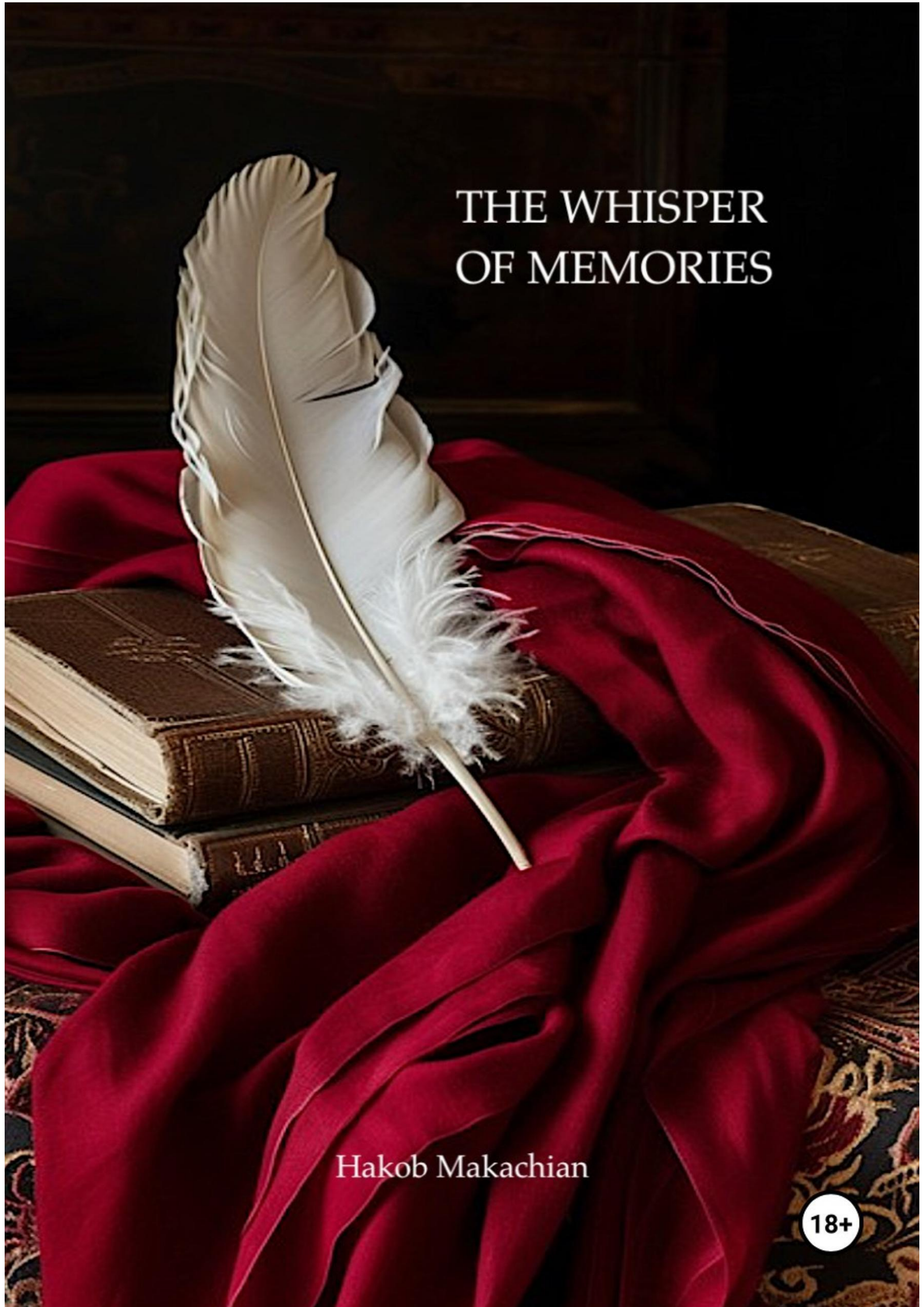


A still life composition featuring a white quill pen with a gold-colored shaft. The quill is positioned diagonally, resting on a stack of two old, leather-bound books. A rich, deep red fabric is draped over the books and the quill, creating deep folds and highlights. The background is dark and textured, possibly a wooden wall or paneling. The overall mood is one of quiet reflection and history.

THE WHISPER OF MEMORIES

Hakob Makachian

18+

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THE WHISPER OF MEMORIES

«Автор»

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Makachian H.

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A spiritual and emotional exploration of the mysteries of human nature makes *Whispers of Memory* a profound and multi-layered work that effortlessly prompts reflection on the most vital aspects of human existence. This book is dedicated to the Makachian family. Remember that the strength of a lineage lies not in the number of years lived, but in the depth of its roots and the resilience of its branches, which reach toward the light despite storms and hardships. Believe in yourselves, cherish your traditions, and continue your journey with pride and wisdom.

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Hakob Makachian

THE WHISPER OF MEMORIES

THE WHISPER OF MEMORIES

Life Hides in the Details

Every person carries a secret that binds him to the world with strong bonds of dependence. Tirelessly it feeds his pride with arrogant emotions and, stirring up a turbulent imagination in the mind, keeps the consciousness in a constant state of expenditure. It seems to us that no one will ever learn of it, yet is it truly possible to hide that which has always been accessible to everyone?

Memory is the one and only source that was able to grant a certain sacred meaning to the path I have walked in coming to know this very secret. Within it I was able to discern the reason for which I undertook this incomparable wandering across the expanses of this world, a journey so saturated with adventures. For the desire to delight in its irresistible beauty and boundless possibilities is granted not to everyone, but only to the one who is able to see, to hear, and to comprehend.

