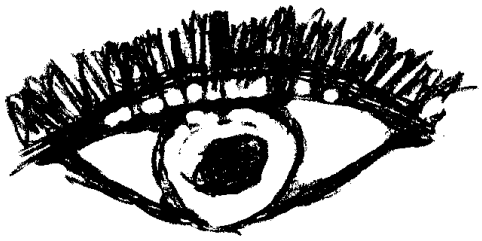
Mistfal - Diary Protagonist

Foreword from the author

This is the diary of the protagonist of the game Mistfal. In fact, it is as a "demo". It can be regarded as the prehistory of the game's story, which explains many of the questions raised by the player at the beginning of the gameplay. The chapters of the diary inside the game become available gradually. Here you can read it whole, even without downloading the game. The diary, of course, contains spoilers.

Part 1



the 17th of May

Where do I begin? I have never kept a diary, I have always believed it to be food for squirrels. I have considered people who kept diaries queer. And here I am, embarking on writing. My doctor who seems a smart and reasonable man – if a doctor can be called that at all – advised me to document my thoughts. Well now, when you no longer know what else to think of …

To my question, what I should write about, he answered, that I could write about anything that came to my mind, events of the previous day which seemed important were worth being described, as well as my bouts.

And now I have become queer myself: in the evening I sit at the reading lamp, writing these lines. The room around me is dark and quiet, just a dog barking outdoors. Perhaps, I have become queer earlier, or maybe I have never been in my right mind.

the 19th of May

Today, when taking Mike from school, I saw that he had a black eye. Mike cast down his eyes and very reluctantly – I had to force every word out of him – told me that he had tripped over a bench and bashed his head against a clothes cabinet. It was clear that it was not true. Some bloody youngster fetched my son one. It put me out of temper: how he dared to touch my son; I had to bawl him out, I told him that he should be strong, should not allow some assholes screwing him. I wanted to find out the name of that hoodlum, but my son would not sing, he asked me to calm down, he was crying. I went to school, right off to the Principal's office; a security guard tried and failed to stop me. I never met the Principal: the fat scumbag's neck had become bloated and he had a chrome-dome; I am sure when he saw me he shit his pants. I gave him a piece of my mind about himself, the school, children running wild who were taking the piss out of my son. He stood there keeping mum, pale, with abundant perspiration dripping from his forehead and was fumbling with the telephone cord. When I was on my way to the car, police arrived. These goddamned legalists detained me, pointed their shooting irons: of course, there is nothing they can do without their shooting irons. I hate this school, hate numb-brained cops, demi-semi men, who worry only about their ass!

the 26th of May

A week passed after that incident. I am insane, I got clear about it again: I cannot pace myself in the fits of rage. I bawled my son out and scared him, nothing can extenuate me. As it turned out afterwards, my son had actually hit against the cabinet, it was confirmed by other children and the doctor who had examined Michael. What an idiot I am. What will they think about me at school, what will they think about my son? Perhaps, he should not go to school for a while, let him stay at home, I will devote more time to him. It will do good to everybody.

On that day I again had THAT dream. The doctor told me that each time I should describe it in detail.

It is a corridor, brick walls on both sides and a lamp under the ceiling. Though I am not sure there is a ceiling. Noise, something is making noise all the time somewhere behind the wall, as if I were at the factory and machine-tools are running behind the wall. I remember this sound when as a child I visited my father at work. The feeling is similar to the one when you are lying in a bath-tub with your head half-deep in the water so that the ears are under the water. Eventually you see the bathroom ceiling undistorted, and the sound becomes as if it is coming from another world. That's it – from another world. Or like the heart is throbbing, all in all, something like that. I start walking along that corridor, leaving the lamp light behind me, while ahead of me there is black darkness. I look back, and at that moment the light behind me fails, and I find myself in complete darkness. Just me and that strange noise. But nevertheless I keep on walking forward, and after a while a knife switch actuates somewhere and a lamp goes on illuminating everything in front of me. It is again a corridor – THE corridor – the brick walls and the lamp under the ceiling. And it goes again and again: I walk to darkness, the light goes down behind me, and then suddenly it goes on ahead of me. I make for one direction, wheel around and make for another, nothing changes – darkness, lamp, corridor.

But at a certain point when I have already got used to this sequence, a lamp goes on, but the illuminated circle is not empty. Taken by suddenness, I come to a dead stop. It is not clear from the first glance what it is; I try to take a closer look, without moving. Then I start approaching slowly, the noise is growing.

It is a body, the body of a child dressed in some clobber. He is lying doubled up in the fetal position, hiding his face under the clothes as if scared of something. I bend over him and with a gentle hand remove the cloth from his face …

I woke up in a sweat, my heart pounding as if I had made a cross-country run. And, probably, I was screaming in my sleep. I got up and went to Mike's room; he was sleeping with his face turned towards the wall. I sat for a minute on the chair, my hand shaking and my throat dry.

