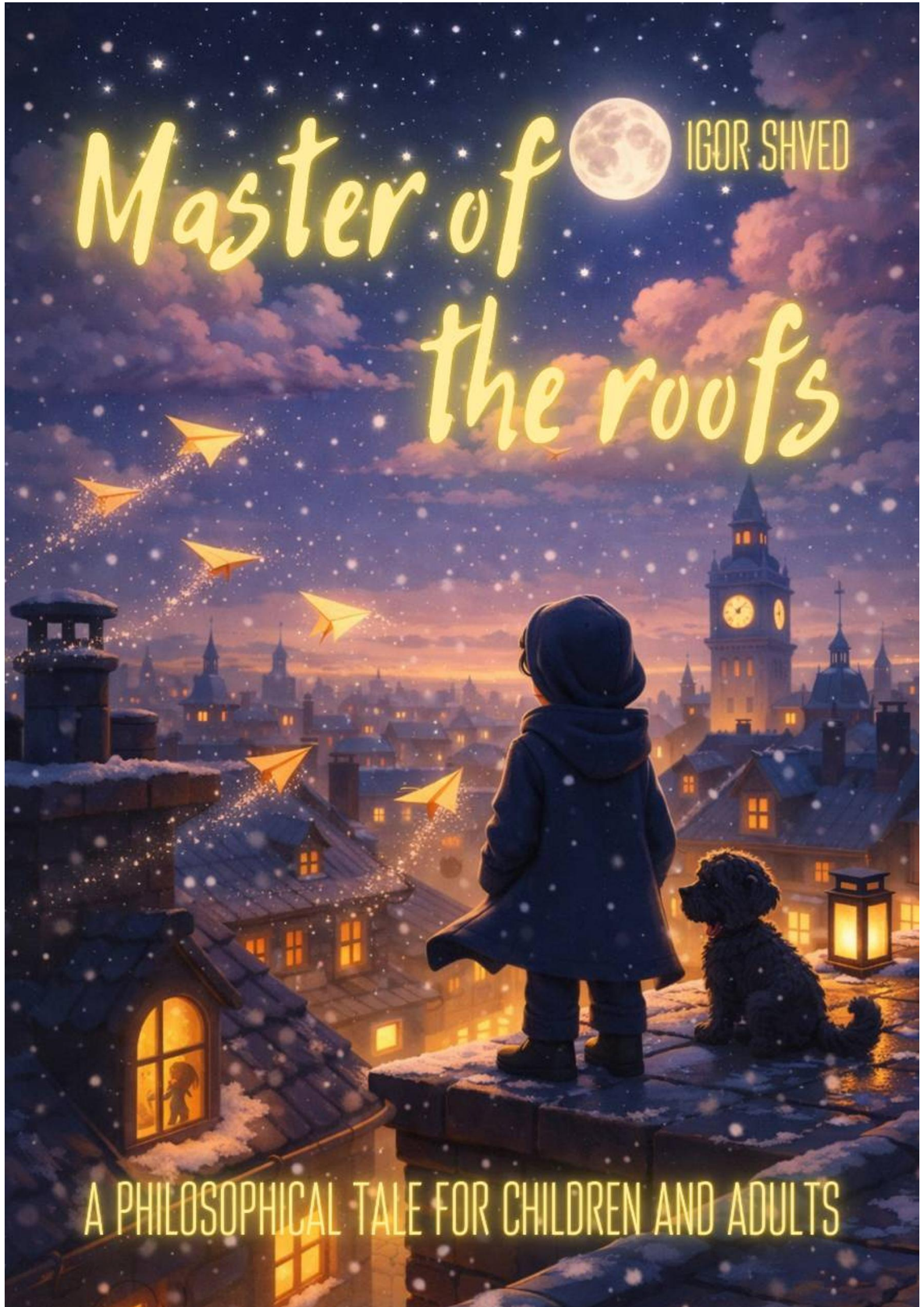


A whimsical illustration of a child in a dark blue hooded coat and boots standing on a snow-covered rooftop. A small, dark, curly-haired dog sits beside the child. They are looking out over a city at night, with a large, glowing full moon and a clock tower visible in the background. Several yellow paper airplanes are flying through the air, leaving a trail of sparkling light. The sky is dark blue with stars and soft clouds. The overall mood is magical and contemplative.

Master of the roofs

IGOR SHVED

A PHILOSOPHICAL TALE FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS

Игорь Швед

Master of the roofs

«Автор»

2026

Швед И.