At times — and to be honest, very often — one and the same thought would visit me: the path I have walked does not belong to me, and I am living a life that is not my own. In the end I turned out to be an involuntary observer of the events taking place, as though some invisible hand were so skillfully leading me. This premonition of duality seems natural, given the place in which it was destined for me to manifest, for in a world where the miracles dreamed of by all its inhabitants do indeed have their place. And for that very reason, among others, we are in no hurry to become aware of and to know that very miracle which is revealed in all its grandeur within each of us. Perhaps that is precisely why I occasionally sense the presence of a certain force that long ago became an inseparable part of me.

Now that the many secrets by which my mind was bewitched have become plain, I have allowed myself to draw back the very edge of the veil of deception, behind which my consciousness had been plunged into everyday illusions. It was precisely this that compelled me to turn to my memories, for only in them did it become possible to catch hold of the single thread that led me through the labyrinth of ignorance toward the knowledge of the miracle that is the life of every human being.

And so, sitting in a comfortable armchair upholstered in soft black leather, on the veranda of my house, I gaze into the distance, beyond the horizon, where the border of the ocean glistens like a golden thread beneath the rays of the midday star. Concentrating my attention on the line that divides the water and the sky, I try to recall the images of my bygone years. In my head, as though on display, dozens of memories scurry past one another, each more vivid than the last, but I wish to grasp the foundation, so as to build the chronology of events correctly. Here it is, this one! Or no, perhaps this one? For some reason, the more attempts I make, the less certainty remains in their reliability and in a favorable outcome to my undertaking.

I am certain that such a prologue would undoubtedly please many lovers of fiction. It grants in advance a certain state of satisfaction, preparing the reader to receive beautiful images. And already the imagination is ready to portray that very hero who is occupied with nothing but fighting the negative characters, those who dared to stand in his way. And how this hero, overcoming hardships and obstacles for the sake of that very truth, in the end inevitably attains a happy finale in the embrace of his beloved! But such reveries are needed by those who suffer from shortsightedness, who prefer to remain in the fetters of their own fantasies, just so as not to become who they truly are.

I, however, intend to reveal through my own example the true face of human nature, which will clearly not please many. Yet the worthy will nonetheless behold in this a boundless possibility

to conquer that which is invisible and inaccessible to the majority. This will allow them to cast from their eyes that very veil of illusions, bringing to light what each of them has always tried to hide and to forget. And this will undoubtedly give them the chance to become strong and wise, those who will be equal to anything they could desire in this bipolar world of matter. Although, once the essence of this world is revealed to them, they will no longer need anything, for when you begin to perceive the unity of all that exists, then any desires to possess what already belongs to you — and yet, at the same time, cannot belong to you — vanish.

Well then, I shall not keep you waiting in suspense, and I will recount the wondrous story of the "living one," who came to know, perhaps, a little more than a human being is supposed to know. All the more so since the place where my consciousness now abides grants me not only absolute immunity from life's upheavals, but also allows me to do this without any doubt or regret. For the emotions of which human life is woven hold no power here. And that means there can be no consequences from them either. No, this place is not located where every one now living will surely follow in his appointed time. This place is always to be found where the consciousness of a person abides, and it is called the home of the soul.

I am certain that somewhere in a dark little corner of the subconscious, each of you yearns for home. But not for that home where loved ones await you, those without whom your life would have had no meaning to begin with. Rather, for that home where you would wish to find your very self. That self who holds the answers to all questions, and through whom you hope to come to know that mysterious and inexplicable thing for the sake of which you so fervently struggle and live.

Believe me, this home is not an illusion, but the most genuine reality there is. It is the place where you were born. But born not in the image of perishable flesh, whose role is, of course, significant and useful, but as an immortal source of life. Where there is not, and cannot be, anything of all that makes you an ordinary member of society. There is nothing there that would contribute to dividing your consciousness into any fragments. There all is one and stable. The biological imagination usually pictures such a state as repose, but that is not so. For it is impossible to describe a state that is formed simultaneously in all the existing sources of being — the Eternal Spirit.

First of all, in order to comprehend reality, one must imagine and then accept a construct that will in the end inevitably lead to the answer to the main question of your life: who am I? For this, it is not enough to bring your consciousness to a new formation, replacing within an already formed worldview the dogmas, images, and meanings accepted by society with those that are inadmissible in the surrounding community. What is needed is will, which, unfortunately, is not granted to everyone. And it makes no difference on what social rung a person stands in the society of consumers. Will may at times reside in the very weakest and most cowardly person, who, by a coincidence of circumstances, is capable in a single instant of turning into a fearless and courageous hero and becoming a splendid example to those around him. And conversely, it happens that the brave ones extolled by the crowd, or, worse still, the authorities acknowledged by the community, snap like the dry branches of a decrepit tree at the very first sign of danger.

All this is because our bodies, being in essence avatars in service to the Universal Consciousness, fully conform to all the criteria of the bipolar material world. Because of which the single source of life is forced, in our imagination, to divide into a multitude of fragments independent of one another. Not because someone or something is thereby trying to establish control over us and to govern us, but because the energy that materializes through direct physical action begins to be generated by us already during the forming of a choice. And at the foundation of this process lies precisely the condition of bipolarity.

Man the creator differs from man the consumer only in his creative qualities. In all else there is no difference whatsoever. It matters not whether you are rich or destitute; if you perform mechanical, formulaic actions solely in order to eat, to dress, and to gratify your self-love at the expense of others, you are a consumer. Although for some the level of comfortable living may indeed be high. Such

persons make up the majority in society, and they are also called simply "human bots," who use the entire potential of their mind for the desire to satisfy the needs of the flesh.

