

SUNDOWNING DIARY PART 4

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Chapter 11 Battle of Shaiba

Buzzing noise in my ears, accompanied by inaudible dialogues of Ottoman soldiers running towards me with a bayonet charge, me unable to move my legs, shellshocked ...there was nothing I could do to stop those angry soldiers from stabbing me with their sharp rifle blades. Still terrified by the view of horde charging on me, my right hand involuntarily touched something solid which I thought was a square shaped stone, being of no use but hitting the face of one soldier out of dozens, still would not neutralize him. However I found it to be a red flag with white star and crescent in the middle, as I picked the object to defend myself from the assailants.

Heavy moustached, iron-bone structure soldier, one of assailants running in the front line passed by, without paying much attention what I was doing while lying on the ground, like I was spook or something, then second, third, fourth, entire horde, dozens running straight ahead with inherent resolve, without breaking the ranks, followed by a huge regiment of those running without any sign of order, irregular Arab and Kurd forces fighting under the red flag. I was lucky to emerge at the right side of the battlefield rather than inside fortified British camp with trench and barbed wires, as I noticed to be wearing Ottoman uniform. Brits holding strategically significant positions 2-3 km around north-west started indiscriminate bombardment straight away, shells hitting contact line causing 4 meter high splashes of wet sand after floods mixed with bloody body fragments of fallen Ottoman soldiers. Young rank soldier stood over me before kneeling down on the ground and put rifle aside.

“Yaralımısın kardeş?” (Are you wounded ?) – he asked in Turkish with caring voice, meaning of which I understood immediately as we both were members of Turkish nation, Azerbaijan and Turkey, with slight dialect differences but same language like Australian and American English.

“Heç bir şey olmayıb. Mərmı düşdü yanıma amma Allaha şükürlər olsun sağ-salamatam” (I was almost hit by a shell but I’m safe and sound thanks to Allah)

“İğdırlımısın?” (Are you from Ighdır?) – he asked whether I was the resident of Turkish region where Azerbaijanis form almost majority.

“Evet” (You bet) – I lied for not to confuse the soldier by uttering the name of yet nonexistent republic that used to be invaded province of Russian empire which was British ally as a member of Triple Entente. I could have been shot point-blank on the spot for misunderstanding and anachronism of this lucid dream, even time traveller - bull shit explanations, wouldn’t have reduced my chances being executed as a spy. He gave me some water to drink and briefed me about to plan of attack, but he sounded so desperate and frustrated that I understood that he was fighting with his conscience, doing all his best to terminate the outcries of cowardice.

Basra was – in my case – is important communication and industrial center captured by British led coalition forces, that became a turning point in the war and roiled the power of balance for the benefit of “English”. After failed attempts to regain the city, it was useless to push forward, with increasing number of tolls that but not for Lieutenant Colonel Süleyman Askerî who would subsequently commit a suicide over defeat in the battle.

In a close range, shrapnel and projectiles pouring on our troops like a monsoon rain, with no enclosed place to take a refuge.

“Türk bayrağını kimse indiremez. Sen bir-iki dakika dinlen, ben şehid olsam, şu bayrağı göz bebeğin gibi koru” (No one can lower the Turkish flag. You rest for a moment, but keep this flag like protecting your cornea, if you see me fall martyr). Hadi, Allahaismarladık (Ok then, goodbye brother)- he said as he took the red flag and ran towards the depth of battlefield like a mad, without any clue where he was going.

He was struck down by a random bullet as soon as he reached a vast crater made by a canon shell impact. The intervals of enemy artillery fire increased as there were almost no one left on the contact line except medics and dozens of soldiers scattered all around devoid of senior command.

I must cross the city with a flag if I want to wake up from this lucid dream. I got my thoughts straight and took a deep breath, and sprinted forward in 45 degree angle, left and right, left and right in order not to be an easy target. I recall my self-defense instructor once said that zig-zag running was more effective pattern than running in straight line when facing imminent threat of getting killed by an active shooter. I expected the bullets bite into my chest or legs as I was running towards crater where my fallen dream comrade was lying. I checked him out in the moonlight, it was a fatal wound, bullet pierced through the forehead and gashed half of his brain out of

huge opening on the back of his skull. I doubt it was full metal jacket bullet as it expanded in contact and almost exploded this head.

It was so realistic that I pitied him from my heart for a moment but then I realized that it was nothing but an element of dream, a Lego house assembled from the bricks of photographic memories and good history knowledge (but couldn't really say mine or Herman's). But I must give him a credit for his courage 'cos he was still holding flag on his arm firmly. I grabbed it and sprinted once again towards the creek running 500-1000 meters to the left of the enemy position. Over 15 soldiers who survived the massive artillery bombardment after taking refuge inside the craters and trenches, popped up one by one, encouraged by the scene – “me bearing the RED, all alone” and unaware of my real intentions, charged towards enemy trenches with battle cries calling Almighty God for help and strength.

That agitated the Britishmen who ceased bombardment after seeing no active Turkish assault on the ground and that was it. We were getting killed one after another. I felt warmth in my left shoulder, that brought up some bad memory of getting stabbed by an old man, in a dark alley. This time it was bullet, but to my surprise, I found myself capable of continuing the march of honor. But then I heard buzzing noise of shell rushing on and got my ass down instantly not to get hurt. It landed 15 meters away from me, that made dirt fly all around the spot and my ears ringing.

“Think. Think!!” – there were no way I could cross the river without being noticed. Like they were monitoring all my actions. I must double-cross them. Second shell hit edge of nearby hole and shrapnel got into my left leg and other one cut through my neck.

I saw hundreds of enemy soldiers, most of them Indian conscripts, walking through the battlefield in a human chain, to see if any Ottomans were alive, as I gained my consciousness.

“Remember leave no stone unturned. We don't need any wounded Turk prisoners. Understood. And remember to pick their flag. We shall hang it upside down, let those bloody bastards know who's in charge”- I heard one of them commanding behind the soldier chain.

They were ruthlessly killing all those breathing, with bayonets, stabbing right into chest in a cold blood. My comrades, most of them facing the death with courage, reciting their kalimat-shahadat before getting fatal blow. But I didn't want to dye and start everything over. I squeezed around the shoulder wound, to increase the bleeding,

it was difficult to deafen the agony developing inside me but this was only chance to survive the army of reapers. I covered all my face with blood and then grabbed a handful of sand and splashed right into my face to imitate a soldier killed not today, but 2 days before the battle of Shaiba. I took a deep breath as noticed two of them 10 feet away, and held my breath, lying still, and half of my blood and dirt covered face exposed.

