

SUNDOWNING DIARY

PART 2

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Chapter 5

Back to school

“De ja vu?”

“Not even close. Lets say its restarting the level from the beginning ”.

Again I was standing in front of the school entrance, but this time among crowd of annoying students. Second me or new part of mine with the name of Herman Avots, convinced me that, without kicking the hell out of previous terminator boy that was part of his bad memory, who used to give him bad time bullying him every day when he was kid - we both stumble in permanent limbo.

Before making another attempt on withholding that young savage, I was shocked to see him totally competent of killing this bastard and doing whatever he likes as a master of my nightmare.

“Ok! You’re asking me why you have to solve my past issues. Wait a moment, I’ll show you ”

Herman just flicked his finger. Out of woods emerged big orange cat on the loose, agitated Leopard stalking left-and right silently preparing for sudden attack. In a split second it sprinted and jumped with open claws on to bullying boy from the back, as he was approaching me to kick my ass for the second time today. As tip of sharp claws interacted with fragile kid skin, his white shirt went totally red, blood splattering all around like a hell fountain from sliced artery.

Gruesome scene made the crowd of young students go mad, most rushed on to frontdoors of the school, dozens of them injured as result of stampede, several fainted right away, others tried climb the trees or flee to the backyard as their only salvage. I stood their shocked unable to move my limbs an inch witnessing unreal school tragedy which could have made the headlines of breaking news if was real. Second time i just heard the sound of finger flicked and everything went back to normal, as if nothing just happened.

Twin sisters with long shiny hair curling around imaginary pole holding each other, fat pumpkin-head boy leaking Rooster shaped red lollipop, group of boys

and girls chasing each other playing in an attempt to touch the runner from the shoulder and tag them.

“Tag, you are it!” – sweet looking 8-9 year girl wearing round glasses said gently touching my hand, yet hesitating whether to run away or not.

She was confused to see me not responding and continued to chase nearby schoolmate to tag him as her next prey.

“So you see what I’m talking. If it was up to me to eradicate this bad memory, would have done it already without bothering your majesty. But its your dream, your call. You’ve to overcome him as myself, underage Herman who had been too weak during those years”.

I sat on the red plastic bench beside young pretty woman in her 30s, Korean style haircut and black sunglasses, holding small size backpack, constantly looking at her kid playing and never diverting her fixed stare from him. She wore casual work clothing, had a strict look, never smiling. I pressed my head between my arms, so all this nightmare stop. But it won’t go.

“Tural, you have to get your shit together, I mean it. We have to get you out of this limbo, otherwise it can damage your brain due to prolonged comma.”

“Out of millions of people, rich kids, poor kids, this damned ideocratic and the most unique and rare disease finds me. How is it fare?”

“You think you got the most unique and rare mental condition ha,? Have you ever heard of Steven La Pen, French architect?”

“Nop” – I said uninterested.

He came sat near me, pressing imaginary caring mother leftwards however surprisingly not making her uncomfortable.

“Being high –demand master of his work, he earned millions of euros in cash, could order and buy everything in one click of a button, only problem he had was his one and only grandchild same age as you. After his parents tragically died in a fire accident, Le Pen became his legal guardian. First couple of years, everything was just fine, pampered teenager spending his time in luxrourous restaurants, dance clubs and nightclubs of Europe, regularly loosing huge amount of money in a Monaco casino, without any limits and testing the patience of his grandfather, yet heir to his construction and design empire Artchitectures Futuristes.

The company was worth an estimated 4 billion euros, but had shrunk drastically after grandfather gave away control over his most bank accounts and safe deposit boxes. Even though he loved him very much and endured his mischievous behavior and lifestyle. But one day, after he caught a cold and got sick, staying couple of days indoors, at his grandfathers mansion, something had change drastically. He began to complain of presence of a stranger at home, some imposter he claimed who purportedly shared his physical appearance and

always hid in a bathroom. The stranger was his identical copy, he had the same height, same hair, same body shape and wore the same clothes as he did.

Eventually it became apparent that, mysterious double or imposter if you will, was only his mirror reflection. Medical examinations and tests revealed progressing dementia, he was diagnosed the unique type of Capgras syndrome - the belief that someone, often a spouse or family member, has been replaced by an exact double, in his case he was the one who'd been substituted" – he claimed.

