but not quite a stable. Grocery and gastronomy, perfumery and haberdashery were multiculturally and amicably mixed on all shelves. Between the shelves, wigs and bales were anxiously and tensely trying to quickly fill their baskets and bags with luggage purchases. When, at the appointed time for the “apartment”, or ten or fifteen minutes later, Mr., corresponding to the description of Mr. Zaltsman, did not appear, Levi addressed the question to a passing woman:

– Sorry, you do not know, Mr. Salzman in his place?

“Wait a minute,” the woman replied, stopped putting the goods on the shelves and climbed up the steep stairs somewhere upstairs.

After that, they came for Levi and he, too, had to climb this ladder and wait for a long time in a separate small room of this “his whole life” reception, until finally Salzman himself decided to materialize in the doorway, who took him to his office and sat him in battered chair:

– Do you want to work for me? Who are you and where are you from? – began his interrogation with passion Mr. Salzman.

Levi took out a cover letter from Mr. Mihai Lightner.

– Very good letter. Highly. Can I make a copy?

Levi nodded in agreement.

– Do it.

After my approval, Mr. Salzman began to revive. He got up and began to walk here and there, and when he finished, he returned with a piece of paper. He picked up a mobile phone and began to ring somewhere intensely, and then handed the phone to Levi:

– This is my wife. She is from Belgium. Talk to her.

It is easy to guess that the employer wanted to test my truthfulness and knowledge of the Dutch language at the same time.

– ABOUT! As I have not spoken Dutch for a long time, ”a woman named Rosa chirped into the phone.“ Where are you from and how long are you going to work with us? ”

– You know, Ms. Rosa, my task is to learn English to a decent level, and in order to cover the cost of housing and food, I am ready to engage in some, even simple, unskilled occupation. If my candidacy suits you, how much are you willing to pay me?

In the phone to pay the word, something immediately gurgled, Rosa's voice wished Levi all the best and asked me to give the phone to her husband.

– Sure sure. H-m-m... – Mr. Salzman was talking with his suprgoy, according to shaking his head, covered with a cap-bale.

Then he finished a meaningful, warm conversation, looked thoughtfully at Ari, and again took his eyes slightly clouded with impressions:

– You know, we now have a “meeting-meeting”, we, behold, we will consult everything and we will call you and let you know about your decision. We have your number.

“Well, consult,” Levi thought, and at parting he said:

– Have a nice day. Azloha, Good luck!

With a somewhat heavy heart, Levi went outside, completely filled his lungs with a refreshing moist air and exhaled it with force along with the air of this wonderful little shop, its goods, its

owners and visitors. The virtuous air of Mr. Salzman, who was lucky enough to breathe with him, also exhaled.

Let's say: OK, as they say here, and as everyone now said, ride. Now this fad from grandfather's leaflet can be crossed out. Classes in the area were over and Levi went in the direction of his Volvo to once again go to the city center and get to know him more attentively. It should be noted that in the Salford area itself, Volvo's auto enjoyed unprecedented popularity – there were only six or seven pieces along one curving path along one side of the curb. Perhaps in this way their pious owners tried to protest to the defeated Hitler Reich, and now to the Schroider government, the German economy, the car industry with their Mercedes, BMW. Maybe the nearest Volvo dealer was someone's relative, and maybe Volvo itself is a good, good-quality car. Despite the abundance of Swedish cars, a German luxury car was parked around the corner – Porsche Carrera 4x4. In order to brighten up its obvious Aryan origin, the Jewish owner forked out and ... Acquired unusual license plates with the inscription "Mashiah" – Savior. Who knows, maybe for centuries the expected Messiah should really come from barbarous Germany.

Levi drove past the unprecedentedly high wall of the local prison, turned into a street between the brewery and the car wash, stopped.

– Good. From here the center is already close and parking without requisitions and guards. Levi locked the door of his faithful avtomobilchik with a key and strode towards the center.

The second day of our acquaintance with the monster city took place at a brighter time of the day than the last time. This walk again enticed Levi and he walked and walked again through the wide streets and through the green squares, decorated with monuments of unknown celebrities, walked, getting his ample portion of this city, the people who lived and lived here, these stone buildings, these thoughtful, silent, already elderly trees.

Having received this daily share and being satisfied, Levi turned back to his car. In the list given by the householder's wife, one of the remaining points indicated that one more Jew named Yael, an employee or bakery owner, who was interested in his car, should be visited.

Levi slowed down in front of the bakery, seeing that there was absolutely no place to park. He was met by two negresses, dressed in municipal uniforms.

"Hallo," Levy called them through the open window of the car – can I park my car here for a couple of minutes?

– Do, do! – Both African boys nodded approvingly, and proceeded further.

Levi entered the bakery.

– Hello! I was sent by Mrs. Lightner. She said that someone here wanted, perhaps, to buy my car.