“We got one of them here, lying in the hole”

“Go check if his alive”

I’m sorry to mention it, but I farted and shit my pants intentionally to somehow, simulate the odor of decomposing body. One of them jumped into hole to check whether I was alive, but nasty smell made him cranky and stirred up his stomach. He got out of hole immediately, fell down on his knees and puked his guts out. Part of chain stopped, amused by the scene.

“What did he see? Beheaded body?”- one of them asked laughing.

“Its f...en rotten body, smelling like a shit. He’s dead already”- he complained. “But I took his flag, he was flag bearer I guess, there was no rifle near him”

“All right then, that will do, don’t fall behind the ranks, continue searching”- commander ordered. Then they moved on looking for other fallen soldiers on the field.

Chapter 12

42%

Dr.Jamal was under huge pressure after unsuccessful outcome of his unconventional and yet not approved brain transplantation. Face to face with dilemma, he did all his best to treat the poor boy who couldn’t stand darkness of the night. Something went wrong and the patient – one and only son of Azerbaijan billionaire fell into deep coma without any slightest chance of waking up anytime soon.

After patient’s mother died, he was afraid to encounter his angry father, who could use his business and political connections to put an “X” sign to his medical career once and for all. But now hearing the shouting of male adult in front of his office, and his assistant wearing headscarf - Zuleykha trying to interfere by telling “doctor’s not in his office right now” which escalates his temper tantrum instead, he decided to tell the parent truth and nothing but a truth.

“I said his not here” she said in threatening tone.

Dr.Jamal calmed himself down and opened the door.

“Thank you Zuleykha I’ll take it from here” – he said showing Haydar Hasanov – the very oil magnate – inside the room. The latter didn’t say anything just stared at him with angry eyes for a moment then entered the room taking a seat by the desk.

“ I don’t consider myself religious man, doc. But what you’re doing is so mean and heartless”

“I understand your anger and frustration janab. It’s not like I’m avoiding you for no reason, we didn’t fail, everything went quite well at first, it was a major breakthrough in brain transplantation. However he fell into deep unconsciousness”

“And when you think he’ll wake up”

“Let me make myself clear. We invited research team from University of Copenhagen to define the true status of your son. They scanned his brain using PET technology, PET stands for positron emission tomography- ok never mind with that, it is used to detect emission of glucose in brain in order to determine whether it is normal or low brain activity. The better glucose metabolize the more chance he’ll get up soon ”

“when did they carry out those scanning you say”

“last Thursday”

“And you didn’t bother to tell me about it”

“please don’t interrupt. I’ll return to that. So, 42 percent. Its unique threshold – for level of cerebral energy turnover, any less than that and you can consider him brain dead with one in a million probability of gaining consciousness. I’m sorry to say your son’s brain operates beneath this threshold, we cannot heal him”

“You mean his brain’s dead”

He lowered his head ashamed ,gazing at a golden pen donated him by giant pharmaceutical company for promoting their ineffective and unconventional medicine among patients, and didn’t respond.

Everything happened very fast. It was so abrupt, that he couldn’t notice how this fat cat type businessman jumped on him over his desk and grabbed from his purple tie hidden beneath the jacket, complicating his respiration.

“You son of a bitch, you convinced me to opt for this unconventional pioneer shitsurgery of yours, let all those money I spent be your Halal, but you are

responsible for his life. Even if any slightest thought about turning of his life support machine come across your mind, any slightest thought, I'll find you and cut your balls myself, understood.

“Ok...but it's useless spending so much money...His brain is dead, you must let him go.”

“F...k the money, he'll stay in life support as long as it takes, do you get that” he shouted loudly shaking him and spraying out tiny spits from the edge of his lips, right onto his face.

“Yes....Sure”

He loosened the grip but didn't let him go yet.

“I've written my directives and will about that, if something happens to me”

“Ok. I said ok. Why your shaking me again.

“I'm not shaking you. The whole building is shaking” he stared at a ceiling light swinging back and forth. “It's an earthquake”

Both of them stood stumbled and shocked, spending last moments of their lives, gazing ceiling crack and huge concrete pile collapse and smash them into jelly.

In the meantime,

I woke up to a strong vibration, still on the battlefield surrounded by 3 Ottoman soldiers who survived by pretending to be dead, just like me. I couldn't hear any canon fire or sound of an ongoing shooting, yet the whole ground was shaking. Two of them were arguing over something in a low voice, the third- the older one with deep scar on his right cheek, was checking my wounds, yet carefully listening to what his companions had been discussing. Facing the midnight sky, I saw crazy, surrealistic things happening up on the air. Twin moons coming into one, stars buzzing up-and forth, dark separate clouds rolling like a ball. And the most interesting thing, I was only person who gave a damn about it.

I think they – the two of them, hammered out a deal to sneak out. Third didn't pry but shook his head in a disapproval. Out of a sudden I jumped into my feet like somebody just hit me with electric charge.

“Where’s my flag...I need to find my flag” –

No response from him, who looked astounded

“Did you see where they took the flag”- he didn’t say anything and just pointed to British fort rising kilometers away on the hill.

He showed me his tongue cut in half to indicate that he can’t speak. Despite him being mute as a result of savage mutilation by enemy, he didn’t bother to somehow give out indistinct sounds that would make me feel sorry for him. Good thing was, he could hear me.

“So you can hear me?”

He nodded to say yes

“Are you deserter?”

He shook his head angrily and almost took out his big hunter knife from his leather belt insulted when I stopped him.

“I’m sorry, I believe you. I was testing you whether you hear and understand me well. Ok then. How do we sneak into that fort unnoticed? Do you think its good time for breach?

He nodded. Then put his hands together under his ear to indicate that most of them were sleeping.

“Yeah...I know. Are you sure you want get involved. Believe me odds of survival are just too low.”

This time I was too late to respond, he took out his knife and slid the sharp blade of his left cheek, without blinking and wincing. He moved his lips

“Ammntt kuvavv”

“Ok you’re not coward. Damn!. I get it. Look what you’ve done. – blood was pouring in a thin stream. I was looking for a cloth to stop his bleeding, returned and saw no sign of red liquid, just old age scar on the same spot, like it had been cut at least decade ago.

Nothing to be surprised, it was just a lucid dream. Everything was possible. First wanted to test whether swiping-and-strolling in between memories, as told by human

face dog, could be applied in this battlefield. Cos' back in a train, mystery man didn't tell me anything about it. So I scouted for a pole or a stick, in order to turn the imaginary page.