There under the clobber it was Mike, and he was dead. And I was dead sure that he had been killed.

the 30th of May

Throughout all the week I was suffering from insomnia. And now it is already three in the morning, my head is rock-heavy, sleep hung on my eyelids, but all my efforts to fall asleep come to nothing. I start falling asleep, but once I close my eyes, I dream again of that corridor, and I wake up. I saw it on TV that a person's normal sleep should last 6 to 8 hours. I can only dream of it, I manage to sleep for 2 to 3 hours a night. In the small hours I usually fall asleep in a state of complete fatigue, but not for long. I cannot keep writing any more, the brain is gone and I feel absolutely done in.

the 31st of May

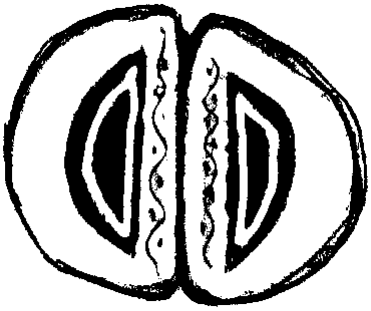
My mind is filled with thoughts about the war. Why did I go into the army, why did I not choose a civilian occupation? I knew, of course, I knew that if need be I would have to kill. Kill people. Though the television tells us that we kill the enemies who have no moral right to tread this ground and breathe the same air with us.

Several years ago during a special-forces raid behind the enemy lines I killed a man for the first time. He was armed and, undoubtedly, would have fired at me if I had not fired at him. This pattern is simple and it has been functioning since the old days when people were running about the woods with stone axes. After a lot of shooting practice the finger pulled the trigger just by itself.

I was in good standing with the senior officers, became a permanent member of the group for mission-critical operations in enemy territory. And ultimately one of those operations ruined my whole life. The threads which had connected me with my family, with normal life were cut short. One on one with myself I realized that the man I was in the past had turned into a killing machine. The machine remote control was in somebody's hands, and I lost confidence as to whether the thoughts of the owner of those hands were always heavenly. My arms were up to my elbows in blood: it is one thing when you exterminate an armed terrorist and quite a different story when entirely blameless people die at your hand. How it ails – I still remember his glassy eye …

I have changed, the world has changed me. And to think that there was a time when I wanted to make the world a better place.

Part 2



the 1st of June

The first summer day. In sober fact, yet another one of the milk-and-water days in my life. I screw myself up to write, but do not understand what I need it for. Maybe, just to make my mind busy with other thoughts, but that's the point that there are no thoughts. And no sense. Last night I decided to sort out the old things in my father's study. Amongst the variety of bottles standing on the shelves, windowsill and lying under the desk I found his pictures and documents. In the last years he did not look very fit. It makes one wonder how short human memory is. He passed away two years ago, I began to weep because it took me some time to recognize him in the photo. Self-pity and self-anger simultaneously overcame me. For the first time in many years I was sobbing violently. My father was gone, six months ago I lost my wife. Mike is all I have now. To save him at all costs is the mission of my whole life.

the 2nd of June

My doctor has turned out to be a right guy, he wrote a prescription for "proper" pills. I hold just one thing against him: why he did not do it earlier. I washed them down with whisky and slept like a normal human being. I popped right off in the sitting room on the sofa. Oh, it was great!

Among the papers I was sorting out yesterday in my father's study I found a lot of newspaper clippings with notes about the Mistfal park. It turns out that my father occupied himself in studying the history of the park and legends of the local Native Americans tribe. Apparently, that was what he was engaged in, sitting in his study for hours, often not leaving it all day long. I remember making a trip to the park when I was a little boy. I should read his notes at loose hours.

the 3rd of June

My dad's records turned out to be an attempt to investigate the most notorious accident related to Mistfal. I heard about it, it was hard not to hear about it – all newspapers wrote about, and broadcasts with reporters babbling on without stopping ran on and on by all channels. A really strange story was at the back of that buzz.

So, the Mistfal National Park was founded many years ago as a wildlife refuge. Gloomy fir-trees, rocks patched with moss, deep canyon, pure Northern beauty, just in the heart of which there existed a natural wonder – the Mistfal waterfall. In the huge cave which looked more like the main hall in a medieval castle the waterfall was cascading from somewhere from the ceiling forming a small lake. I actually saw it many times — it really comes out strong. The Mistfal waterfall is not the most, most

something, but once you happen to be next to it, you get a feeling of excitement as if you peeped round the folding screen behind which the innermost secret of nature was hiding.

There were tourists, but not so many. Schoolchildren, students came here in groups, parents with kids. And what's more, according to the local Native Americans, here was a place of power where in ancient times the local tribes performed rituals, offered sacrifices and were engaged in other nonsense. As evidence to support that, the park rangers, many of whom were the descendants of the local tribe of Native Americans, demonstrated old totems which actually stood along the tourist trail. For all I know, they put them closer to the trail on purpose to make some money out of souvenirs, or maybe not — who knows?

Besides all that Native Americans crap a real meteorological station operated in the park to attract tourists. It was located midway in front of the cable-railway. It was supposedly engaged in studying fogs, since they occurred here unfailingly regularly.

There you have it – a strange hodge-podge of the natural wonder, superstitious nonsense and science. How they cohabited was beyond my reach. But everything changed one hot summer day.

the 4th of June

The accident picture can be reconstructed from one person's hearsay only. The sole witness was the park ranger who acted as a guide. After the accident he was in a state of stupor for a long time and during the first several days he could not string two words together. The guv was not young, he was left reeling in shock for long. Then he pulled himself together and gave all the details, in doing so he more like caused even more confusion to the minds of the policemen who were carrying out investigation.