Master of the roofs / И. Швед — «Автор», 2026

He lives on the rooftops. He sees what is hidden from others. He comes when he is most needed. "The Master of the Rooftops" is a book you want to read by the fireplace, give to your loved ones, and reread on difficult days. A philosophical tale for children and adults—about how one act can restore warmth, light, and faith in miracles to the world.

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Игорь Швед

Master of the roofs

I

Midnight. Midnight. A windless, calm September night. The starry sky blanketed the entire city, the moon shining brightly like a beacon for ships.

The streets are almost deserted, with only a few people still returning home. A group of friends are chatting heatedly after a fun night at a bar. A young couple is strolling along the road after their first date. Across the street, a sullen man is trying to hail a taxi after a hard shift at work. In the distance, near a nearby park, a woman with a dog is hurrying home after a night out.

Within minutes, not a single soul remained in the area. The city had fallen asleep.

"Grandma! Grandma!" A child's ringing voice filled the entire street.

A fair-haired girl of about six walked down an empty street. She was dressed inappropriately for the weather: a T-shirt, denim shorts, and sneakers. Confused and frightened, she clutched a stuffed red cat in both hands.

"I need to go higher. That way I'll definitely find her," she thought, noticing an iron ladder leading straight to the roof of one of the houses.

At that moment, a sharp crash was heard somewhere nearby, as if something metallic had hit the pavement. The girl, frightened, ran up the stairs and ran as fast as she could. Without looking back due to the fear that had overtaken her, she ran to the very top. Catching her breath, she realized she was standing on the roof of a building. The girl became even more afraid. Then she clutched her plush companion tighter and tried to get closer to the edge of the roof, looking for her grandmother. After taking a few hesitant steps forward, she stopped. Fear completely paralyzed the little girl. Dropping to all fours, she looked around. Spotting a stairwell with a metal door in the center, she slowly crawled toward it, holding her faithful friend with one hand. Reaching the coveted door, she stood up and tried to open it. But the door was locked from the other side. The girl fell to her knees and began to cry, hugging the toy tightly. Tears of despair and fear dripped from her rosy cheeks onto the plush friend she held tightly to her.

"Hello," a child's voice was heard from somewhere behind me.

The girl looked up. A dark-haired boy, slightly tousled, stood before her. He looked to be about ten years old. He was dressed in a dark blue hooded coat, pants a few shades darker, and brown shoes. A dark red sweatshirt was visible beneath the unbuttoned coat.

"Why are you crying?" the boy asked without waiting for an answer.

"I'm lost," the girl answered with a slight degree of disbelief.

"You're probably cold? Here, take this, it'll warm you up," the boy added with a smile, handing over the coat he'd just taken off.

Carefully placing the stuffed cat down, the girl put on a coat several sizes too big for her. Then she picked up her pet again.

"Thank you," she replied, wiping away her tears with her free hand.

"What's your name?" the boy asked curiously.

"Liza," the girl answered, calming down a little.

Just when she thought of asking the boy his name, he blurted it out without waiting for her question:

— And I'm Savva.

"Would you like some hot cocoa with campfire marshmallows?" Savva added, smiling at Lisa.

"On a real fire? I'd really like that," the girl replied, smiling.

"Then let's go!" he replied, taking her hand and leading her along.

Walking around the stairwell, Savva strode boldly toward the edge of the roof, holding Lisa's hand. Approaching the very edge, she saw something resembling a bridge, constructed from planks already darkened by time, leading directly to the roof of the neighboring building. Savva stopped, and Lisa followed him.

"Do you trust me?" he asked, turning to the girl.

"I've been here a million times before. Don't be afraid, just follow me."

"Maybe we should go down that ladder?" Lisa asked a little nervously, pointing toward the very ladder she'd used to climb up to the roof.

"She's very old and has been doing her job for a long time. Now it's time for her to retire. If we start climbing down her, she won't be able to support us, and we'll fall along with her," Savva replied.

For some reason, believing her new friend, the girl merely nodded approvingly, indicating she was ready to cross the wooden bridge. Savva squeezed her hand a little tighter and stepped onto the bridge first, leaving Lisa with no choice but to follow.

"Don't look down, just follow me," the boy said confidently, leading Lisa behind him.

The girl looked only forward, seeing only Savva's back in front of her. A moment later, he stopped.