With his hand gesture he wanted to know what i was doing, crawling on the ground in the dark.

"I'm looking for a stick or something piece of an long iron...something like that"

He took the long rifle off his shoulder and handed to me, still curious of my real intentions.

"What was I thinking, Yes... much obliged. It would do, I guess"

I swiped the ground with it and turned the page as I was instructed previously, in the meantime thinking about him standing behind me, I couldn't see him but was sure, he was thinking of me as crazy person.

As soon as it touched the ground, huge transparent bubble appeared expanding every next second gradually opening a view to dimly lit room, with 3 men sleeping inside. It was a chamber of enemy barrack. I was entering the wormhole with rifle on my left hand when he grabbed me from my shoulder and didn't let me through.

"Fayyyr wwwuuulllll saan" –he said showing me the rifle

"Oh, you're damn right, what was I thinking. We need to eliminate them by blunt force or..."

He didn't let me finish my point and took huge hunting knife out of his sheath. But before giving it to me, he handed round shape package made of thick animal skin holding some butter or something.

"Goot ft"

"Goat feet?"

"Goot ft"

"Oh.. a goat fat, a tallow? And why would I need that?"

He didn't answer this time just, dipped his three fingers to a semi-solid cream then sliding it around each side of knife. Funny thing was in this lucid dream I recalled a particular dream when I was spreading a spear with butter and piercing the heart of somebody –I can't remember whom - and realistic experience of smoothness of flesh-metal collision while stabbing him.

He handed to me the 'ready-to-go' knife once again as we travelled through the wormhole.

Two of Brits were sleeping on the bare ground, the third - high ranking officer - comforted himself on a bed matrass sitting high off the floor and snorting like a pig. I

spotted the “Red” placed under his pillow. But it was impossible reaching his bedside and taking it out without being noticed by soldiers who could raise an alarm.

One of them instantly jumped to his feet after he heard rustling noise under my feet. I kicked aside his rifle so he couldn’t shoot us from close range, but it didn’t relax his vigilance, he grabbed a stone and threw it at me so I drop the hunting knife. But he missed. Second soldiers woke up to his companion’s war cry who was screaming and charging on me- and jumped like a cat on to my mute friend.

First one, tried to grab the knife out of my hand and wrestled me to ground using hip throw, being pretty stronger than me, he gripped my right wrist with his left, firmly pushing my veins with his long thumb nail. I unpreventable loosened my hold of a knife. But I exerted all my strength and gave him a strong head-butt as soon as he lifted it. I took advantage of his dizzy state, grabbed the knife one again and poked it right into his throat. I threw his dying body off me and didn’t bother to pull out the knife to fasten his bleeding.

With my mute companion, the case was much easier. I turned to see him strangling the enemy soldier and the latter burning last sm³ of oxygen left in his lungs, his eyes popped out and face swelled all in red.

The high ranking military officer awake, staring at us with anger that could melt a steel. He blew a whistle to alarm nearby unit, with other handing reaching for his rifle.

“Hey...he’s getting the gun” – I warned my companion

Mute Turk, jumped onto him with a thunderstorm punch, but couldn’t evade the fatal shot, I rushed to help him, and saw him already poking a bayonet right into officers heart, but himself bleeding badly. He grabbed the Ottoman flag and handed it to me:

“Rannnnn!” - he told me to run.

I took it and thanked him for his help. He was dying and I couldn’t do anything other than paying tribute to this imaginary hero resident of my lucid dream. I heard the footsteps of running soldiers. There was no way I could escape from the one and only front door, leaving me no choice but swipe and stroll. So I poked the bayonet on ground and generated another wormhole opening to the creek that would serve my exit plan. I tried desperately not to make a sound while escaping the bloody chamber. I barged in and out in a split second, and found myself standing on the bank of the river in the early morning dawn. I was not confused though, to an abrupt time zone change, taking into account 10 years of supersonic flight experience to beat the time

those days. Worrying part, was that wormhole didn't close, leaving me prey to the enemy soldiers. They would chase and stab me one by one, raged by our "treacherous raid" on chamber, before I crossed the river. I was aghast at the very thought of it. Opening another dreamgate was of no use as well. The first one did not disappear from sight.

"Think fast...work brain work." – I grumbled slapping my forehead. "I must take my chances" . I tried to think of any particular memory that could help me block their exit from the first wormhole. More of a physical obstacle.

I remember back when I was six, entire house could have burnt to ashes if not stopped by Mom in time. Out of kiddish interest for matches and flame, I put a handful of cotton on fire behind the bookshelf, what flared up instantly. I dropped it on the floor abruptly, not to hurt myself. But then I was mesmerized by the view of burning carpet and poured a whiskey from father's Black Jack bottle. Poor mother first panicked, but then rushed to the bathroom for water. She put down the fire with 4 buckets of water before father came and gave me "greasy" slap right in my right ear. It was so painful and my ear did become swollen and deformed from the bottom part permanently. I still feel the pain as I recall that incident.

"Now I have an exit plan." I said to myself. I swiped & strolled to that particular memory block, but this time I was involved in this incident as more of a third person, observer if you will, other than first person – 6 year old dumb and naïve kid.

"Hey kiddo give me that" – Younger me, winced to see me emerge out of wormhole through the wall and steal box of matches and bottle of Black Jack from my father's sweetheart collection. Younger me ran away crying and calling for Mom. I was happy for him. At least he won't get punished for being naughty. After I returned back to river bank, I checked out my right ear to see whether it would turn back to normal state, you know, after some kind of time reaction like in Back in Time movie. But then realized that I was having a lucid dream so no need to waste a precious time. "Whom are you kidding".

The last wormhole opening to my childhood home didn't close as well. I saw dozen of heavily armed soldiers crowding inside the chamber checking their fallen comrades, yet bedazzled by the sight of transparent bubble on the brick wall. It didn't take long for soldiers notice me running towards them, with Molotov cocktail on my hand, which took me less than a minute to make.

"Curse. It's a curse" – one of them ran out of chamber.

Other one recited some verse from Bible inaudibly, marking himself with the sign of a cross. But most of them drew their long barrel guns and aimed at me, ready to face the imminent danger. I aimed and threw burning bottle right inside the wormhole. Dreamgate bubble somehow boosted the aftereffect as I saw Molotov cocktail explode like a napalm strike. Those on the front row caught on fire immediately, screaming and running chaotically, bumping their heads to the wall. They got no save. It was dramatic moment but I didn't snap, they were not real after all. There's no way they pass the dreamgate engulfed in fire. Now it was time to cross the river of escape, with Ottoman flag in my hand as I was told to by a stranger from a train of no return.