They have no idea how joy is born from a thought and an idea that you carry within, develop, and then bring to life. No, not from the thought that you must catch up with your neighbor in his means, that you must spend and acquire. And not from the idea that you must imitate those around you and strive to conform to certain social standards. But from the one that your idea was born in you alone. And when you bring it to fruition, it will change some part of this world. The wings of happiness are acquired and unfurled when your work is able to influence human lives and to change them. In all other cases it is merely a fleeting ecstasy from one's own "grandeur," which, it is worth noting, is of no interest to anyone but yourself.

Our consciousness, more familiar to us under the abbreviation "the soul," is able to abide simultaneously in infinite alternative realities, creating along the way worlds just as factual. The home of which I speak is that very place where the soul was created — the consciousness of each individual person. It is there that the Great Architect of the Universe, in the source of life, the "Holy Spirit," creates souls out of his consciousness, souls that serve not only as generators of life in biological bodies, but through which he also builds and transforms worlds. Indeed, this place is forever awaiting its prodigal son, who, after an exhausting yet beautiful-in-meaning day of labor, always returns once more.

And so I too, having worked to my glory, before stepping across the threshold of immortality, resolved to lift the veil from the secret for the sake of which every person, to the extent of his abilities, does everything to come to know at least some little piece of it. And the place of my confession, where the wondrous union between the worlds of eternity and matter was created, is no accident, for the reason that the concentration of energies differing in their content can be known only within the bounds of this world, which is the planet Earth.

I was born in a country rather progressive by the measure of its time, in the past century, and, like everyone, I felt pride for my people. I must confess that this emotional state, which was able to gratify only my pride, has, strangely enough, remained with me to this day. The country was small in scale, but, as the law of balance presumes, what is small in one thing must be great in another. And so my people were no exception. The world knows them as Armenians, and the country as Armenia — small in size, but historically great. At that time it was part of the largest metropolis by its own measure — the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

I would like to describe the grandeur of the Land of the Soviets in greater detail, but not in this place and not at this time. And so I shall be laconic and say only that many years later, when I became a witness to the inevitable changes that touched every citizen of the once-great empire, I more often recalled the Soviet Union and missed it. No, not the social order that ultimately led to its demise, but the people, who were entirely different. This nostalgia had objective reasons for its existence, for the feelings preserved in the memories of those times were pleasant and bestowed upon the mind languorous vibrations of happiness. Nor could it have been otherwise, since, first, childhood emotions always surpass the later adult ones in the strength and quality of their impact. And second, the system of governance, however imperfect it may have been, nonetheless gave each of its citizens the possibility of stable growth and development.

One could argue here whether this was good or not, but that is not the point. For the socialist construct of governance, for objective reasons, still remains inaccessible to our "developed collective mind." For example: the people never came to appreciate the fact that the socialist system of governance, in order to form a healthy community, had at its foundation a construct of free education, free medicine, and fair conditions for the advancement of citizens up the social vertical. It was precisely this stability that allowed the ordinary representative of the working class to be emotionally balanced, which directly reflected upon the raising of a mentally healthy generation. And this is already a direct sign that the children of that time were happier than they are at present.

I cannot recall ever, as a child, having to want for anything. I do not remember there being any homeless people, nor any adult in my circle being in financial need. I remember only that people were cheerful and merciful, and also that everyone considered himself free and at liberty to do and to have, within the bounds of the law, anything he wished, because he could afford it. No one worried about the future of his family. The state system, however much it may have rotted from within over time, was answerable for every citizen and for every child. And we, the children, sensed this on a subconscious, energetic level.

Well now, I promised that I would not touch upon the political and social aspects of the former "empire of free citizens," but I did not succeed. The memories of that time proved all too vivid. Especially the fact that my parents did not have the habit of worrying about their children, who, from early morning until dark, roamed about the courtyard and the nearby surroundings. We preferred to delight in communing with one another, rather than abiding in a self-isolated state, as our children do with their technologically advanced gadgets. For we, in essence, were thereby coming to know our very own selves in the images of our friends.

My parents were endowed with a certain amount of free time, and they gladly devoted it to me. Which in the end was reflected in the quality of my upbringing up to a certain age. Until about the age of five, I was the happiest child in the world. I remember the tenderness of my mother and the warmth of my father. My mother was affectionate, attentive, and sensitive; she loved my father and was an exemplary wife to him. She would meet her husband after work with embraces and a wonderful supper on the table. But most importantly, she spent whole days at my side. And this provided my imagined safety, certainty, and pleasant disposition.

Our courtyard was small. On one side ran a busy automobile road, some fifty meters from the house. On the other was a little yard and a summer gazebo, beyond which the private homesteads began. The house was two stories and had two main entrances. On each floor there were two apartments. There were not many children, and there was nowhere in particular to roam. But it was precisely this time that was imprinted in my memory as the most beautiful and happy, because I felt the love and unity of my family.

This delightful state I fixed in my memory through one rather emotional image from a certain winter evening. After my father and I had spent practically the entire day playing snowballs with the children from all over the courtyard and had grown thoroughly tired, upon returning home we noticed that snow had begun to fall outside the window. My father took me in his arms and set me on the windowsill, embracing me from behind. I was about three or four years old. I literally felt his warmth and his protection. I had the impression that nothing in this world could disturb my inner peace. In the embrace of a beloved person, I watched the most beautiful snowfall I have managed to behold in all my life. To a little boy, the snowflakes were the size of a palm, and they, as if upon a stage, performed a beautiful dance of life. With their mesmerizing movements they seemed to be trying to reveal to me my whole destiny, which was about to unfold in the near future. And this became that sacred prophecy about me which I, warming it with my heart, carried through my entire life. It seems to me that I truly became a witness to a kind of screen adaptation of my future battles with that part of the world which had always been kept within me.