He met a group of tourists who had come by bus at the park entrance gate and led them up the trail. The tourists were of a very common type, the only thing which surprised him was absence of kids. A leisurely-step ascent to the waterfall took about two hours. Standard stops at the viewing points, taking pictures of fine views a la "me and the mountains", "me and the mountain stream" and stuff like that. Having reached the meteorological station, the park ranger made a short stop before further ascent. After a short rest, a drink of water, a visit to a bathroom, the group boarded the cable-railway and crossed over to the other side of the ravine. Having walked through what was known as the "Snake Path" (a labyrinth going through the rock), the group entered the cave and walked to the key point of the route — Mistfal waterfall.

And there everything went as usual, though the park ranger noted the change in the group ambience after they had left the cave. They all became silent and only made eye contact with each other, the park ranger caught one of such eyes, and, as he said: his blood ran cold. It is hard to explain, but it is as if you looked in a dead man's eyes. Tell me about it! I experienced such a feeling, it is really scary. One of the girls had a nosebleed, the park ranger rushed to help her — he took a handkerchief, the rest stayed put, even her boyfriend, or, maybe, her husband. He just stood there looking somewhere into the distance, as all the others, it seemed that they were all gazing fixed at some point.

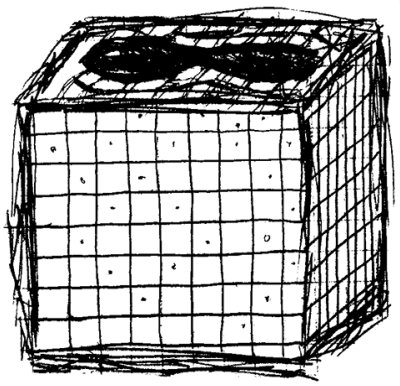
The group returned to the cable-railway. The park ranger said that he was very worried, seeing the group condition. After all, they would have to move at high altitude over the canyon abyss, something might have happened. The cable-railway was not moving. It was growing dark, the fog which was still a thin mist started ascending from the canyon, as always in the evening. He called the meteorological station by a walkie-talkie, asking what had happened, they said that the power had suddenly went out and the backup generator had not yet been started. All that was most unexpected, the park ranger

became all wet, the walkie-talkie was slipping out of his hand. After having thought for a few seconds, he said that the group would take an alternative route: a narrow track went along the rock towards the meteorological station. It was afterwards that they built a permanent timber bridge, while at that time, right in the middle of the track, there was a small ropeway. In their situation he thought that it would be the safer route than the cable-railway. As a matter of fact, in the course of judicial proceedings, that decision was considered the most disputable act of the park ranger. The group followed the alternative route. Having reached mid-way, the park ranger was the first to start moving by the ropeway, warning that the bridge should be crossed one by one: it was not designed for heavy loads. When he crossed, he turned around, ready to give the go-ahead so that the next person could get over the bridge, but froze with his hand up. There was nobody on the yonder side. Not a single person. Clutching the ropes with his shaking hands, the park ranger crossed the ropeway back. Having thought at first that the group had gone back, he ran to the cable-railway; he stumbled on his way and tore his knee and palm on the stones. The park ranger was seized with terror: there was nobody at the cable-railway, either. Just then the generator started working in the distance and a few seconds later the cable-railway quickened. The chairs approached and, having made a semicircle, drew away. A minute passed and, perhaps, more; the fog was thickening every minute. The walkie-talkie started crackling, the park ranger jumped, they asked him where he and the group were. He ran again along the path by the rock towards the ropeway. A hair-raising thought visited the park ranger, he approached the edge of the precipice and looked down. The fog had become thicker, the sun was already setting behind the horizon, and the canyon floor could not be seen at all, only the water could be heard babbling somewhere beneath. Suddenly he saw a bright spot, a cloth on the canyon bench. He got down on his knees, pulled out the extensible pointer which he used during the tours and drew it up. It was his handkerchief stained with blood, the handkerchief he had given to the girl with nosebleed.

I would have also been struck dumb by that. The story told by the park ranger was circulated by all mass media. The truth was that the group of tourists had gone and dived off right in the ravine. Thirteen people came to a tragic end simultaneously, the ravine there was almost 100 meters deep, the chances to survive were next to nothing. And the kicker is that the park ranger crossed his heart that he had not heard a single scream.



Part 3



the 6th of June

Many events occurred over a three-day period.

Firstly, my uncle came to visit me today. I was in my dad's study at the time, keeping on sorting his papers. He introduced me and Mike to a daily maid who would come and help me in the work around the house. At first I was against, but on reflection decided that at that rate I would have more spare time to spend with Mike. Oh, well, the daily maid, then let it be the daily maid.

Secondly, I went to see my doctor; he again wrote a prescription for pills. I complained that a day before I had heard a nasty thread of sounds in my ears and I had been dizzy. It happened twice, and the second time I threw up right in the garage. He explained that as a possible drug effect of antidepressants. No need for him to know that I wash them down with booze.