"What are you doing be careful with the wires..." It was again creepy voice of a badass woman, piercing through the morning sky. Then I heard muffled sound, chain of a words I couldn't understand, but ... "layyf suppot"

I rushed to the edge of the river, fit the flag around my neck like a scarf as I felt something was not right. The surface of water wasn't flat, it was a streaming jet. I took a deep breath and plunged into water swimming toward the other side of the river, bobbing up and down through the stream. After a dozen of strokes I almost reached the other side of the bank. While swimming half a head above the water something brushed my leg. I tried not to panic first even though my heart was pumping tons of black blood. But seconds later there was another contact. It was not a bite of crocodile or some other predator, for sure. It was touch of human being. Someone grabbing from my right foot and pulling back to the bank. There was nothing left from a professional swimming technique and I was twirling and spinning unable to resist the strong pull of unknown.

"Where are you going, come here" – I heard a familiar voice as I turned my head. Unknown was Herman in person. My "bad will" organ donor my "savior". This rascal wouldn't let me wake up from comma as Tural, trying to bury me in his own mean memory blocks in order to invade my personality. He pulled me out of water to a dirty bank. Out of a sudden, Herman the weakest person in the world, became a strong man with enlarged biceps.

"Let me go, asshole" - I screamed

He bend over me, grabbed my hair and hit my face with elbow and double punch, knocking me out of "power grid". Then put some metal rod in my hand and hit the ground with it, using my hand like some kind of tool, or glove, in order to open the alternate dreamgate to a deeper memory block. I felt sort of dizzy and ready to throw up anytime, unable to see the contents of a new wormhole. This time he kick

me right in my stomach. He picked my half-dead, half-alive body cradled it in his arms before throwing it to the other side of dreamgate.

Chapter 13

Yodogo

“I can’t stand it anymore. Please make this noise less noisy”

“If we do it, then what is the point. Annete please increase the volume to 115 decibels. Play “bitter sweet symphony”.”

A year before meeting doctor Jamal from Pakistan, who introduced new method of brain transplantation, some sort of a breakthrough of its kind, I was taking unconventional courses of music therapy from Dr. Ehrmann, who believed and persuaded my father that it somehow relieved my condition.

He goes: “Unprotected human ear can spend 8 hours a day exposed to 85 decibels without the risk of hearing loss the level of freeway lawns, crowded restaurant etc, 115 decibels is the sound of a loud rock concert . Your safe exposure time is only half a minute, but will increase it to 3 minutes. I’m sorry fellow but you’ll have to listen the whole song from beginning till the end”

It was a rainbow colored headset like an astronaut helmet equipped with a digital screen and sound proof fixers, similar to pioneer VR headsets of 90s. They left me alone inside a narrow room without any furniture or anything else, but an armchair I was sitting in.

Last thing I remember, was getting brutally beaten by Herman near the creek then I fainted. Now I’m back in time, within my memory borderlands. How come?!

Music goes:

Dam-dam-dam da –da da- Dam-dam-dam dam dam da”

'Cause it's a bittersweet symphony, this life

Try to make ends meet”

Music was getting louder and louder accompanied by visualization of metamorphosis of various patterns and colors on the display in front of my eyes. Then world became dimmer an image appeared, projecting interior of an airliner with no one on board, it was one of the creepiest moments of my “hibernation”. Plane was passing through variances in air density, wildly shaking the seats. Music getting louder and louder. I look around and saw a black rigged smudgy cat-sized creature hovering above my head. The beast didn’t have eyes, nose or mouth but it somehow detected my presence, getting ready to attack on its prey.

“No, please- get me out of here! Help! Doctor, I can’t take this anymore, take this damned headset off. Oh my God! Stop it.”- all my efforts to remove the helmet were in vain. It wasn’t like being stuck in a virtual reality game. Fear getting all over me, the creature was about to jump onto me any moment. And it did. Somehow getting into my sound and water proof helmet, covering my face with its humid and corrugated exterior.

“No, take it off me, take this damned think off me”

Then something happened instantly, creature dissolved as someone took off my helmet. No. It was me who removed it – not helmet but a black sleeping mask. I really was inside a plane, overburdened with Asian passengers most of whom appeared to be asleep in a faint light coming from behind the curtains.

“Tss...You’ll wake up everyone. You were having a nightmare” – it was cute face Japanese girl in her late twentieth, seated next to me. “My mother says never eat late-night snack, it generates bad dreams”

Cabin was classic Asian interior with no LED screen or any other interesting gadgets on the backside of every seat. Just footrest, folding tray, ashtray, pocket for reading stuff to put and seat belt. Yeah, and the square shaped red call button. Must be some kind a ‘lowest-cost flight’. Problem is I didn’t recall, travelling on plane resembling a transit bus rather than commercial airliner. Couldn’t get any sense of safety and comfort in this cabin design. There was not enough space for passengers to move around. For a moment, I even doubted there was active air pressurization, to avoid from high altitude hypoxia.

“Where is the doctor?”- I shouted yet not sure where I was, but I didn’t remove her thin and snow white soft hand stroking my face, she leant her face closer to mine to comfort me, her dim red lips inches from mine. She was the the first Asian girl, I have seen, with perfectly round mole near her mouth. So beautiful she was, running shockwaves through my veins.

“Your’re travelling with someone else?”- she asked with her kiddish voice.

“No...”- I answered hesitantly, still resisting my temptation not to kiss her magnetic lips in front of everyone. I caught creepy eyes of several passengers, with an angry look on their face.

“Hey mind your own business” – I shouted at them. They returned to their seats, using indecent language, “putdowns” in Japanese. She leaned back to her seat and blushed without saying any word.

I turned my face to see flight attendant walking to my seat

“Sir, I’m sorry, but you’re bothering other passengers. It’s a sleeping time. So please sit back and relax. Don’t make loud noise’ then she disappeared out of sight.

“What were those angry men , in front seat, saying to me?”

Her pretty face blushed so hard that I could feel a heat coming from her face.

“They were addressing me, not you. Conservative “daddies”. They think I’m flirting with Italian”

“Italian. Are you kidding. I’m more Asian than European. I’m, from Azerbaijan?

She smiled: “I thought you were Italian. Looking like one actor from a movie, I can’t remember your name. Which country are you from, you said?