Before my father met my mother, he had been an actor, and then a director, in a theater of dramatic art that was popular among the people. With aristocratic manners, well-read, erudite, and, on top of that, ruggedly handsome to the envy of many men, he conquered more than one theatrical stage and more than one heart of actresses and his admirers. But owing to a romantic relationship — first formed and then ruined — with the daughter of the theater's director, he had to leave the work he loved. After which he found himself an occupation in another field, one that resembled a hobby more than anything: as a photographer, he supplied the city with large outdoor slides. The wages were a little lower than the previous ones, but they were quite enough for the worthy life of a Soviet citizen.

By about the age of five, disappointment crept imperceptibly into my life. By that time my little sister had just been born into our family. She was sweet and pliable, and I often abused her trust. I loved her and was attentive to her, until the time when we moved into the house of my mother's parents. Our family relations turned upside down, taking shape within a different, new paradigm. One of the factors turned out to be that the influence of my cousins, who also lived under one large roof at our elders' home, had a negative effect on my relationship with my sister. And this was a natural process. In my unripe mind, everything gradually became muddled, thereby swapping my priorities around.

We had to move because my mother decided that she lacked the means for a beautiful and carefree life, and with these intentions she sent her husband off chasing "the long ruble" to earn money in the country's resort regions. Of course, the reason was banal — we had to conform to the fashionable standards of her circle and be in no way different from her relatives, some of whom in just this manner had a little more than the rest. The sorrowful decision in the end led to divorce. It could not have been otherwise. In just such a form the shared life ended for practically everyone who longed to earn a few rubles more far from home. And usually, in every case, the guilty parties turned out to be the wives, who longed not to fall behind in the competitive struggle among rivals from their nearest circle. This fate did not spare our family either.

It became hard for my mother to cope alone with two children, and she begged her way into her parents' home, whose house was rather large by Soviet standards. The thing is that in the northern regions of the empire, citizens were forbidden to own two-story houses if they were not members of the party. But this rule did not extend to the southern regions, where one was permitted to build up to three stories. And so my grandfather had a spacious two-story house, where two of his sons lived together with him along with their families. And now we, too, were to live there, while my father went off to earn money.

Earning money meant that he was absent for roughly eight to eleven months out of the year. There could be no talk of any healthy family relations, where the wife begins to grow jealous over every trifle and where the children cannot delight in the love of one of their parents. This is the collapse of any family and a catastrophe for any child. My little sister and I began to vent our anger born of disappointment and pain upon each other, which could not but affect both our characters and our relationship. All the more so since there were always alternative opportunities close at hand to spend a merry time with my cousins, ignoring the person dear to me.

This went on for quite a long time, until about the age of ten. We gained the chance to make more purchases and lost the chance to be happy. The misunderstanding between people who had once loved one another grew to an extreme level. I did not wish to understand for what reason my mother had become different — nervous and anxious. Which sooner or later was bound to lead to a certain sorrowful outcome.

Later, already as a grown man, I always experienced a certain inner discomfort whenever I became a witness to a child's suffering. Even when I saw a child crying, it meant that I, too, might shed a tear in my soul. For this reason, toward my own children I was always lenient and left the choice up to them, in return trying from the earliest years to spend more time with them, offering them various life situations as examples. Through these I tried to convey to them life's priorities and meanings, so that it might be easier for them to pass through the stretch of growing up. But here, too, not everything turned out smoothly. At times, as it happens, they took my leniency for weakness. Then I had to remind them of each person's role in the family, resorting to harsher forms of explanation. Though I ought to be grateful to fate that I turned to such a method very, very rarely, for the reason that my children proved far more quick-witted than their parents.

For example, it will be interesting to examine the stalemate situation with parents who rely on the matrix of the system of public education and upbringing. It is enough for any parent simply to observe more attentively the time spent with his children in order to realize the hopeless state in which

the majority find themselves. How much time does each parent spend with a child once the child begins to attend kindergarten or school? About forty minutes in the morning and at most two hours in the evening? Or even less. At times even twenty minutes is enough to discuss the most important matters with one's child, matters that mainly concern his duties. And the older the child grows, the less time remains for him.

And in this situation, all that remains for the parent is to rely completely on the system, which offers all sorts of attractive services in order to ease the burden of the working parent. It seems to the parent that society is concerned with giving them more free time. But in reality the system does everything to ensure that the parent has as much time as possible for work. And so the sleepy parent hurries off to their job every morning, in order to provide their offspring with all the necessary goods that this very society imposes. And in the evening this exhausted parent has no strength left to give their child the most important thing of all — their tenderness, understanding, and love. What is truly sad, and grows even sadder, is that in the end not a single parent understands the cause of the misunderstanding on the part of their own child — the very child for whose sake, as it seems to them, they sacrifice their whole life and all of their time.

But what, in reality, are they sacrificing, and to whom? First of all, it is worth ceasing to feed ourselves the illusion that public education, which in fact is what makes us into who we are, is aimed at imparting the right knowledge. This is not true. The knowledge it shares is incapable of making anyone happy. To understand this, one must recall the reason public schools came into being in the first place.

It all began in the era of economic industrialization. The caste of untouchables suddenly found it necessary that qualified workers labor at their newly erected enterprises. And so as not to search the world over for such specialists and pay through the nose, a brilliant idea came to them: to educate the children of the workers and peasants, who were in fact their bondservants, without kith or kin. This did not mean that these children thereby acquired the status of free citizens, nor did it mean that in the future they would be permitted to make decisions of state importance.

The notion of "liberty, equality, fraternity," on the basis of which principles and values were reformatted in many developed countries, appeared a little later. Thanks to it, citizens of a lower social level became able, using their abilities and acquired knowledge, to rise to higher rungs of the social order. But even in this case, the public schools did not betray their chief rules. Even now they have remained the same, imparting only systemic knowledge aimed at the development of mechanical labor.