As often happens in such stories, the red-haired fat man hatched his already overly hatched eyes on me:

"Oh, I don't know a lady like that, I don't need a car," he said indistinctly in his loose mouth, as the machine probably kneads dough for shabbat challah and soft buns. Seeing that his yummy doesn't impress Levi and he doesn't go away, the fat one seems to be awakened:

– BUT! How, how! Of course! A machine! Let's go and see her more quickly, – the fat man rushed headlong somewhere and for some reason into the side utility room, quickly returned and stood right next to Levi looking at his unwashed Volvo B70 car.

– Can you open the hood?

– Of course we can.

Levi opened the hood. The diesel engine peacefully and steadily clatter its mechanism. Baker Yael stood and looked at the rattling steel unit. What did he hope to see there, this Jewish baker?! Knead dough, challah on shabbos or maybe a cake with whipped cream? The bonnet lid closed deafeningly and impressed Yael looked inside the cabin:

– Oh, power windows! – He exclaimed shocked, – and you have a third seat?

“No, I don’t have a third seat,” Mr. Yael, ”Levi answered patiently,“ but its installation is provided for and if you like, you can purchase and install it. ”

The redhead held out his warm, wet, sticky palm, Levi shook it, causing the red-faced automatic smile, which solemnly and sensually said:

– I am very, very interested in this car. Be sure to call you today.

He never called, and Levi did not hear anything more about this ginger baker.

Levi returned to his lodging house, the owner Mikhah came and the two of them, as already started, got into a large Volvo 940 car, drove around the corner, parked, and went to the Teaching House – Beit Midrash. After returning from prayer, there was an unchanged orange-brown soup with scanty cushions of dough and fried meat. After the meal, Levi went up to himself, washed himself, read an English textbook and fell fast asleep. Imperceptibly, the whole body plunged into the state of “Stand by”, and a part of the soul connected to some unknown levels of Heaven. For recharging. Sleep sweet.

## Valera Lustik

Feet slowly wander along the asphalt covered with deep old wrinkles, absorbing its dust and inescapable sadness. Street Courland. The Institute of Aviation Instrumentation, from a socialist past, stands slightly above the smoked houses with communal apartments, in which there are many families, trying to share the world with one toilet, one kitchen, sometimes one stove – on a burner per family. Before reaching school 271, where Levi once and for some time studied, he decides to turn onto Derptsy Lane in order to go through it to the avenue, now called Riga. At the end of the avenue you can see the ruffled waters of the Fontanka: nearby the Gulf of Finland and its tides with the North Wind influence the mood of the river. It happens that in the fall this mood is such that the waters leave the banks and go for a walk along the promenade, spilling further and further along the adjacent streets and squares. At the turn, the legs turn left, on Riga Avenue. Once in the middle of it lay tram rails, those rails on which a boy named Yura left his five-year hand. A tram ran along the rails, tapping evenly and tinkling from five in the morning. A new government came and the head of the city ordered to remove the rails, reselling them for recycling, like old metal, and “taxis” became an alternative to moving, and their owner was some kind of relative or friend.

Levy is moving on the right side of the avenue, apparently, according to the habit of remaining from school, from school number 278, in which he studied and from there returned as a child. Walking on this side, he looks at the windows of the second floor of a pink low house, on the other side of the street. That other part has even numbers, the thirtieth numbers. Once upon a time from a number of these windows, almost a whole floor, a cozy welcoming light shone. In this apartment there lived a friendly Lyustiks family – mother, father, son and youngest daughter. Valera Lustic was born in 1963 and older than Levy, but, nevertheless, they managed to somehow get to know each other and maintain friendly relations. Levy willingly went to visit Valera. He was never refused admission, but he was indifferent, because there was no benefit from him. Valera always had a full house of various people, guests diverse and interesting. He made some deals with them, and they also with each other. This apartment was full of business life. Valera's sister is a pretty sweet girl with full wet lips. Levy told Valera that he really liked his sister.

“You know,” with a little snobbery and adult thoroughness, Valera tightened, “our family has her own plans for her.” We want to marry her with a rich Jew from Hungary.

Well, from Hungary, so from Hungary. Levy could not offer anything to this pretty girl – neither wealth, nor position. Of course Valera is right.

It so happened that since 1983 Levi has not seen Valera for a long six years, and when he appeared again in Leningrad, he did not go to him, because he didn't have much to tell. But time passed, Levy gradually got to his feet, began to make good money. While walking along the avenue, turned into the familiar front door, climbed to the second floor, pressed the call button.

– Who's there? – an unfamiliar voice outside the door. Levy introduced himself.

The door opened, and the one who opened the door immediately disappeared into the rooms. Levy came in. A lot of fashionably dressed up guys are important to talk, talk. Among them, Valera, who is even more plump, has a striped shirt, ruddy with a short soft beard on her face.

– Oh, Levy! Hello! How are you?

– Gd bless! All is well. How about you?

“Fine too, buddy.” You sit down here if you want, and I have to talk about business with the guys.

Valera stepped aside and spoke, spoke, spoke. And Levy was sitting. But he did not sit for long, because he realized that no one would drive him, but he would not entertain either, since no one needed him here and, rightly, was not interested.

– Thanks for the hospitality. Well, I'll go, ”Levy went to the door.