“Azerbaijan...No clue? Caucasus mountains. Caspian sea, rings a bell?

“Caspian sea? You mean the largest lake on the earth. You bet it rings a bell. I took geography lessons as every single girl in my country. Problem is I’ve never heard of your state. Is it some kind a southern province of Soviet Union.”

“Are you kidding me. Soviet Union? You’re too young to know that my home country was once part of this “Commuland”. No longer it is. Azerbaijan is a free , independent country, is a full member of UN...even once managed to become non-permanent member of Security Council. So Geography is not a ‘cherry picking’ subject. You have to keep yourself up to-date on the latest geopolitical developments.

“Really? Wow. Good for your country. I thought it was impossible to become independent from Soviet.

“What you mean by that?” – I sounded worried.

She didn’t have any slightest clue where I was going with it.

“I mean Soviet and US are main world powers now. That...”

“What year is it?” – I interrupted her abruptly.

“1970, March 31. Why?”

“Oh my God, it’s not one of my travelling memories. It’s a trap. Something is going to happen” – I looked around scared. “Son of bitch, Herman. Dragged me to his bad memory sector.” There was barely seen screen in front, above the curtain separating economy class from business class. My eyes caught ‘Japan Airlines Flight 351’ written in Italic above the Japanese translation on a navy blue background.

Everything happened in a split second. I heard several passengers on the front row scream and panic, as one Japanese man in a dark suit jumped up with a shining steel samurai sword on his hand. He grabbed nearby flight attendant serving drinks to awake passengers. Moment later someone turned all lights on, i could clearly see him putting the tip of katana on her back, intimidating loudly, in Japanese on the backdrop of turmoil.

“Suwatte! Shizukani shite” – he screamed. Then several other Asian men emerged from nearby business and first class sections, and from the galley brandishing katanas in their arms, as well. There were nine of them. Pretty girl who had been talking to me a moment ago, seem terrified by the whole scene.

“Who are they? What do they say?” – I asked anxiously

“They ask passengers to be quite and not leave their seats. I guess they are radical members of Japanese Communist League. They want to access to the cockpit, demand the pilot to open the door or they will stab the crew members one by one”.

I wasn't sure whether they would negotiate a large sum of money for their extremist cause without hurting anyone or cut us into pieces out of sadistic urge. Nothing was for sure, inside twisted brain of Herman. There was nothing I could do to stop them. “Where the heck is air marshal”- I thought. I wonder how did they manage to clear security at airport with so many lethal cold weapon unnoticed. Must be inside job.

What I read from their face, they were not fooling around. And pilot who grasped the seriousness of situation, complied with demands of left wing extremists and unlocked the entry to the cockpit.

“They want to divert the plane to North Korea. Land at Mirim Airport. And cockpit crew seem to comply. He just notified the ground control about hijack situation and forced change of the course.”

You son of It was Herman, his dirty plan of reviving 1970s Yodogo Hijacking. North Korea meant even deeper levels of subconscious where I could stumble for centuries. I have to find the way out, before it enters the air space of Peoples Republic. He must have reconstructed this incident from his early memory. Wait a minute, there is a chronological inconsistency in this entire scenario. Herman is 45 years old tops. Even if he was a new born baby during the incident, he would have been 50 years old at least. I couldn't understand how he rendered this memory. Maybe he had watched particular documentary on this incident on TV when he was

kid. I doubt. Cos' vizualized details in this dream were too realistic, to be seen on documentary. I had too many unanswered questions. I must find the way to leave the plane in time, before it touches down in Pyongyang . After failed attempts to open a new wormhole from my seat, I didn't have much of a clue about my next steps. I saw no alternative but fighting those left wing extremists to stop them from diverting the plane. I was looking for any sharp or blunt object to arm with.

“Do you have scissors in your bag?”

“No I don't, sorry. What are you up to? ...I have a comb. Will it do?”

I ignored her ridiculous answer searching for anything that could be useful whilst attacking the terrorists. I checked the folding tray, the literature pocket...and my hand touched a small palm size and smooth object. I pulled it out. Believe it or not, it was...

“What is it, glowing? Are you some kind of secret agent or something” – she asked

“It's a smartphone.

“Smart meaning clever . Or it is a new abbreviation”.

“Now I got a plan of escape. I'm getting out.

The hijackers' motive was to find freedom in North Korea. Using North Korea as a base of operations, they could liberate South Korea from its oppression, then proceed to start workers' revolts across East Asia. (from Wikipedia)

The screen of a touch sensitive smartphone lit up as I pressed one and only present button on the bottom. Why in the name of heaven, there'd be a cellphone in a dream based on events of 1970's. Maybe it was a hint by my subconscious, that it would not rest on its laurels until I'm victorious and gain full control over transplanted part of brain. Scrolling through the list of menus, and sub-menus, I could not find anything written in English. All commands had same folder icon and various Japanese scripts I was unable to read.

“What those writings say. Can you read?”

“Hiragana?...you bet I can” she bent forward trying read tiny scripts. “what are those...they don't make any sense.”

“Why is that?”

“First one says... “Don’t try to screw me”, other one says “stop touching me” next “Prick!”. This says nothing important. Next says ...”

“Wait a minute” her intentionally skipping translation of one particular command didn’t go unnoticed so I interrupted her instantly. “What the former one says? Everything is important. Please?”.

She hesitated for a second then uttered.

“Don’t trust this bitch”

Not the message of my subconscious but how she pronounced it with a threatening or angry tone made me almost crap my pants.

“Never mind. We can analyze it later. Next” - I said trying to restrain my emotions, as not to let her panic. Now I certainly knew she was the element of Hermans subconscious, unaware of her evil assignment yet. She was more like a time-bomb, that could go off anytime.

“This one says “Go to next menu”

“OK” – I did as instructed by my subconscious.

Next menu contained only two options “Emergency call” and “Online messaging” written in English.

So there was no internet coverage for sure. I opted for the first one. It didn’t indicate the name or the number of call recipient, just red ringing phone image and a tip saying “put it on your left ear”. I get it. She is not to listen this conversation.

In the meantime, “samurai” terrorists those angry henchmen argued with one of the cockpit crew members, brandishing their swords and saying something in their own language in an intimidating way, then dragging him from his ear who barely remained standing under those dire circumstances. He lurched back to cockpit, as far as I know, accompanied by a lame henchman, wearing blue and red stripped jersey.

After second dial tone I heard an unfamiliar voice.

“Hello”

“Who am I speaking to?” – I presumed it was a voice of a man in his late 60th.