At the same time, the most important thing that the public school cultivates in children is submission and obedience. Submission to anyone of greater social status it cultivates by means of a humiliating method — assessing the knowledge children have acquired publicly, thereby breaking the healthy psyche of the child and destroying at the root any certainty in their own powers. With obedience matters go even better: over the course of ten or eleven long years the child is trained to follow particular templates — to live by a schedule, but not by their own will. Where it is important to know that the teachers are always right, since they have the ability to punish you by assessing your abilities.

In public schools, unlike in private ones, they do not teach communication, mutual understanding, respect for the opinions of others, financial literacy, a philosophy of life, or the search for truths through the examples of successful people. And most important of all, they cannot teach one to love oneself and one's surroundings. And so it is through this school that the parents pass, parents for whom the conditions in which their children find themselves are entirely acceptable. And these children must in the end walk the very same path, so as to repeat the same thing in the future with their own offspring. We are shown the technocratic evolution of humanity, being persuaded that we have thereby become freer. When in reality it is the wrapping that has changed and grown brighter, while the filling has remained the same.

This system, in which the slave voluntarily agrees to work more for the good of his master, was devised in Ancient Egypt by a certain priest. He advised the pharaoh, in order to avoid trouble with the periodic uprisings of slaves — among whom revolutionaries of various kinds kept appearing — to pay them for their work. The result astounded everyone to such a degree that millennia have passed, yet the system still continues its flawless existence. We are ready to work day and night to provide our loved ones with all that the rapidly developing economy of the world offers, while pushing into the very last place our sincere feelings toward those same loved ones.

In the end, pain becomes the one lifelong companion that compels us to obey blindly, if only so as not to disturb our hidden wounds. It is the same pain that forces us to wear masks: to be insincerely cheerful in company, displaying the image of a happy person; to show our sternness and self-importance, concealing behind it a spiritually weak personality; and always to hurt those around us, so as to delight in the sufferings of others. It is easier that way to endure one's own torments. It is easier that way simply to exist where almost everyone is playing the very same role.

How does one escape this seemingly hopeless situation? It is elementary. In every circumstance of life the parent's priority must be the child. No, not in order to manage to do everything for them, but so that in time — which is the decisive factor in achieving our intended goals — we place our children in first position. That is all. We will always find time to earn as much as is necessary to satisfy hunger and imitation. We will always find time to do all the necessary things in order to live in abundance and in harmony with the world around us. And so the first thing we must do is find time to give our offspring, besides genetics, our love and attention. This is the most important motivation any child can receive. From whom, if not from those closest to him, is he to receive it?

Returning to the origins of my childhood, it is impossible not to make mention of the country where it was destined for me to come into the world. Of proud Armenia. Its outwardly small yet at the same time boundless grandeur — boundless in the hearts of every Armenian — has an absolute right to its own existence, however arrogant this may appear. At the very least, the thousand-year age of this people, the envy of all its neighbors, demands a certain respect for itself. Everyone who has ever set foot upon this land steeped in ancient history remains its admirer for the rest of their life. And the reason is not that the people are hospitable, or that the nature is irresistible and the food superb. It is that this place exudes an extraordinary energy, which pierces the soul of every person with a certain majestic mystery, revealing itself to each in its own particular way.

Those who come to visit find answers to many questions that gave them no peace over many years, because their soul begins to resonate with the divine source of life amid the majestic mountains. As for the locals, they simply grow accustomed to this miracle from the very moment of birth and, from the excess of this very attention, whether they wish it or not, become overgrown with plain pride.

When in 1816 George Byron visited Armenia, he wrote the following about this country: "I have studied the Armenian language in order to understand how and in what tongue the gods spoke. For the Armenian language is the language of the gods, and Armenia is the homeland of the gods, and the gods hail from the valley of Ararat." Impressive, is it not, to what degree Byron grasped this divine attention? It is precisely because of such examples that the people of Armenia grew proud and, instead of taking delight in this gift, preferred to content themselves with only its glittering wrapping.

But Byron's words turned out not to be the only ones that exalted this country. In olden times Armenia was significant, as is attested by many examples from ancient sources: the cuneiform of the Sumerians, biblical narratives, and Iranian, Assyrian, Greek, and Roman historical documents.

Armenia is first mentioned by the Sumerians, who named this country Aratta — the home of the supreme gods Enlil and his brother Ea. The land of Urartu, as it was called by the neighboring Assyrians and Greeks in their own dialect, was pronounced by the locals as Aratta. And it was precisely upon these lands that, at the request of the council of the gods, the god Enki together with his wife, the goddess Ninmah, created the first humans: Adapa (who, by the way, while a guest of

the most high god Anu, refused to accept immortality from him) and Eve (Ninti, the maiden from the rib, the giver of life).

The people who began to be fruitful and multiply in the land of Aratta were no simple folk, but possessed all the qualities and abilities for spreading the divine wisdom and energy that they had absorbed from their creators. And perhaps it is precisely for this reason that there still glimmers within me a certain form of pride in the genes passed down to me from my ancestors. This feeling is strengthened in my consciousness by the reality that my people demonstrate — a people continuing their noble existence over many thousands of years, all the while preserving their unique identity.

I was fortunate to be born upon this land where, as history asserts, the gods once dwelt. Moreover, in that very city whose age numbers more years than that of its near contemporary, ancient Rome. Its antique name, Erebuni, which over time transformed into the modern Yerevan, has not in the least squandered its grandeur over the course of many thousands of years. It is impossible to explain my bond with this city and with this country, all the more so after I came to perceive myself as a man of the world, for whom the whole planet Earth has become a native home. But the fact that I feel it with my entire soul on any continent speaks volumes. I confess, to this day I have still not formed for myself an understanding of what exactly in Armenia draws my attention and, on the subconscious level, awakens pleasant feelings of attachment. Even if one leaves aside the energetics of the place, the smells and the tastes that sometimes somehow arise in memory instantly materialize on the physical plane through my biological receptors.