– Ah, well, be healthy, – the answer sounded half-indifferent, – come in somehow else.

“Come in” sounded like a formal invitation and Levy really did. Not immediately, not next week, maybe in six months, or maybe in a year. The door was not opened as fast as the last time, everyone was asking who and where. When they let inside, they personally took us to the living room, where several people were sitting, and among them the dull Valera. Blush disappeared from the cheeks, a deep sadness and hopelessness fell on his face.

“Ah, it's you, Levy.” Hey.

– Hi, Valera. How are you?

– You know, bad.

Valera did not hide or hide anything, but in a completely simple-minded, fallen tone, he said:

– One evening they rang the front door. Two masked men entered, armed with pistols, ordered everyone to lie on the floor and after that they took money from the table and, without saying goodbye, left. Serious guys. It's good that everyone survived,” he added despondently.

“How much money did they take from you, Valera?” I asked, so as not to be silent and ask at least something.

– More than a hundred thousand rubles. This money is not mine. This is the money of those people who came to visit me and left them in storage. The trouble is that these people, knowing about this misfortune of mine, nevertheless demand them from me and demand very harshly.

One hundred thousand! What an incredibly colossal amount, Levy was horrified to himself. One hundred thousand, when the average salary in the country is only one hundred rubles a month! And all these people, why did they leave their money with Valera? So that later one of them could make a “tip”, bring his friends and then rob him, then to demand everything back. These are such business relations and such business partners, don't bring Gd.

Drizzles a cold rain. Levy recalls how he also walked along this sidewalk and also drizzled with a cold rain, but he specially opened his jacket so that everyone would see him for the first time tied a red tie. Cold and proud. The ends of the tie tremble with joy, playing with the wind. Here is the one-story building of the Louis Pasteur Hospital. Seven-year-old Levy was saved here when purulent appendicitis was discovered in him. Then he really didn't want to be put to sleep, put up a fight on the operating table and shouted everything – “fascists, fascists”.

Here is the “Baronovsky” house, opposite which stood two beer stalls and a long line of men who blew foam from the mugs, diluted beer with vodka, and then cursed, urinated, fought, wallowed. These Larkovs have long been gone, but the smell of a mixture of beer and urine seems to have settled here forever.

How much did he not see from that tragic moment to Valera? He never saw him again. Only a couple of telephone conversations he had with him. What for? Probably low. Nostalgia when people try to look in and return to their past.

“How are you, Valera?” Do you live all the same? – I ask questions on the other end of the wire from the Netherlands.

– Do not you know? I now live in Uzhgorod and try to earn money as a customs broker.

– Why?

– Yes, because! Because I was forced to sell my apartment!

“Such a nice apartment, in a good place.” Yes, you didn't seem to need it.

– Why, why! – annoyed Valera. The memories for him, apparently, are very painful and painful,

—

– They took me to the forest, hung me upside down, like Pinocchio, and forced me to sign the documents. I now do not have an apartment, I live in Uzhgorod.

Drizzle sprinkles from heaven, nailing to the earth, it seems eternal, inexorable St. Petersburg dust. Breathes fresher, lighter. Windows of the former apartment have long been left behind, and his slightly naive full face is still looming in front of me. Does a person have constellations and a designation or not?

1981 year. Hotel "Soviet". Happy Valera Lustik is the owner of two warm jackets with hoods, which he just purchased from Finnish tourists. In a country where there are only two tailoring factories, the Volodarsky and Bolshevichka factories, you can sell these trophies with great profit. A shabby guy nicknamed Sheep comes up to Valera and takes these two bags from Valera under some pretext. He does not give him money, but sends him away with threats. Valera can not do anything and leaves robbed with impassable disappointment and bitterness, which, it turned out, will have to carry his whole life.

In addition to Valera's face, another face pops up, not as rosy and naive as Lustik's – the face of a certain Vitya Chingin, who also liked to sit out and stay for no reason at Valera, a healthy guy-champion in wrestling. Our world is so small and the planet is so small. Levy met him, surprisingly, in Amsterdam. Vitya's wife was Jewish, and her brothers lived in the Netherlands. All of them were granted a residence permit very quickly and without any restrictions on the grounds that their brother Boris Fastovsky was abducted in Leningrad and demanded a ransom for him. Then they released him and wrote about this story in the newspapers. With these newspapers, Boris came to Holland, drawing anti-Semitic motives to his twists and turns. He and all his relatives and friends who came to him, also took advantage of these newspapers and these motives, healed comfortably and happily. Levy later learned that a terrible tragedy had happened: he was kidnapped from one of the Amsterdam towers where Boris's office was located. The kidnappers demanded a ransom of a million guilders, but for some reason they were not given a ransom, and Boris disappeared forever. Neither the police, nor the psychics, nor the money helped his mother learn about his fate. Viktor Chingin and his wife served a short term in the pre-trial detention center on suspicion of complicity in the abduction, but were released for lack of evidence. After some time, according to rumors, they divorced, but still sued each other for a long time because of common or other people's money.

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