“What an asshole. Like you don’t know. OK. You can just call me Mister. What you want from me?”

“To be honest, I have no idea. I found this cellphone with only your number in contacts list, I thought you can be somehow useful under given circumstances. I’m in the midst of Grand Asian Hijack with nutty left wing extremist brandishing their long samurai swords all across the plane. I’m sure it is in both our interests to resolve this issue peacefully, Mister. Do we understand each other?. ”

“Are you retarded boy. I’m not freaken air controller or an air marshal for you. Why should I care?”

“Never mind, then bye.” – I was going to hang the phone when heard him change his tone drastically.

“Tural...wait wait... Let’s talk”

“Now, out of sudden, you know my name, how come Mister?”

“All right, I was just breaking your balls. I am your subconscious indeed. First, make sure pretty-face is not prying.”

“Oh my God”

“What now?”

“She disappeared. Can you believe it. She was just sitting next to me.”

“You can deal with her later. I know how to get you out of there. You don’t have any chance to stop those bloodthirsty maniacs using force, they are well trained projections materialized by Hermans subconscious. Violence would only increase your likelihood of failure.

“So what options do we have?”

“You must make unthinkable, unpredictable move. Keep your friends close but enemies closer. You have to turn those left wing extremists into your allies. At least pretend to be ally. Make them believe you’re Soviet secret agent, coordinated by Communist authorities, that you are to assist them in successful accomplishment of this mission. They will try to verify your statements, your integrity, therefore you have to have solid information that only one from inside may have at given time. You can tell them whats gonna happen at Mirim airport, which statesman would meet them, which actions would be taken in regard to passengers and Japanese crew members, based on historic facts. You’d know better. Use your brain. Improvise kid!.

“Historic facts...Are you serious. Where the heck I’m gonna find this information. I have no internet access or Cambridge Library at my disposal, to dig about the incident that had happened almost half a century ago”

“But you have cell phone, right?”

“So what?! Without internet access this cell-phone has no use other than “fly-killing”.

“Shush. Stop whining like a poor baby. I have a perfect solution for you, I’m sure you’ll like it. You’ll try to access Herman’s subconscious ‘controller’. Considering the fact that he rendered the incident of 1970’s in a ship-shape manner – let’s be clear here, he never was an eyewitness, this particular memory is muscle pumped by a lot of watching and learning – you can get all necessary information for manipulating those banzai goat-f...ers. I’m now redirecting this call. Good luck.

“Wait! What about....

I heard a girlish voice of a teenager, who answered suspiciously.

“Hello!”

“Who is it. Herman?”

“Yes. Do I know you?”

“Of course.” – I replied without giving a thought, yet confused.

“Victor is that you? Why you are calling this time. I can’t be bothered right now, I’m watching a documentary on Japanese flight hijack. Switch to First channel. You will not regret it.”

“You see, Herman. It, fell down, smashed into pieces as I got into a fist fight with my father yesterday. My box is gone. Puff! Just like that.

“You are one crazy mother f....r you know that!?”

“Nah...forget about it. What they tell? You have provoked my interest.

“I guess, they were bunch of crazy samurais who hijacked the commercial plane. They call it Yodogo Hijacking. Occurred on 31st of March, 1970 without any fatality. The alleged mastermind of the hijacking, who did not take part in the actual operation, was Takaya Shiomi. Can you believe, there was a Moriaki Wakabayashi – famous bass player of Tokyo’s underground legends Les Rallizes Denudes among hijackers. They were all aged between nineteen and twenty-one years old, boarded a Japan Airways Boeing 727 at Tokyo’s Haneda Airport – internal flight bound for

Fukuoka. Soon after takeoff, the nine terrorists stormed the cockpit and sections of armed with pipe bombs and samurai swords.

The hijackers' motive was to find freedom in North Korea. Using North Korea as a base of operations, they could liberate South Korea from its oppression, then proceed to start workers' revolts across East Asia...".

Last sentence sounded too formal, like he was reading it out from somewhere.

"...At first they demanded the pilot to divert the plane to Cuba. However plane had only enough fuel for touching down at Fukuoka's airport- its original destination.

"Are you sure, about it. They really wanted to fly to Cuba? Nothing said about North Korea"?

"Man, negotiations lasted for three days" – he continued ignoring my question. "Eventually compromise was reached. The authorities agreed that the airliner should be allowed to fly instead to Pyongyang, in Communist North Korea"

Something was not right. It seemed like he skipped some necessary information between the lines. Slight inconsistency.

"...then plane landed in the disused Minimu Airport, where the North Korean authorities hailed the nine as heroes. They were all granted political asylum, and received military medals, all other privileges, plus luxury accommodation.

"At least tell me who was the leader of group?"

"If I'm not mistaken, his name was Takamaro Tamiya"

In the meantime, cellphone beeped low battery again. "Shit". I was getting bad connection. Please, not in a freaken dream.

"What about passengers? Where were they released? Hurry up, I have low battery."

"You have what?...Wait a minute, Victor. You said you fought with your father yesterday. How come? Your father died in a car accident several years ago. Who is it really...?"

Connection was gone. Battery was dead. "Screw it." I couldn't retrieve sufficient data for manipulating whole situation. "What the hell, I don't have much of a choice. Time is of the essence. I cannot afford to let all of my efforts go down the drain".

I cleared my throat, stood up and announced.

“I need to speak to Takamaro San, please”. Response came quick. The face of the terrorist who was nearest to me, went all red, complexion changing into nasty, intimidating grimace. He came by and began shouting.

“Yakamashii! Ii kagen ni shiro!” – he said still hesitating to punch me in the face.

“Sir, I don’t understand anything you say. I need to speak to Takamaro San” – I replied, throwing him cynical smile.

“I say, shut your mouth, and stop messing around. Sit down now.”

He had a punk –style haircut , so it gave me idea that he could be....

“Oh, so you speak English after all, Wakabayashi San” – I decided to take my chances, pretending like I knew him.

“How did you know my name, you Italian prick?”

“Not again....What is the matter with you people, you are more Italian than me, ...You are musician, aren’t you . From Denudes” (I couldn’t recall the first word of the title). You thought, by changing your haircut, nobody would notice you. Bad for you. Now go and get me Takamaro San . Your leader.”

He looked stunned, just like cattle brought in slaughter house. I turned back to see other cold-blooded terrorist standing right behind me, nothing to read on his face, threw me stare of indifferent judge. It was him. The leader of the henchmen who hijacked the plane, Takamaro Tamiya, in person.