"What happened?" Lisa asked, fear in her voice.

Savva turned to face her.

"Well, here we are," he replied, smiling and taking a step to the side.

Lisa's gaze fell upon Savva's cozy little house, boasting a fabulous view of the city. It was located right in the center of the roof. In front of it stood an awning draped with garlands of vintage light bulbs. A few meters away stood a metal barrel with a blazing fire. Around the barrel were several pallets covered with attractive mattresses.

Before the girl could take it all in, something rushed to her feet. It was a small, black, curly bundle with a curly ponytail. The dog nudged her leg with its head to get her attention.

"Meet Kuzya. He really liked you," Savva said, leaning over to pick up the little dog.

Lisa stroked Kuzya, and a smile spread across her face.

"Hello, Kuzya. My name is Lisa, and this is my friend Tomato," the girl said, holding the stuffed toy up to the dog's face.

Kuzya licked the toy cat, and everyone laughed.

"Let's go to the fire, the cocoa and marshmallows are ready," the boy added, gesturing towards the burning fire.

Coming closer to the pallets, Lisa saw two prepared cocoas, and next to them lay skewers with marshmallows strung on them.

"Watch and repeat after me," said the boy, taking one of the skewers and holding it right over the fire.

Lisa repeated exactly what he said. A few seconds later, they were sipping hot cocoa with toasted marshmallows, perched on soft pallets.

"Who prepared all this if there was no one here except Kuzya?" Lisa asked with slight suspicion.

"Just a little bit of magic and it's ready," Savva replied with a smile, taking another sip of cocoa.

"Magic exists?" she asked in surprise, looking at Savva.

"If only you believe in it, then magic certainly exists. Trust me," the boy replied firmly, rising from the pallet.

"How did you get lost?" he asked, picking up a tennis ball lying nearby and throwing it aside.

The little dog immediately ran after him.

Remembering this, Lisa's face filled with sadness. The girl put down her mug of cocoa and hugged her stuffed cat tightly.

"Today my grandma told me that not far from her house there's a kiosk with the most delicious ice cream in the whole wide world. When she was little like me, her dad always brought her that same ice cream when he came home. So I decided to do grandma a favor, find that kiosk and buy her that same ice cream. To be honest, I really wanted to try it myself. I've never had the most delicious ice cream in the whole wide world. And believe me, I've tried a lot of ice cream. When grandma went to see a neighbor, I broke out my piggy bank, took the money, and went looking for that kiosk. Grandma said it was not far from home. And to make things safer, I took Tomato with me. I looked for him for a long time, but I never found him. He was nowhere to be found, honestly," the girl said, then fell silent to catch her breath.

"Then I realized I was lost," she added.

"Why didn't you ask anyone you met on the street for help?" Savva asked with curiosity and a little surprise.

"My parents say I shouldn't talk to strangers. They might try to kidnap me," Lisa replied proudly.

"What about me?" the boy asked, smiling.

"You were the first to talk to me. And you don't seem like a bad person at all," the girl replied, hugging the cat even closer.

"Don't worry, I'll take you to your grandmother," the boy answered confidently, looking at the saddened Lisa.

"But you don't know where she lives," Lisa answered in surprise.

"I think a little magic will help us with this, right?" Savva said with a mysterious smile.

After which he put his hand into his left trouser pocket, from where he pulled out something that looked like a crumpled ball of paper.

"This will help us," he added, looking at the lump, and then tossing it into the air.

Once in the air, the crumpled piece of paper transformed into a bright gold airplane. After circling the children and their dog, Kuzya, several times, it stopped about twenty centimeters from Savva's right shoulder, where it continued to hover in place, as if held by an invisible thread.

"Wow! This is pure magic!" Lisa exclaimed joyfully.

"Will he show us the way to grandma's?!" the girl asked, joyfully and surprised.

"That's right, he'll show us the way to your grandmother's house," the boy answered, smiling.

"And now it's time for us to go," he added, extending his hand to Lisa.

She took his hand. The airplane then flew a few meters ahead of the children, its sharp nose pointing in the right direction.

"Let's go," Savva added, smiling at Lisa and taking a step towards the airplane.

The girl obediently followed him. Between each rooftop, no matter which way the airplane turned, there was a bridge, across which they deftly crossed from one rooftop to the next. Lisa was certain that each bridge was part of the airplane's magic, guiding them. About fifteen minutes later, they stood on the roof of Lisa's grandmother's house. The airplane circled the children a few more times, then flew into the pocket Savva had opened. The boy crouched down in front of Lisa.