Thirdly, a lot of interesting things were discovered in my dad's notes. The fact that exactly 13 people died at the waterfall was in no way fortuitous. Sounds utter rubbish, but my dad dug a lot about the Native Americans tribe in the local library. Specifically: the legend of the waterfall curse. Need to read about it in more detail.

the 7th of June

All day long today I have been foraging among my dad's notes. My son dropped in and asked to repair his bike: he has poked a hole in the tire somewhere, little rascal, just like me. Tomorrow I should get right on it, I must not let my son feel being neglected. But the most important thing is that I have learnt a lot from the notes. So:

Legend of Mistfal.

Before the European colonists came here, there was a pueblo of the Great Raven tribe. The tribe led a quiet and steady life: the men of the tribe went fishing and hunting and the women kept hearth and home and brought children. Oh, my, rainbows and butterflies! But the even tenor of life did not last for long, the warlike tribe of the Red Wolf started launching attacks on them. The Raven tribe men were more hunters and fishermen than warriors, therefore they kept losing the fight for the territory out to the more experienced warriors from the Wolf tribe. At the end, the local tribe was completely enslaved by aliens. It was a desperate situation: the entire tribe had become slaves, many men and youngsters had been killed. The old shaman of the local tribe decided to save his tribesmen. He escaped from captivity and came to the ritual site at the waterfall. At that time it was not yet called Mistfal. Having

performed a ritual he invoked the demon from the World of the Dead, and begged him to save his tribe from slavery. The demon did his part, and on the following morning none of the warriors of the Red Wolf tribe woke up. Tribesmen found the old shaman near the waterfall. He was very weak, having depleted all his sap by the ritual. In his extreme moments he told his tribesmen that he had released into the World of Spirits a powerful demon who would become their protector but only as long as every year on that day they would offer the demon a sacrifice. And not just any sacrifice, but thirteen victims and sprinkle the altar at the waterfall with their blood. The demon's name was Mistfal, and the fog was his breathing.

the 9th of June

Today I went to a supermarket, had to do some grocery shopping. And also a tire for the bike. I took Mike along so that he could help me in making a choice. How great it was to feel a fleck of yourself beside you and realize that the little person would soon grow into a man.

Having bought everything we needed, we left the store. Yelling and screaming were heard from the car-park — local idiot was running among the cars, shouting. He usually helped to wheel shopping carts back to the store; everybody knew him, treated him with understanding and used to give him a few cents. What life he led, where he stayed overnight and what he fed on, was unknown, and hardly anybody was concerned.

He was running and shouting: "You are all ne'er-do-well! Each and every! All of you!". He kept running, saying it again and again, nonstop, with foam coming out in the corner of his lips, his eyes shifty, his glance not resting on anything. When he was running past me, I called him, waiving with my hands. For some reason I felt sorry for him. He halted, and I waved again; Mike said he was scared and pulled me towards the car. The idiot slowly approached me, close-by he looked to be crying, his dirty face was tear-stained and he was sniffing like a little boy. I grabbed a bottle of whisky from my cart and gave it to him with a smile: "Here you are, take it. Have a drink, ease up, dude!". He came even closer to me, he was stinking to high heaven. He took the bottle and, dabbing at me with his finger, he said: "You are different". He turned around and dragged himself, repeating: "Different, different, different..."

Back at home, I kept reflecting on his words for a long time and it suddenly struck me that he was right, damn right. That idiot does not see people among people, but sees waste of space which draws in the environment, everything around. Way back in Afghanistan this thought came to me; once back home I became established in that for sure. People are reluctant to give something just for the sake of it, but they want to get something in return. Consume, use — private interests are above all. It makes me feel nasty. He said I was different — it is so, I am different. My fate means absolutely nothing to me, my son, my Mike, my pride — that is above all things. And I will make a man of him.

Part 4



the 17th of June

I dropped the diary for a few days.

I saw her again. This time I could see her particularly plainly; before it seemed to me that sometimes I could see her in the crowd or at home in the dusk of the rooms. But it happened somewhere, out of the corner of my eye.

Today when I came back from my psychotherapist, Mike was at school. The daily mad had already left, she always tried to sneak, when leaving and coming, I was just fine with that. I went to the kitchen to heat yesterday food: baked beans with pork meat. The microwave gave a beep in silence, and I came to it and tried to turn it off — I kept pushing the buttons on the control pad, turning mode selector and at the end pulled the plug. The beeping sound did not cease, out of pique I banged on the top of the microwave several times, slid down the fridge to the floor, took my head in the hands and squeezed it, narrowed my eyes. The fit was over, my hand was aching, the knuckles were clotted, and my lips were salty because of the blood taste. Having struggled to my feet, I saw Luisa standing at the window. She stood there looking straight in my eyes. She was so live, beautiful and – fearful glance with eyes swimming in tears. I felt someone walking over my grave; walking backward, I slowly left the kitchen and at a run, stumbling on the staircase, rushed into my room. I felt a sensible chill and qualms. I hardly remember what happened next: seemingly, having reached the bed, I went out like a light and woke up only because Mike aroused me when darkness had fallen outdoors.