“Hello. Do we know each other?” – not a muscle moved around his eyes. He also spoke in English

Musician guy made me out stretch my hands high, to check if I carried any weapon, while he was speaking to me.

“In absentia” -I replied with a slight grin upon my face - “I’m KGB agent, working undercover to assist your whole operation.”

“So what do you know?” – he spoke to me in a comfort and in a friendly tone. I could not understand what was the catch.

“ You are in charge of the hijack, but not the mastermind.”

“So who is it then, Nikita Khrushchev?”

“Why making such nasty jokes. They can make me “go”, even for hearing it. You know better than me. The mastermind of whole operation is Takaya Shiomi”

The moment he heard the name, there was total change in his face followed by seconds of silence. He now looked baffled.

“OK.” – he shook my hand completely different person “So what can we do for you, comrade?”

“My organization negotiated good terms for your stay in North Korea, arranged everything related to your accommodation, logistics, command center for your future operations, for liberating South Korea from American oppression and start workers revolts all across East Asia” – I used those formal words verbatim, which I heard from teenage Herman.

“But?”

“But. There’s one important issue. The thing is, I cannot be seen among the passenger of this plane after touching down in Pyongyang. You know conflict of interests. Korean authorities. My mission is deep undercover.

He smiled and answered.

“I’m not going to ask you details, out of respect for your cause, comrade. Nevertheless. What do you suggest? To change the course to Moscow? Will your authorities greenlight such a diplomatic controversy.

“Why Moscow. You can release me in Seoul, for example”

They all laughed mockingly after hearing my last words. “What an idiot ,me.” And I thought I was in the charge of situation. Actually, I turned into an object of ridicule.

“I have better suggestion for you, comrade. I’m letting you go now.

“Now? What you mean by that?”

“Literally, now” – he replied in a metallic tone, then wag his tongue, ordering his henchmen to bring something, in Japanese.

After several minutes of silence other leftist member , - I mean not musician guy - reached with a whit backpack in his hand.

“You cannot be serious?! I’m not into that sort of things. A parachute jump?

“It seems to me you don’t have any other choice. What can be more important than duty and cause, for KGB agent. Getting your cover blown is not in your best interest. Unfortunately, I cannot provide any training session ahead of jump”

He gave an order to strap me in a parachute harness, with a tip of katana pointed at my throat at a point blank range. I had severe doubts that I would not get killed even floating at that altitude. What if main chute doesn’t deploy, is it secured with a reserve. What would become of me, if I fall and die. Will the level start from square one? How is that even possible to exit the plane flying that high. All those negative ideas made me dizzy.

“Just make sure not to break your neck, comrade” – he said.

I was so mad at him that could tear his face with my nails and fangs off. Nevertheless, I was too tired to get killed and start everything over from a get-go. I never gave up hope.

“At least tighten it well, so I won’t lose it before landing as a meatball. Will you do it for me?”

Wobbling henchman opened the door and super-strong gust of wind blew into the plane, sucking small things out; plane began to rock. Passengers went into utter panic, crying, screaming, praying, some of them swearing at their fate, the whole universe. Things could turn even crazier if this happened in real rather than in a lucid dream. He told me to stand in the door.

“Remember to pull this D shaped rip cord. “No need for greenlight to jump. Just jump!”

He asked if I was ready but didn’t give me a chance to answer, savagely pushing me off the edge.

I couldn’t see a thing but ambient condensed clouds all around, first. But whole change of scenery took place within a minute, symmetrical green valley and thick forest spread like a stripes of a painting. I couldn’t yet tell how many thousands of kilometers I was above the ground. At some point, I hit air turbulence, swirling here and there, unable to control my floating. I pulled the handle, releasing the parachute. Thanks God it opened within 3 seconds. I tried to decrease the rate of descend by randomly adjusting the rigs. This was one hell of a landing.

Chapter 14

I was standing on the top of a low-lying hill, where I landed, gazing the morning sun, while pondering on my further escape efforts. Finally I realized that, I had “snapped at the bait, hook, line and sinker” when listening to a stranger from train of no return. He didn’t have any good intentions but tricking me to a battle ground which would lead me to an even deeper limbo. If it was my only escape plan from the expansionist evil named Herman, how come, I spot my major enemy right at the bank of my escape creek. He must have been representing the evil intentions of Herman – his bloody attorney at law. Japanese flight hijack – the same story. Whole thing was set up. I felt like a puppy drown in the pond with a brick round his neck.

“Screw him” – I insulted him in his absence yet cornered, with no idea how to survive this long-term horror. My eyes caught pretty young girl at her late 20s, who had natural long blonde hair must have been from Slavic origin- Russian or probably Ukrainian with sexually explicit dress – black mini skirt – tight pink blouse which exposed her navel – walking her dog near the woods on the foothill. She gave me a couple of glances but sly smiles didn’t follow. Instead her face was ghostly in the gloom and I noticed fresh bruises under her left eye. As she turned I saw back of her exposed long legs were covered with number of bruises and red marks like she had recently survived a horrible assault. Weather was just fine, mild, but out of a sudden her whole body girl began to tremble like a desert thorn and she was walking oddly. It was her dog barking annoyingly. He growled to alert her owner.

“Oh my God!” – my heart jumped as I saw a huge Grizzly bear equipped with bone crushing jaws, enormous claws and creepy thick dark brown fur emerge by steep trail, 10-15 meters away from her, irritated by the barking dog the size of his knee and chasing them at a consistently ascending pace. I prayed God, girl would not make her fatal mistake i.e. panic and run.

“Отпусти собаку, отпусти собаку” -I cried in Russian to let her dog loose, thinking she’ll understand me as I was already rapidly descending the hill. What a stupid but brave girl. She refused to let go her pet, shouting at bear with a creepy look on her face. She was doing her best in terms of calming herself down. But grizzly won’t back off. She realized it was not good situation and bear was going to attack any moment. After clumsy monster did easily away with annoying dog, it was just bear and the girl, mano-a-mano. I couldn’t watch this horrible scene as typical, careless bystander even if it was a lucid dream, so I rushed down the hill to somehow save the girl.

“ Не беги, ни в коем случае” I warned her not to run. But it was too late, she snapped for a moment and made the worst mistake of her life, giving herself to the hug of panic. Grizzly knocked her down with his massive bone structure, circled around her and attacked again piercing scary fangs to her leg joint, tearing the foot

apart, sprinkling the blood like fountain from poor girls cut off veins. I already reached the “crime scene” and could intervene immediately to protect her. However I found myself numb, unable to move or do anything. Bear ignored me, and went ahead ripping her intestines this time. Poor girl was dying in agony of pain and I could do nothing about it, I was totally lost, acting sick, looking for a cell phone in my pocket to call 911. What an idiot.