"So what happened next?"

"He became pals with his own reflection, though prescribed strong medications, anti-depressants by physician in-charge, talking all day long with his imaginary double who knew too much about him, in bathroom, living room, any place where mirror had been available. "

I don't know whether he made it on purpose like previous Leopard rampage trick, but I was surprised to see pretty parent with fixed stare on his playing kid, now looking at him, with a face like, eager to hear all story, without missing any detail, so excited she was.

"Grandfather at first made huge effort to ignore his heir's spontaneous conversations with himself that seemed to have been conducted in a non-violent and friendly manner. But then?" – he made an intentional pause.

"Then?" – I asked demanding the continuation.

"Situation got out of control, after so called stranger became aggressive and they had a quarrel, he barely went to pee or take a dump on principle not to encounter his loathsome double, uninvited guest. Day-by-day things got worse, with broken mirrors and windows, he even damaged huge Tv mounted on the wall of living room, to avoid close encounter with him."

"So..."

"So within a week delusion had disappeared, he cured the hell out of himself, and his double left the house once and for all."

"Let me guess experimental medicine made from stem cells?"

"Wrong, ancient and traditional remedy, a business class ticket to the hell if you will - suicide."

CHAPTER 6

Unforeseen circumstances

She reached canal footpath looking for the keys his half-drunk husband had lost whilst doing "Number one". Where he might have lost them- she wondered,

looking all around among the bushes, on the ground, everywhere for a half an hour except, the running water which was out of reach. Her husband – Herman stooped and aggressively continued the search without a success, 15-20 meters away from her, checking the lawn in the dark with his dirty fingers and swearing in Latvian, each time his hands touched something palpable and badly smelling.

“Shit! I Cant do it anymore.” – he stood up and shouted at hour wife tired of searching, like it was Flora, to blame for lost keys. It had been in his nature to always to shift the responsibility to someone else.

An hour ago Herman and Flora were on their way to home, after birthday party in suburban district of Jurmala, driving as fast as a rocket, alongside the canal, which was old and rarely used by residents of capital city, but most frequently used by pik-nikers and late time lovers. 2-3 km to the north of highway juncture, he had spotted a traffic police car and therefore decided to park the car behind the high rising tree, for not drawing attention and eventually get busted for intoxicated driving.

“Ok..There always must be solution. I have an idea. I have 2 spare keys, one of which is in my office, on my desk, behind family picture frame, another one in the house. I’ve expensive equipment inside trunk, so one of us goes, one of us stays. Your call”

“I’d rather stay. You go take a cab nearby and rush to your office before I get killed from exposure. Hurry. I’ll stay inside the car. Its getting cold out here.”

“Ok... 30 minutes tops. Sorry for inconvenience darling.”

He had his hood on, pulled the laces of dark black inspector boots until the knot is tight, gave himself good slap on right and left cheek, as to somehow curb the pressure of alcohol and hit the road running - to the surprise of his own wife – who had known him for almost a decade and never seen him so resilient.

“Don’t turn the lights on cos I don’t wanna see you in the dark...” - he sang his favorite song by Cromea as he was running alongside dark and vacant road with no lights inside, to cheer himself.

Running to fast took his breath away, but he was satisfied with distance he closed so far, after he turned back to check the progress. He wished he had ultimate running sneakers instead of black classic boots he wore for the party. His ears caught hardly audible dim noise within surrounding woods, sounds of young blood joy rather than a scream or outcry for help, as he stopped to give his overheated lungs a break. Some kind of late time orgy or something his thought, *“freaken young generation,, no taste in music... no good way for passing time. Just chatting-cheating-fu...ing- with all its supplements”*

His eyes blistered as he saw a car with headlights on coming towards him .

God, let it be a tax, let it be a taxi, let it be a taxi.

Monday is not so unlucky day after all. Pale yellow color made him so optimistic that day.

“45 Soborsky street, please hurry. I lost my car keys so wife waits inside the car, near the canal.”