the 19th of June

My dad used to say that our life resembled a spiral rising to the sky. With a certain frequency white and black in our life recur again and again. That is why it seems sometimes that everything happening to us has happened to us before. Beautiful allegory which has little to do with life. I got wise to it and experienced it, just the spiral of my life was not unwinding upwards but was sinking lower and lower to the depth of despair. Nobody could help me, I understood it back in hospital in Afghanistan. Doctors are exactly the same people as I am, each with his own inner demons. How can they help me when they cannot help themselves? These four-eyes live in their world of make-believe where everything is all about the shitty psychoanalysis. You would not be able to live the old life when one day you would try to apply a tourniquet to the taken off leg of your mate and second self. Those moral and physical monsters can do and are doing even worse. You should deal with your own problems yourself, working out your own salvation.

the 24th of June

I can easily profess that I spent those days wisely. Soon I will become the best specialist in local culture in the neighborhood. To crack the mystery of Mistfal I decided to go to the bottom of the local Native Americans culture and beliefs.

So, in the local Native Americans' perception the world we see and in which we exist is not the only one, but one of the three: the World of Living, World of Spirits and World of Death. In that particular sequence, as a layer-cake. The World of Living and the World of Death do not come into contact with each other, or else the world order will be shattered — the dead would rise from the grave, the living would become dummies without a soul. Really, some kind of zombie-apocalypse. To understand where a man stands in these worlds and how he interacts with them, the most important stages in the man's life – birth and death – should be examined.

When a child is born, it is only its body that comes into this world. The supreme totem being of the tribe – Great Raven – selects a dead man's soul from the World of Dead to transfer it to the World of Spirits and piece it with the newly born child's body. So, after the birth a man has his body which is situated in the World of Living and his soul which is situated in the World of Spirits. It goes without saying that there is a relation between them which usually lasts throughout the man's life. Besides, "helpers" appear at a man's birth in each of the three worlds – his guardian angels. The spirit of a hare in the World of Living protects the man's body against diseases and injuries. The spirit of a squirrel in the World of Spirits protects the man's soul against evil spirits and guards the relation between the soul and body. Great Raven in the World of Dead watches the man and makes or breaks him. One of the deadliest mistakes of a tribesman is to put Great Raven into a rage.

Great Raven proceeds with his work when the man dies – he calls the man's soul to the World of Dead, building up a special fire. Human beings' souls fly to the light of that fire like moths, but do not get burned out in the fire but merge into its flame. In the World of Dead the man's soul is purged and falls into oblivion until Great Raven decides to call it back to the World of Spirits. And it happens time after time, that is why the Native Americans are not afraid of death from the knowledge that after death their soul will come alive again one day.

In the Native Americans traditions the nature, animals, people — all are in the same boat. The Native Americans of the tribe have no right to kill one of the totem animals in the hunting field. Evil spirits are the dead men's souls which could not make it to the World of Dead. They are roaming the World of Spirits, searching for refuge, and they can even capture another man's body.

A shaman's ritual for sending a dead man's soul to the World of Dead if there was a mistake and the soul got stuck in the World of Dead is worth a special description. It needs to be done, otherwise the man's soul is sealed to damnation. With the help of herb and mushroom tea the shaman falls into a trance and transfers his soul to the World of Dead. There he needs to open a portal: light a fire, similar to the one which is kindled by Great Raven. The dead man's soul flies towards that light from the World of Spirits, thus breaking free and finding peace. The ritual is very dangerous, the shaman's soul cannot stay in the World of Dead for long: if the trans lasts too long, the shaman may die as his body in the World of Living is torn away from the soul for a while.

the 27th of June

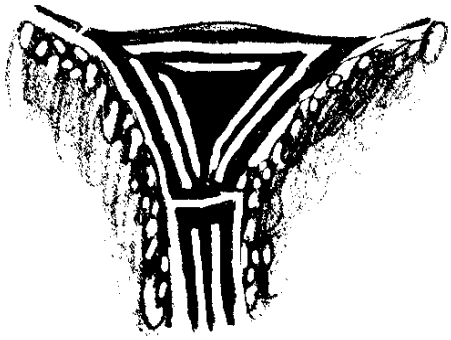
Shaman cuts a great figure in an Native Americans tribe. He is one of a few in the tribe who can travel between the worlds, be in touch with spirits, and some shamans can even converse with Great Raven.

Making sacrifices, communicating with tribesmen's umbra, treating physical and mental ailments — shaman has a lot of work. His authority goes beyond exception, virtually no decisions are made without his involvement. To become a shaman was not all that simple, but very difficult, as a rule, the Shamanism descended from father to son.

The legend of Mistfal makes sense when you know about customs and more of the local Native Americans tribe. The shaman took over the responsibility of Great Raven and forced the powerful evil spirit out of the World of Dead, thus disharmonizing nature. Of course, he was punished for his act. The tribe was saved, but there was nobody to control the evil spirit, while the offer of thirteen victims every year could hardly satisfy him.

From my dad's notes I found out (it might seem amusing, had it not being the truth) that my dad, though as well as I, was distantly related to the last shaman of the Raven tribe.