Surely everyone has rare moments when memory awakens certain images from the past through smells or familiar sounds resonating in the head. And this state, for an instant, makes you happy under a surge of already physical emotions. That is why I can tirelessly, day after day, wander the streets of Yerevan and travel across the mountain peaks of Armenia, reliving these sensations again and again. Committing to memory all the while every architectural detail of the buildings, every mountain ridge and crag, the countless springs, waterfalls, and lakes, and the sky of unimaginable beauty. And without feeling any fatigue at all — on the contrary, charging myself with new emotions and strength. I can simply converse with people in the courtyards and on the streets about various topics, saturating, without any exaggeration, my mind with their bottomless wisdom.

I remember that in childhood, during the summer holidays, for some reason it was precisely me, out of all the other grandchildren, that my old folk took with them to visit our numerous kin scattered all across the country. There were so many of them that at times we had to visit relatives in Georgia as well, in Tbilisi, from where, as young people, they had moved to Yerevan. It was an impressive spectacle for a boy raised in urban conditions. Naturally, most of the relatives lived in villages or in small settlements of an urban type. I remember as if it were today the smells of the domestic animals that almost everyone kept. I remember the taste of food that differed significantly from what I ate at home. I remember the sharp, all-piercing yet at the same time slightly intoxicating air. The evenings when I lay in a soft bed beneath the open sky, gazing into the boundless beauty of the Milky Way, stretching from the horizon to the edge of the world.

The relatives, as I have already mentioned, were many. It would happen that in a single town or village there were several families, and we had to visit a new home every day. And then, too, we would unfailingly go to the local churches to pray. Naturally, I did not know how to do this. Nor did anyone pay particular attention to it, owing to the Soviet atheistic ideology. But back then such subject matter did not interest me, and I delighted in what I had — namely, in conversing with people of differing mentalities, for each region of Armenia was renowned not merely for its diverse dialects, but also for its temperament of communication and its worldview, subjective to that particular locality.

On our dynamic tours, what I liked most of all was visiting the ancient churches. Plunging, as it were, into these stone structures with their carved ornaments that had already grown old, I would lose my connection with reality. The divine singing of the male choir, performing centuries-old prayers, carried my thoughts away from the people who surrounded me and from their conversations, which

slightly resembled a kind of hum. It was as if to my inner gaze there was revealed a different mystery, inscribed in the memory of these stones and this music. I seemed to feel a vibration that whispered to me the history of this locality, awakening in my consciousness certain images, mostly in the context of what I had chanced to hear from the grown-ups.

And always, after my solitary excursion, I would gaze upward, where the blue sky of unimaginable beauty opened up to my perception a different reality of bygone events. I felt and imagined that all the history unfolding below was stored in the memory of this very bottomless sky. It seemed that if I concentrated my attention just a little more, then certain epic scenes from the past would surely appear among the clouds: historic battles or the raising of majestic cities. And in such moments, when your childhood consciousness stands on the threshold between two realities, doves would appear, which seemed to pursue me and scatter all my constructed images. And I, with a certain vexation, would return to my relatives, and we would go on plunging further into everyday cares.

From earliest childhood I was a silent observer. Indeed, such I remained my whole life. This innate quality allowed me to be at the center of all events and to hold in my hands the controlling levers over circumstances. My childhood circle entrusted me with all their sacred secrets for the reason that I knew how to listen, to understand, and, most important of all, not to betray. I was, as it were, a kind of grey cardinal in all the courtyard collectives where it was destined for me to appear. I gave directions to the heroes, pointing out the possibilities for achieving a goal — having, of course, my own dividends in this.

This did not at all mean that I was afraid to do anything myself and to take responsibility upon myself. On the contrary, in any case it was I who answered for everything, and this too brought me a kind of pleasure. But all the same I liked to be master of the situation, and at that time this was possible in the case when I kept myself at the distance of an observer, yet inside the very process. My mind delighted in the images of complex combinations it had devised, when I possessed all the information of the events taking place and therefore had every possibility of seeing several steps further than everyone else. Yes, it was a kind of experience of manipulation, which I subsequently and quite consciously renounced, having judged that such a methodology weakens my will. But that came later, and for now I delighted in my childhood adventures.

The grown-ups loved me. Wherever I went, within a short time I became the object of their admiration. Because I was not like, as they supposed, their unruly offspring. How were they to know that their children, to a greater extent, did what I wanted. The whole energetic flow of attention from the grown-ups, just as from my peers, more than compensated for my loneliness, which was a product of my character.

Over time, by about the age of ten, or more likely even earlier, I came to prefer the company of grown-ups to that of children. I found it more interesting to listen to the tales of my elders than to the fantasies of my peers, which had already grown stale in their content. However, very soon I understood that the greater part of the grown-ups were no different in their level of boasting from their own children, and in some respects in their development as well. Except that they knew how to present their pride in more interesting forms. But all the same this helped me to understand human relations better at higher levels.

I came to know the subtleties of psychological influence, so to speak, in practice. Although this does not mean that I made no mistakes. There were, in fact, far too many of them for an immature childhood consciousness. For the reason that my peers, however much they tried to display their importance and independence, were in reality obedient and compliant, and followed the decrees of their parents. Which, by and large, fenced them off from many subsequent disappointments of life. I, by the will of fate, began from an early age to live without a father, and as I have already mentioned, my mother, naturally, could not keep up with my adventures. For the most part I was raised by my old folk: my grandfather and grandmother. For which, in truth, I am very grateful to them, since the

wisdom of the old folk was far more effective in the formation of my young worldview. But even they could not control my desire to gain bitter life experience.