He was standing at the window quietly but angrily staring at the laserlight billboard advertising useless toothpaste, with its tricky subliminal messages hidden behind toothbrush curves similar to female sexual organ, then shifting his gaze on to a Afghan migrant merchant selling various fallalery or junk jewelry in the alley, yet unable to forgive himself for a mistake made a year ago, that eventually lead unforeseen circumstances and breaking of love bonds between Flora and himself. He longed to be in bed, to close his eyes, leep off all bad memories related to night his wife was gang-raped, after he had left her alone near the irrigation canal.

“Is it your final decision, ha. You cannot take that horrible day, out of your mind, can you? But I love you Herman, you know it. I wish we had a child, so to somehow relieve this pain of ours. It is neither your nor mine fault, for God’s sake stop blaming yourself. All those freaks are now behind the bars.”

He tried many times, but felt so humiliated for himself and her wife who’d been stigmatized by local community like she was some kind of prostitute rather than gang rape victim. They moved to another street, another block, but all was in vain. He felt like his personality diminished to microscopic ranges for failing as man to protect his woman.

“Nop, Flora. I did my best, you did your best. Lets not deceive ourselves, its stalemate situation, that I can’t let go on. You were right saying “if we had a child”. But unfortunately we haven’t, ‘cos I’m f...en infertile shooting blanks, I’m no man, I’m fu..en loser and moron, - he hit his forehead on to the window pane. God, what was I thinking that night leaving you alone. God damn that day, God damn Mondays.”

Flora stood up from the edge of bed, approached him to somehow comfort his husband, but after her lips landed on his right cheek, out of a sudden sustain massive slap from Herman that hit her nose, made her bleed. They both were standing numb, unable to move and not seeing but hearing every drop of blood fall onto floor, giving out irritating noise.

When he returned his face to the window, and apologized silently, Flora was already on her way to the door, wiping her nose with blood soaked dollar, as she could not find any napkin or cloth.

He saw her downstairs hastily running toward taxi on the other side of street, his heart pumping harder with every step she take. After cab vanished from view, something caught his eye that he could not ignore. It was another billboard, no

painting or illustration just bold font ad, must had been installed hours before, cos looked so fresh.

“DONORS WITHOUT BORDERS”

Donate your post-mortem organs and get €50,000 cash instead..., Organ donation and transplantation save the lives of between 40 - 100 people in Latvia annually. By donating your organs, you could save the lives of up to 3 people who are in end-stage organ failure .

CHAPTER 7

Avenger

I checked out my left pocket, touched a 2-3 inch hole, second pocket stacked with manat notes – national currency of my homeland – to my surprise. In the meantime, Herman was busy trying to wipe out a grease stain on his old coat. It was a long and tedious moment of silence between us, after so many efforts we made to escape this “spider net” of bad memories.

“What do you think, maybe by hurting each other i can wake up ,hmm? You know like when you pinch your arm to awaken the nightmare.”

He ignored my questioned.

“What’s his story?” – I asked after a minute trying to change the subject

“Whose?” –he exclaimed with all attention.

His – I nodded towards massive bone structure young student painstakingly sweeping the fallen leaves and saying something inaudible each time he put another pile into dustbin.

“Oh , I remember him. Its Johan – an orphan poor boy, fifth grader whose in legal custody of her aunt, well known prostitute. He very often gets into scuffles on the school grounds , with those calling her aunt “5 dollar fat whore”. He’s assigned to an hour of detention after lessons for a week and abusing punishment of cleaning job outside the school -this time for breaking the nose of headmaster’s relative. His one bad-ass lone wolf, no friends no girlfriend, uninterested in lessons, just passing time, “You don’t touch him, he’ll not touch you””.

“He looks like physically mature and strong eleventh grader rather than junior.”

“You bet he does. He works out too much.”

“I used to have a bodyguard , strong but dumb like a sheep just like him – Jafar”

“First not used to, but you have in real, him being killed was just lets say side effects of assimilation process. And Second Johan is not like him , his no dumb ”

As we were speaking of Johan, a brilliant idea flashed across my mind. Boom!

“What’s the name of a dork ,that have beaten me for tenth time within a day, your childhood enemy I mean. “

“F...k. I even hate spelling out his name...Eugene.”

“Are you sure that by beating hell out of Eugene we’ll eradicate this bad memory?”

“Yes...Why do you ask?”