«Помоги» - she whispered last words out of her mouth and passed away, with a curious look on her popped out eyes, yet “Why didn’t you help”. Grizzly faced me once again and walked away with a lazy pace. It was horrible scene with good abundance of blood pool and disfigured, dismembered body parts provided. I fell on my knees, crying and insulting myself for such cowardice. I knew it all was not real, that it was all sick imagination of my subconsciousness. Nevertheless, at that very moment I discovered my sheer and true nature, and , fear of death exposed inner me, an instinct of survival surpassing the sense of humanity, helping the people in the need of aid. I’d react the same if encountered in a real life situation as well. I closed my eyes for a moment and wiped my tears away with my dirty hand.

I felt something had changed as I opened my eyes again. The body of girl disappeared and I was standing on the top of a hill once again. “What a heck? Oh my God” . I saw the glimpse of the same girl walking with his dog far away from the previous bloody scene like nothing happened, coming towards that area. It was like a time repeatedly bent back on itself i.e. a time-loop from sci-fi movies. It was a same case when I got stumbled inside Latvian secondary school where Herman was bullied. If this scene is repeating then there must be some important clue or I must not fail and save the girl in order to finish this level. But wait a minute, how I’ll save the girl without facing the claws. First I tried to warn her about imminent danger.

“Эй...девушка. Эй...Девушка, не ходи туда...” I don't know exactly whether she was deaf or there was no way I could contact her at the beginning of this so called 'level', but she didn't react to my screaming and call. I cannot afford making same mistakes repeatedly. This time I just sat there thinking of the way-out, ignoring what was happening minutes later, at the same spot, at the same time.

“Evrice”. I decided to open wormhole to a particular memory block where I remember to watch some kind a documentary , a survival TV show on Youtube. Coyote Peterson I remember. I used to be fourteen when watched him giving lifesaving tips on how to react whilst stumbling upon this “beast-Americana”.

The wormhole opened in an narrow room stuffed with all kind of funny things, various superhero toys, selected quotes with classic style inscriptions, full color posters depicting martial artists from action movies, including Bruce Lee, Van Damme, etc.

“Really?! I watched it in my cousins room. Samir – the craziest teenager I have ever known. Intelligent, smart boy with a touch of explosiveness and hot-blooded behavior. Very rare combination though. He used to read couple of classical literature novels in a week and yet having a time for playing football with youngsters of his age, in the yard, rob alycha (sort of sour cherry-plum) from the neighbor’s garden, vivisect a poor frog not for fun, but for learning purposes, he promised his mother to be highly acclaimed cardiac surgeon one day, fight with guys from other neighborhoods over a girls, Pokemon chips, and treats jointly collected from houses during Novruz holiday and many other crazy things, that I won’t be happy to mention.

His laptop sat closed on the messy desk. Sliding laptop over, I immediately opened it and pressed power button letting operating system to reboot. Everything was going on just fine until I opened the browser to surf some valuable tips about survival in wild. I found there was no internet connection. I tried to search available wireless coverage. There was only one wireless connection named Koza Nostra that I knew for sure was one of mean nicknames he used on the web. I double clicked to initiate a connection. “What the heck?”. Popped out window required to enter the password. “Who the hell assigns a password to his own wi-fi?! Idiot!” I angrily pressed Enter without any clue, what to do now.

“How did you get in and what are you typing in my laptop, cousin ?” – I heard familiar voice and turned back to see Samir hop into the room from the window.

“ It doesn’t matter, I need to use your laptop, I have some stuff to find on internet” – I replied.

He was all covered in mud, yet dressed in blue school uniform, hair sticking up all over the place.

“I skipped math class and guess what? Sons of bitches from 9th grade, the dogs of Talat, caught me at front gates and kicked the hell out of me for meeting her sister on the roof of first block... How did you get in , really? Did mom let you in.”

“ No, I popped out of wall and emerged, just like that ” I said with a serious look in my face.

“Oh cousin-cousin. I failed to change your sense of humor.” But his face grew almost radiant. He changed to his casual cloth still staring at me suspiciously. “What are you going to do now? I’m going out to play PES with Rashid at VIP playstation saloon. Don’t tell mom I was here ”

“Hey wait, I need your wi-fi password”- I stopped him before he disappeared out of sight. He returned and stuck his head out of window and looked excited.

“ Or what, you’ll tell Mom that I ducked out of school...Today’s wi-fi password is...” he intentionally made a pause to keep me thrilled “....today’s password is.... the

hint is above your head, inside yellow frame. See you!” and he disappeared once and for all.

Man!...what a spontaneous person he was. Changing his passwords on daily basis just for fun. The most interesting part is that passwords he assigned, were the answer for particular riddle or quest. Like today’s, which said: “What was the name of Georgian thug who allegedly masterminded the second kidnapping of Musa Naghiyev”. Naghiyev was the richest Azerbaijani oil magnate in the early 20th century, during the oil boom of capital city. He was twice kidnapped by local gangs for ransom. He was notorious for his acute stinginess. During his first abduction, organizers failed to get demanded amount for release. They realized it was senseless to negotiate with him or his family members as he was persistent not give even a smallest gapik coin to his captors. So they released him for nothing. I knew that second time he refused to pay for ransom, as well. But this time it was much more serious gang that had been financing the Bolshevik party before October Revolution, by committing such organized crimes, initiating more strikes and agitation. Therefore his close friend, good-will Azerbaijani oil magnate negotiated and paid the ransom from his own ‘pocket’.

But I didn’t know who was the mastermind of the second kidnap. Georgian thug who could he be. I was looking for a clue. “Koba?” – I asked myself hesitantly.

"Koba" was the nickname of the ruthless leader of Soviet Union- Joseph Stalin, after the Robin Hood-like protagonist of the novel The Patricide by Alexander Kazbegi. He used this pseudonym as a revolutionary, after his return to Baku where he befriended local criminal gangs and organized series of murders, protection rackets, and robberies.

I returned back to his laptop and typed in the word “Stalin” and pressed the enter key. Message on the right corner said “Connecting to Internet”.

“Moron, I wasted my half an hour for nothing.” Then I devoured all information I could get, especially tips for survival in the wild.

The end of part four