Part 5



the 30th of June

I went to the park today. The day was sunny, the way to the park took slightly over an hour, at the end – a long drive up a serpentine: whitish cliffs on one side and precipice on the other. Streams were running along the cliffs, flowing to the road to the precipice. There were gates at the park entrance before, then a large parking lot and the building housing administration and cafe. What was left of the building was only the framing, couple of walls, the pieces of roof in the grass. The parking lot was chocked up with huge wooden containers: seemingly, it was planned to move away what was left of the meteorological station equipment. Pitiful sight. I was climbing the path, the cliffs there rose up as the walls of a tremendous medieval castle. At the first sightseeing point there was a great place with a royal view good for a picnic. I should bring Mike here and show him the surrounding countryside views. I think he would like it here. The staircase on the way to the meteorological station was missing a set of stair-steps, I had to pick up a board and build shaky crossing. Anyway, I could only make it to the fence of the meteorological station. The station was sealed, I wanted to go further to the bridge where the ill-fated accident had happened. Next time I'd better take a crowbar from home so that I could enter.

Even though I did not yet reach the waterfall, I, however, got second wind. There is Native Americans blood in my veins, and I knew about it before, but made no fuss about it. Now I keep finding more and more in common with my forefathers. This is my nature, my culture, my roots.

the 1st of July

Over the last two weeks I have again started suffering from headache, tingle and insomnia. After so many months of struggling with my body I gave up and just started taking three pills a day instead of two. After that my sleep became better, but I began to see strange dreams now every day. These dreams put me on edge.

I dream of the Mistfal park where I wander in the heavy fog, dense as milk, and the wind is singing between the rocks and trees. It is so strong that every rush of wind bends the grass to the ground, but the fog becomes thicker and thicker. I hear steps and heavy rasping breathing, I am afraid of walking towards it — it is death itself waiting in the wings. But I won't give up easily to it, I crawl on the ground and stones, ripping off the skin of palms and knees until they bleed. The blood is so bright in the fog, traces are left behind me. My heart is in my mouth, I have a feeling they are going to track me down by these traces, and my hands, no matter how hard I try to dry them, are bleeding. And now I feel death near me, it looks at me, I run, stumbling on tussocks and stones, my heart is beating so high that it takes my breath away. I try to run, but noting comes out of it.

Having awaken, I go to the dad's study and keep reading by the table-lamp until I can barely hold my eyes open. Every so often I happen to wake up in the morning in the armchair with my head on the diary.

I also dream of a cave with a fire burning in the center. I first walk along a mountain stream, its water prattling lively under my feet. I enter the cave, there is a long dark passage, it smells damp and smells of touchwood. And then I find myself in the cave, filled with rhythmic rattle. This rattle becomes one with my heart beats. The fire smoke goes up and disappears somewhere in the stones. I hear logs crackling in silence, I feel good and in peace with myself. This is a good dream, I wish I could visit a place like that in reality.

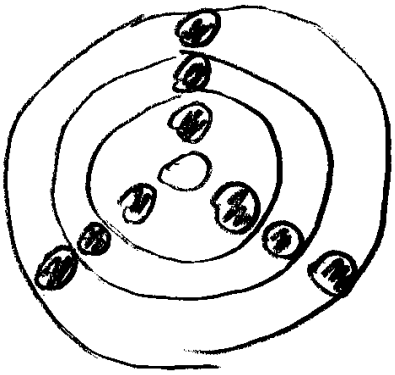
the 4th of July

Yesterday I got talking to an operator at the filling station on a highway. I asked him what he had heard about the Mistfal park. I heard some stereotype superstitions about the park: curse, spirits and stuff like that. But he also added that his neighbor used to go hunting in the nearest woods and had time and again heard the sound of an axe not far from the meteorological station. He might have got a wrong feeling, but it looked like somebody lived there. It was really weird, it could not be anybody from the locals. The locals kept away from that place for a long time, it was too ill-famed.

Today I sat in the study doing nothing, and thought: why not go to Mistfal. I did not reach it until after the afternoon, the sun was striking down, I was feeling thirsty all the time. Leaving the car, I walked up towards the meteorological station, there was a stack of wood at the broken staircase and some logs were scattered about. Somebody had really cut firewood not long ago: saw cuts on the logs were quite fresh. I descended to the stream near a little wooden bridge; crouching to the water, I started swilling when suddenly I felt somebody's eyes looking down upon me. A raven sat on the bridge railing watching me. Having wiped its beak on the wood, it croaked and beating the air heavily with its wings it flew away towards the meteorological station. This is a sign, I thought. Suddenly there turned out to be a hole in the fence around the meteorological station, I entered. The meteorological station consisted of several buildings on a small site between the cliffs and the precipice. The buildings were connected by a boardwalk, the devastation barely reigned there — the meteorological station had been in operation for a few years after the park closure. To the right there were minor storage buildings and a large two-storey lab. To the left – the office block, power generator building, a fuel tank, further on there was a gradual climb up to the viewing point and cable railway. The boardwalk was in good condition, just some boards were squeaking vacillatingly under my feet. When I reached the viewing point, the breathtaking beauty of the surroundings struck me again. The view from here was spectacular: deep ravine with clouds of spray and mist beneath, the piny opposite side of the canyon. The entire nearby foothill spread before the eyes. The clouds were slowly drifting across the sky, the raven was flying high above the canyon, inspecting its territory. The cable-railway got all rusted because of constant high humidity, some chairs missed boards. It would hardly ever come on the run. But it was not the main point — there had been no electricity in the park for years, and there was no fuel for additional generator. From the viewing point the section of the track along the rock where the disaster had happened could be seen. I should visit it, and I set on the track leading to the spot about which I had read a lot in the old newspapers. A permanent bridge was built instead of the ropeway after the accident. But time and water, absence of light (it was the northern slope) had done their dirty deed: the bridge was ruined and for a wonder with all its weight was hanging just on two piles only. It looked too risky to me to cross the canyon. I approached the edge of the cliff and cast a glance down. I felt as if hit by lightning: a man was lying on the canyon floor. Flabbergasted, I threw myself on the stones and crawled to the very edge, but no matter how hard I strained my eyes, I failed to get another sight of the body. The noise sound in my head, I felt violent pain in the head, my eyes dimmed and I think I passed out. When I came around, I