“I want to stir a fight between those two, and after your “friend” get smashed by this lone ranger, finish him myself. “

“You think it would work!” – Herman exclaimed agitated - I wonder how come they have never fought each other yet. But I doubt they’ll fight”.

“Lets give it a try.”

I began dully monitoring the schoolyard activity, checking for perfect candidate, who’ll make those two fight each other, some kind of dirty messenger, a snitch if you will that is ready to sell even his mother for bar of Milkyway.

“Hey bro – Yes you.... Wanna earn 5 dollar...”- he approached hesitating, but with a face, that contained no respect to me , to little Herman. Like he was abused to be called upon by a guy with bloody inferior rank.

“Why would I need, your souvenir butthead.”

“You little piece of shit”. –I exerted all my anger and strength grabbing him by his collars. Thank God, Herman was enough strong to punish this dork, at least, I thought. – *“You listen to me, and listen carefully”* –

He was surprised to see me act so hawkish, not type of Herman he used to know and tease before. I thought he’s gonna collapse on me as, his eyes almost popped out of his head. Herman (the old one, not me) was eagerly observing not generally interfering the course of whole process.

“OK. I’m sorry “– he apologized in a mean and pathetic way.

“Apologies accepted,” - I let him loose

I poked 10 manat instead of 5 dollars I promised, which surprisingly turned into Latvian Lats, in the meantime. Yeah red “desmit latu” on the background of gloomy beach brought him to his senses.

“What should I do?” – he asked

“Johan...”.- I pointed so called lone wolf who was already sneaking behind the pine tree to smoke a slim cigarette.

“Him? – fatboy asked surprised. – So what?”

“You reach him and tell him that his Eugene call his aunt names, “fat – greasy slut”

What I liked in him most, was that he did not give me any unnecessary questions and went straight ahead to accomplish his evil and warmongering assignment. Johan stood up as he saw “well known school snitch sneak in front of him. At first I saw he was pointing at me and telling Johan what did I say. “What a nerd...” I thought. But It happened to be Eugene standing right behind me, whom he pointed to and he was ready to strike a blow, when heard Johan shout angrily.

“Hey, Eugene the moron – I heard you’ve been calling me names, - come here!”

I’ve never seen Eugene so vulnerable and freaked out, he didn’t move, didn’t say any word, just stood there like a broken robot. I stepped several feet aside so not to find myself in the middle of brutal fight, as I saw Johan coming towards, spinning the mop in his right hand.

“You called me names, moron?”

“I didn’t call you anything” - he responded in repulsive manner. No more no less.

“Oh my God they’ve advanced to a hitting stage already” – I hissed barely audible to Herman smiling venomously.

The first punch came from Johan, which had been followed by strike with a mop, that firmly landed right onto his left shoulder. Crowd of students went crazy, regardless of their age and sex, children rounded up and surrounded those two school celebrities, cheering and chanting the name of a fighter they supported. All I wanted was to take advantage of this fight and finish him when he barely stood on his feet after good set of punches and kicks from Johan “with love”.

But eventually everything went upside-down...after blocking Johan’s next punch, he threw a massive uppercut from close range that landed on his chin, that knocked him of his feet and threw several feet backward. This was the end... and mine as well. Johan was lying on the ground after fainting. In the meantime, I saw principal and several teachers rushing to a scene to check what was going on. The next thing the Eugene the Champion did was interrogating the sneak that caused the trouble between those two. Within a minute, sneak confessed everything, this time pointing at me, indeed.

“You bastard,”- he jumped onto me like rugby player, punching, headstrikes, strangling and all. My face covered all over with blood. Suddenly all surrounding plunged again into darkness. I was gradually getting used to that, it meant restarting and travelling 10 minutes back in time again.

Next time I opened my eyes, it was not Herman but our snitch waking me up which surprised me very much. That meant memory chain hasn’t been restarted, but we didn’t overcome this obstacle either. Like somebody accidentally pressed the hotkeys of CTRL + S, saving the data, but forgetting the proper combination

for closing the document. I saw Herman sitting on the bench in an extraordinary manner, curled up into a ball, his eyes wide with anger and frustration, just minutes away from weeping.

“We’re stuck!” – he stammered with a cracked voice.