"Well, here we are," the boy said, smiling and looking at the girl.

"Thank you, Savva," the girl replied, hugging her new friend tightly.

"Don't get lost again. Let me help you down," he added, hugging Lisa as well.

The girl nodded approvingly. And Savva helped her down the stairs. When he reached the last three steps, the boy stopped.

"You'll manage without me from now on," he said, looking at Lisa, who was beaming with joy.

"Won't you come with me? I want to introduce you to my grandmother," Lisa replied, a little upset.

"That would be unnecessary," the boy replied.

"I have a little surprise for you and your grandmother. Look in your pockets," he added with a smile on his face.

The girl carefully placed the stuffed cat on the ground and then put her hands in her pockets. A moment later, she had two tubs of ice cream in her hands.

"Ice cream! Is this the same ice cream?!" the girl exclaimed, beaming with happiness.

"This is the most delicious ice cream in the whole wide world, believe me. You'll never forget it," Savva replied with a smile.

The girl threw herself into Savva's arms again.

"Thank you," she replied with as much gratitude as a six-year-old girl could express.

"Run already. Grandma's all worked up," the boy replied, stroking her head.

Putting the ice cream back in her pockets, the girl picked up her stuffed animal and ran straight to the entrance. Savva watched her go.

"Grandma, grandma!" the girl called joyfully, running up the steps.

Running into the apartment, she threw herself into the arms of an old woman crying in the living room.

"Grandma, look! Look what I have! This is the most delicious ice cream in the whole wide world!" she exclaimed, waving the ice cream in front of the old lady.

Seeing the ice cream, the old woman understood everything. Why and for what purpose her granddaughter had left, which made her cry even more. They talked for a long time that night, savoring every bit of the ice cream Lisa had brought. Savva hadn't lied; it was the best ice cream they'd ever had, one neither of them would forget until the very end.

Savva's coat had disappeared by morning, as if it had never existed.

Years later, the girl realized the true essence of the most delicious ice cream in the whole wide world, often telling this story to her children before bed.

II

Today, Savva once again set out on his usual tour of the city's rooftops. The moon, his only witness, softly illuminated his path. He nimbly moved from one rooftop to another, like a professional acrobat. The walls of ancient houses held his secrets, and the wind whispered mysteries hidden from the eyes of ordinary people. The city spread out below him like an endless ocean of tiled waves and windows that, like eyes, looked at him with curiosity and wonder. The boy once again enjoyed his small kingdom.

Savva slowed, noticing a slight movement in one of the sixth-floor windows. A slender young woman, about twenty-two years old, sat on the windowsill. Her hair fluttered in the wind like a golden waterfall sparkling in the moonlight. Savva, leaning against the edge of the roof, watched her, curiosity flaring in his chest. The girl was lost in her thoughts, her hand swiftly sliding across the pages of her notebook, leaving behind letters that turned into words. But suddenly she tore the sheet of paper from her hand, crumpled it, and tossed it aside. The sheet of paper, arcing through the air, fell quietly to the sidewalk. Several similar wads of paper lay nearby, like forgotten dreams, dropped on the path to something more important. Savva felt a slight bitterness wash over him, leaving a lingering sense of unease.

"What is she writing?" Savva thought, turning his gaze to the girl, his curiosity surging.

In his world, words weren't just a jumble of letters; they possessed the power to change destinies. Savva sensed the girl needed help. Without thinking, he jumped onto the roof of her house. Then he hung upside down, his face directly in front of the right window.

The girl, hearing a strange sound, turned around and jerked back. Her eyes widened in surprise; Savva was hanging upside down before her.

"Hello!" he greeted, smiling at the girl.

"Hello," she answered hesitantly, still not believing her eyes.

"I'm Savva. What's your name?" the boy asked, introducing himself.

"I... I'm Jane. What are you doing here?" she asked, still surprised, after answering the uninvited guest.

"Me? I'm just walking on the rooftops," Savva replied, then did a somersault and jumped into the room.

"Walking on the rooftops?" Jane asked, still not believing what was happening.

"It's not safe!" she added, even more surprised.

"Yes, but it's exciting! And observing the city from above is much more interesting," Savva replied, smiling mysteriously at the girl.

"What are you doing here? You look like you need help. What are you writing?" Savva asked, not waiting for the girl's next question.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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