realized that I was standing on the bridge with one leg already over the handrail and going to put the other one over it. I became desperately scared, I heard that sound from my dream with the corridor. Having got back over the railing, I ran like hell to the meteorological station, squeezed through the hole in the fence and ran with long strides to the park entrance. Already back home I discovered my shirt torn on the back and my palms lacerated. I have been through worse during military operations, but I have never felt such a thrill of somewhat hobgoblin horror.

Part 6



the 12th of July

For several days the thought about my trip to the meteorological station was haunting me. What was it? What possessed me there on the bridge? The more I thought about it, the more similarities with the accident in the park I saw. What if somebody's invisible hand pushed those people into the precipice or even penetrated their senses and forced them to jump, and now it tried to do the same to me. It was my strong will, reason and a rage to live that saved me. It is hard to believe but a month ago when I found a loaded gun in my dad's study... but no, no. I have a reason to live, to live for Mike's good, in loving memory of my father. It was he – Mistfal. He was pushing me to the precipice, he thirsted after blood; those sacrifices made by the Native Americans throughout several centuries stopped as if the stream filled with violent life force had dried up. He slackened but it was just a trick and there at the waterfall he had captured the thoughts of those people and forced them to throw themselves into his arms, he called them up to his military service, the powers of darkness again swept over those beautiful mountains. By ironic twist of fate, the force summoned to protect, backfired on his masters. Now it will be extremely difficult to force him go back to the World of Dead. He can enslave somebody's mind and perpetrate enormous crime. The key thing is to be resistant to his whole bag of tricks and keep a cool head.

One more thing: what was that man in the park, who was he, what brought him to that cursed place? Perhaps, he is a hunter or a former employee of the meteorological station. One way or another, it was very odd, the whole thing.

the 15th of July

All those days I was pondering long and hard. My thoughts were running in my head, rushing from one place to another, as back in his early childhood Mike used to keep running about the house without a pause. And it was extremely difficult to calm him down at that very instant, as well as what is going on right now in my head. I became even more perplexed when I made a trip to the park in the afternoon.

In front of the first viewing point a tower stood made of totems. I dare swear that when I came there previous times, it was not there. The tower consisted of three totems put on top of each other. They were the figures of some average fictive animals: a dog-faced animal with prick ears was on the first tier, the same animal, but with wings on each side was on the second tier and the third was a bird with open wings. It stared in the face that whoever had put them, was familiar with the Native Americans traditions. The first totem was a hare, the second one was a squirrel and the third one was the Great Raven. It became immediately clear to me, even though the figures were rather rough-and-tumble. Who and what for had made them, remained highly questionable. Having walked further on, I saw that near

the staircase and meteorological station somebody had tried rather rudely to carve yet more totem figures out of wooden chocks. Perhaps, to raise more totem towers.

The marks on the soil proved it was an adult male. However, if he had come here, then just for a while. At the meteorological station and everywhere in the park the human presence was evident, but the man did not live here, that's for sure. Some Native Americans who decided to cast his mind back to the forefathers' life and rituals? I doubt: the local Native Americans, as far as I know, stay away from this area. Former employee of the meteorological station? A scientist could, theoretically, have returned here to continue suspended research, but he would not have carved strange wooden figures, much less put them on top of each other. Park ranger?.. Perhaps.

Casting the options about in my mind, realizing that one is more "plausible" than the other, is silly, but what on earth am I to do?

the 19th of July

Headache and tingle have been tormenting me for a week now. Absurd dreams: the corridor again, the park lost in the fog. The pills no longer bring peace of mind, temporary though it was. I take them with my brain on autopilot, the alcohol comes to nothing, either. Now the day and the night have become a single incessant headache. All day through I am like in a drowsy state, in the evening my mind goes blank about what I have been doing today, what I was doing yesterday. At night I sit moving over the dad's notes, not trying any more to find any sense, but just not to go nuts. To go to the park, I must go to the park with Mike, I need a jolt of fresh air, it has to help me. A picnic will be tomorrow, and it does not matter how I feel, but I will do everything for your sake, Mickey.

Part 7



Protocol of a treatment interview of the 19 of October

Doctor: Tell me please what happened on the 5th of September?

Patient: I have told you, and more than once.

Doctor: For clarification of some episodes of the incident I must ask you to repeat your story.

Patient: It is no good, I don't think I can tell you anything else.