We looked at each other. This time my fresh bruises didn’t vanish like the other time. Instead it hurt badly. I returned and joined him on the bench, wood still cold and unpleasant in spite of casual sun emergings. I just wanted to stop for a while and rest there. Breeze from the south was a slight relief for agonizing pain of face beat into a jelly.

“I’m completely out of plans.Sorry” – Herman exclaimed after he heard me moaning from pain.

*“You think I care. Zibil- (*garbage- I cursed in my language). All I want now is to vanish. Please God help me.”*

Herman leaned down still sitting on the bench, collected small stones and cobble fragments, then leaned back as he gathered good handful of them. I was ready to smash his head into a ground after I saw him visually picking an elm tree 10 meter in front of us, raising his right hand, small round shaped stone between his finger, waving it like fixing the target. He hurled a stoned and hit the target right in the middle. Second one hit the same spot on the tree as well, third, fourth, fifth.

“I see your good marksmen my friend, bravo ---I was so amazed that, didn’t notice all my pain cease. – what about other one...yeah, behind it 2 meters to the left.”

Boom.Hit.

“What about the monument of that man, near the school wall.”

“His no ordinary man, his our famous composer - Jāzeps Vītols – No can’t do. Its not ethical to hit respectable person who promotes my nation. But i can hit power pole nearby for sure.”

I thought that’s it, hitting metal pole standing almost 60 meters away, was like one in a million chance.

Hi waved his right hand, closed his right eye zooming the target with left one, and let it go. Almost unbelievable, while in the air small stone turned into apples size fireball that his junction of cables on the pole, huge sparks flying each side following explosion. Nobody paid attention, like nothing just happened, like he didn’t just damaged the power supply system.

Unbelievable .He leaned back smiling

“You can do better than me, be sure.”

“What the hell are you talking about. I cant even hit this dustbin, I’m not a good marksman, besides, my my hands are shaking because of my condition.”

“You still don’t get it, do you. In here, you’re not Tural, the son of billionaire suffering from sundowning, you’re underage Herman – with marksmanship 3 times better than mine middle age Herman. Give it a try, you’ll see I’m telling the truth.”

I gradually liked this grin on his face

“You can try on live target if you wish”. – he said yet smiling

It was like a moment of revelation. Previous plan of escape was bullshit compared to what thunderstormed in my brain that moment

“What did you just say?”

“Hey, chill. I don’t call you liar. I just say that you can do it better than me.”

“No.. not that, I mean what about live target”- I interrupted – *Why the hell didn’t you tell me you’ve been good marksman before.”*

What a clever idea I thought, as was trying to put up proper words, to explain him my plan.

“Yes, I admit the fact that, in this dream, I’m physically schoolboy Herman, not myself. I couldn’t beat the hell out of Eugene because, you were weak in your past, unable to give back to your rivals, so now I can’t beat him up anyhow, this is for sure. But after I discovered your marksmanship a brilliant idea flashed across my mind, if you can hit the bulles eye, that means, I can hit the bulles eye as well. Do you get the point.”

I never saw him so optimistic.

“Not at all. But I’m curious”

“I’ll splash his head open hurling stone at him and we’ll get out of this limbo.”

“My friend you are a genius. I wonder why I haven’t try to get rid of him this way in my childhood. Never mind, are you ready?”

“You bet I am.”

Here he was coming again, Eugene the Terminator, Eugene the Nightmare, Eugene the Smasher, for his easy prey, to bully, to kick and humiliate just for fun. Nevertheless, this time I won’t let him control the whole situation and show off his martial art skills.

“Why did you tell the teacher that I stole your stamps, you f...khead?”-

Not again. This continuous sentence became broken summer for my ears, totally irritating.

“Stand where you are” - I stopped him verbally 10 meters away from me. He was surprised to hear me giving orders for the first time which totally altered balance of powers making him as obedient as dog. I picked palm size, heavy stone, fixed the target, and hurled it wildly putting in all fury and rage gathered

against him. The stone hit right in the middle of his forehead. I saw no blood, no reaction or aftermath. Just some transformation in form of a puzzle catching all surroundings and putting me inside a wormhole. I was so happy, I remember even waving my hand to Herman to say Goodby. I thought I was going to wake up from a coma but instead I had found myself standing on the rocky shore of a sea or lake, with an unknown old man by me, holding a fishing pole in my hand.

END OF PART 2