This I understood much later: that adult life, whether we wish it or not, is built upon an emotional foundation laid back in childhood. The difficulty is that as an adult, even if fortune has smiled upon you and you have realized and beheld the source of your problems, you do not always have enough strength and knowledge to set them right. A foundation cast in childhood from a reinforced-concrete emotional mixture is practically impossible for a psychologically formed individual to reconstruct.

We try to correct the errors of the past with the help of therapy, but this merely adds new meanings to the existing perception. Feeding on the hope that by this we are acting upon the future. But this only adds one more layer of convictions to the program-cake that was launched in childhood. It is impossible to change the past while the mind is bound to it in an emotional coupling, packing consciousness into alternatives that arise under its influence.

Only when consciousness passes out of the zone of alternative realities — which the bipolar material actuality is — into the realm of the passive observer, do the miracles of the transformation of matter begin to occur. After which everything that was founded upon indestructible emotions is easily transformed into that which you yourself desire.

It is important to understand that the mind, being a product of the material world and concurrently serving as the chief controller in the life activity of a human being, executes its duty with virtuosity, tracing out all the paradigms along which our biological nature moves. It is also the mind that creates all the cause-and-effect connections, when our consciousness, under its direct influence, prefers to dwell either in the embrace of past disappointments — imagining that suffering in the present is the answer from the past — or to fret over the future, sensing the inevitable retribution of fate for the errors of that same past, the so-called karma.

But when consciousness manages to bridle the mind, all these fabricated prejudices lose their significance, for in reality they are groundless. You will never answer for anything until you confess to it and accept it as a foundation. But you will always answer even for what you did not commit, because that is what your mind demands of you under the pressure of the collective mind, already. One need only come to know this game of substituting concepts, and your mind quite calmly turns from the master of situations into an instrument in the hands of your consciousness. But this is possible in the case when you place your consciousness in the position of an observer who has no emotional connection whatsoever with the object of observation. You tear consciousness away, so to speak, from the direct influence of the mind.

The observer is capable of achieving a positive result only in harmony with himself. Otherwise concentration is impossible, since the voice in the head will whisper every second about numerous events from the past, the present, and the future, drawing the flows of energy you have generated away into an environment groundless for consciousness. Physical attention always awakens feelings, whose function is to bestow upon their master emotional flows of experiences. An emotion, by its structure, is the very physics that draws from space all the necessary energetic potential for the achievement of goals and intentions. In order to abide in an awakened state and to be aware of your presence here and now, it is necessary periodically to sever the connection between thoughts and emotions. Emotions must not be born of thoughts. They must manifest themselves in the heart, in the subconscious, protecting the mind from external oscillations. God is present in silence and dissolves into the dense noise created by the thoughts of the mind under external control.

For example, closer to the age of forty-five, or perhaps earlier, when I had become a fairly aware person but continued to come to know various meanings, I had to face one very global and unresolved problem from my past. In this a certain specialist in psychology from Miami helped me. His name was Pavel. More precisely, he helped me to behold the cause that had been hidden by my subconscious in a place where I could hardly have reached it. After I contacted him by telephone,

within literally five minutes of our conversation he pointed out the cause and offered to help. His mission consisted in this: that over three months of therapy he would rid me of this psychological ailment. But since I had trained myself to achieve everything on my own, I solved this problem ten minutes after the moment our conversation ended, by switching the meanings around.

The cause of the ailment was as follows. My mother, who, as is known, was not able to cope on her own with the upbringing of her two offspring, resorted to the very methods through which she herself had had to pass in her time, as a child. Namely, in order that the children obey and be compliant, she often had to raise her voice, thus compelling us to carry out a certain order. But since she had forgotten other methods, this became the principal one throughout the whole of my subsequent growing up. And so my sister and I often preferred to hide behind the broad backs of our old folk, who somehow at least softened the emotional blows of our mother's wrath.

When, in the middle of our conversation, Pavel suddenly asked me what I felt toward my mother at that moment, the first word that came to mind was indifference. Not anger and not pity, but indifference. Why did he ask this question? At first I had explained to him that I had achieved a great deal in life, yet for some reason, no matter how hard I tried, my most cherished desires never came to fruition and collapsed halfway. To which I received a professional's answer: the indifference toward my mother that had been embedded in my subconscious over the years was being projected onto my own life. To say that this news shocked me in that instant would be to say nothing at all. I was crushed. For a moment I felt like a cornered beast with practically no way out in sight. And what I regretted most was the lost time, the fact that life had simply slipped through my fingers and that it had not been my fault.

And so, after the conversation with Pavel ended, I sat in my car and sank into deep reflection for some ten minutes. The first question I asked myself several times was: "What did I ever do to deserve this from you?" After which, for a moment, I simply turned into a pitiful creature that had lost everything it had. Fragments of childhood memories began to flash before my eyes, trying to piece together, bit by bit, the process by which this ill-fated program had been formed. But since by that time I had trained myself to deal with non-standard situations without delay, using a unique method, after, as I have already said, roughly ten minutes of self-flagellation, I began to search for a solution. The first thing I told myself was: "The result you were supposed to reach through therapy can be obtained here and now." And what then opened up to my consciousness struck my mind to such a degree that I could not immediately grasp its significance. In that instant I literally, physically felt how an enormous boulder that had pressed upon my shoulders throughout my entire life, falling away, gave a fresh stream of air access to my lungs. Afterward my body, for a moment, was literally numb and relaxed, as if for the first time it could feel the light breath of the wind.

The solution required first of all acknowledging the existence of the pain, knowing its cause, and establishing its position as a source of inspiration, thereby swapping the meanings within the existing program. And also recognizing in all of this the sole opportunity to transform my weak energy into strong energy. I realized and accepted that my mother had been the most important teacher in my life. She had sacrificed her life, taking on this form, so that I, having sunk to the very bottom thanks to her diligence, might in the end discover within myself a hidden strength of will and, pushing off from there, soar to the very top. Having recognized the ruinous sides of indifference through my own example, in the blink of an eye I was able to behold its illusory nature, for the source of its power lay in my vivid childhood emotional memories, fixed in the memory of my subconscious. And it fell to me to be rid of them.

After that the rest was simple: I acknowledged the significance of this principal lesson of my life. I raised its standing onto the very highest pedestal and freed it from the negative emotional background that had fed it, replacing, as I have already said, the meanings with one another. I entered into the image of an observer of my own self, who began to direct this whole process from the outside. As if I and the one who was considered to be me had ceased to be one whole. Severing this bond, I

was able to behold the very pain that had tormented me, stirring up those same ruinous and hidden emotions through which I had been drawing all this reality to myself. Only in this way and in no other did it become possible for me to govern what lay in another dimension.

Consciousness is the only force that creates not only where it has a biological or any other material attachment, but also where it is possible simply to observe one's own iterations from the outside.

Later, applying this same mechanism to other persons who had left in my memory more or less deep and oppressive wounds that bled the soul, I was able to isolate and close all matters with them. I came to feel gratitude toward all who had in any way harmed me and made me live through negative experience. I began to understand that each such incident revealed new abilities within me and, making me stronger, granted new possibilities. By resolving them, I rose higher and used more divine energy to create something better and more magnificent. But most importantly, I came to relate differently to my mother. As if some hidden image of her as a guardian angel had shown the face of the true benefactor.

I suddenly began to recall all the pleasant events connected with my mother, at which my soul, each time, expressed the wish to shed a tear. Because all my life I had preferred not to remember them, having driven them into a dark and hopeless corner of my memory. My mother was an inexperienced and madly naive person. She came from a simple working-class family, where not much attention was paid to knowledge and good manners. But in childhood she was often hurt because of a congenital bodily defect — she was missing the hand of her left arm. This led to her growing up capricious, since at home they tried in every way to please her, fulfilling all her wishes, and along with that very suspicious of everyone, for it seemed to her that the attention of those around her was directed precisely at her. Naturally, this attention, in her opinion, was at the very least disrespectful and therefore carried an offensive subtext.

If someone had been able to explain to me back then the reasons for her behavior, I would have bestowed upon my mother all the sincere love that every child possesses. I would have valued her care for us and would have supported her in every way in any situation. But beside me there was no mentor of the kind that usually appears in beautiful novels, and I did not know what to do.

Life at times makes sharp turns, substituting the priorities and meanings of the values accepted by our consciousness. My mother voluntarily stepped over the threshold of stable family comfort, plunging into a seething, unpredictable, and uncompromising reality. Not only was she unprepared for this, but in addition she dragged us along with her.

At first this instability in a person's mind arouses anger, which imperceptibly grows into hatred toward everything that opposes you. Including toward those who feel sincere love for you, thereby granting this state full authority to occupy the central niche in your heart. Hatred is born in secret, deep in the subconscious. It has the most effective disguise our mind could devise — pain.

It is precisely pain that makes its presence possible in our hearts. And pain itself is the product of our self-flagellation. A person likes, if only periodically, to pity himself. Though he will never admit it, least of all to himself, torn between actuality and a reality invented by him alone. Pity born of one's own powerlessness, of hopelessness, and of the awareness of a bleak future makes a person weak, nervous, and hating, first and foremost, his own life. Having understood this trap constructed by life itself, I resolved to reflash my mother's worldview settings and to introduce radical changes into our relationship.

And now, after many, many years, I am trying to make up for what had seemed to be lost. In a year my mother will turn eighty; she is old, yet at the same time, however paradoxical it may appear, her thinking is passing from an unstable state into a balanced one. I talk with her a great deal about the meaning of life, about people, about God, and, listening to her pain, I point out the other side of the coin. It gladdens me that she wishes to change herself, wishes to come to know the new, the unknown. And it brings her satisfaction when she herself notices how her views change toward

what until recently might have disappointed her in some way. All of this has affected me as well. My indifference, both toward my mother and toward myself, has vanished. I have once again awakened, in the depths of the crater of my heart, love toward the woman who gave me the chance to see the light of this world. And this same feeling I have managed to cultivate in my mother as well.

She has begun to look differently, with understanding, into the actions of people who know not what they do. Before, such characters could irritate her and inflict deep offense. Now, however, she looks at everything from a different angle of perception. She has learned the most important thing: she has begun to recognize the causes in people's behavior. Understanding what exactly had once prompted her to be different — irresponsible, in a hopeless waiting for deliverance from suffering. Having come to know new paths, she with difficulty, yet still, overcomes all those psychological barriers that until recently seemed to her impregnable. Which, in turn, makes my perception of her successes, in the literal sense, dazzlingly pleasant. Thus the observer's experience has helped me and continues to help me uncover new horizons of possibility in a world where miracles are able to manifest precisely where we are least drawn.

But for the time being, while I was a child, when that very indifference was slowly forming within me, my old folk came to my rescue. To me they were the best in the world — as, for that matter, they are to most who have them or have had them. My grandfather was a brave fellow. His energy made everyone rise from their seat wherever he entered, even if there were strangers to him in the room. He was taciturn, as am I, but every word of his held deep meaning, from which the soul of each interlocutor was filled with wisdom. To me he was the most faithful friend in the absence of my father. Between us there was a bond that only he and I noticed and felt. And the most important thing, from which to this day a certain inner pride, unnoticeable to those around me, still arises: neither I nor he ever boasted of it.

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