Doctor: I am not an investigator and I have no intention of interrogating you. Anyway I ask you – all the more reason as it is to your advantage – to talk to me. You want to go back to your family and to settle down to a normal civil life as soon as possible, don't you?

Patient: Family… My son is all that is left of my family.

Doctor: So, the 5th of September?

Patient: OK. I'll tell you one more time. In fall with the special operations detachment I moved to the location of the terrorist act on the skirts of Kabul. On the 5th of September at 11:45 in the morning, after the convoy has tripped a road-side bomb on the skirts of Kabul, information was received about the terrorists hiding in the neighboring structures. At 11:55 our detachment received instructions to move to the suspect terrorist location, and at 12:00 the detachment consisting of 12 persons helicoptered to the destination. Having arrived on the blast seat, we started the operation to mop up the surrounding structures, it had been a remote detonation, and the people who had set off the bomb could have ducked for cover. Upon arrival, the detachment commander ordered me and Robert Lisitski to clear a small two-storey building at 100 meters to north-east of the blast seat; there was clear vision of the street from its second floor. A turned-over Hummy lay at the site of the blast, the burst wave had thrown it to the shade of the house wall. Hiding in the shade of the wall, we moved towards the building by broken runs. A hole stared from the Hummy side, the ground was bloodstained, the hands tightened the grip over the weapon as if all by themselves. At 12:15 we entered the building and I immediately reported the fact to our commander by radio.

Doctor: Was there much light in the building?

Patient: First the darkness seemed pitch-black because it was very sunny outdoors, as, in fact every day at noon. We paused, the eyes got used and we got a move on. The building seemed absolutely empty. We moved down the corridor, examining every room. It was dark, the ceiling lamps threw feeble light

on just small areas in the corridor, for that reason we had to use a night vision device. The rooms had no windows, or rather, they were nailed down or sandbagged. Some rooms were absolutely empty, while the others had loads of some old rubbish: old tables, chairs with broken legs, piles of rags, wisps of straw, crunching crocks and squares of glass. Most of the rooms were filled in to a minimum: nobody seemed to have lived in them. Having reached the second floor, I heard some rustle at the end of the corridor and gestured a caution signal to Robert.

Doctor: Was the second floor illuminated better?

Patient: Why, yes, I think so. There were holes in the roof, there were no totally dark places, even the corners had some minimal illumination.

Doctor: Yes, go on.

Patient: Having made a few steps forward, we both heard clearly the rustle coming from the corner room, and immediately motioned to each other. Then I was watching Robert's back and he stepped into the room. He shouted: "Stay where you are! Freeze!" and I also made a step inside. A woman stood in the corner of the room flattening herself against a closet. She looked like an ordinary local woman, dressed in a traditional costume hiding everything but the eyes. As she was standing in the corner, her hands behind her back, there was no way to see whether she had anything in them or not. That, I think, caused Robert to react the way he did. I, too, quickly raised the rifle aiming at her chest. I don't know how long it lasted, probably, a few seconds, I only saw her eyes. And besides the fear there was something else in those eyes – but at that time I did not understand why it was so. Robert pointed his rifle to the center of the room, shouting: "Get in here!". Finally, he put the rifle down and motioned her to approach and show her hands.

Doctor: Why did you stop? Go on.

Patient: He stepped towards her, and just then I saw that something had flashed in her hand.

Doctor: Could Robert Lisitski see that?

Patient: I don't think so. That could only be seen from where I was standing. For God's sake, why again about that … Something flashed in her hand, and I thought it was a knife. It looked very much like one, I.. I..

Doctor: Take some water. Calm down, after all, you are a soldier and should be ready to situations like that. Your actions, according to you and Robert Lisitski's testimony, accord fully with all recommendations and instructions given to you for similar special operations. Now you need to understand one thing only – you did not commit any blunder.

Patient: But how can you say such things? I killed a harmless person.

Doctor: I understand your points, but you overdramatize. It was a military operation during which morally questionable situations may arise. Why, if that woman had indeed carried arms, you and your mate could have been hurt. And anyway, what kind of morality one can speak about when the warfare is going on. There the first law is: might makes right.

Patient: Eyes… Dead eyes … looking… they are looking …

Doctor: What are you whispering? We've got side-attracted, let's go on with our conversation.

Patient: Go on… yes, I can go on. Something flashed in her hand, my mate could not see it, and I took a shot. A single shot in her chest stopped her, she started falling forward to the light spot. When she fell, a child, a boy of about 8-10 years old, came in view behind her. He stood still for a fraction of an instant and then he sank down the wall. All the while I and Robert were standing still, the woman gave no signs of life. Then I dashed up to the child, at close range it became clear that, having pierced the woman's chest, the bullet first had struck the child's chin, and then his neck. Blood was trickling from the boy's neck, throbbing. He began to wheeze and seized me by the arm, his hand seemed very hot to me. You know, like a baby, clasped it. I swung the rifle to the back, picked him up in arms and made for the landing site. When I ran up to the landing site, the commander was already there. I shouted: "Whirlybird, we need the whirlybird straight away!". The commander laid his hand on my shoulder and calmly said: "Take it easy. Calm down". I glanced down and saw that the boy was already dead. His skin had become pale, the eyes were open and the pupils were still.

Doctor: It's a good thing you've told me everything again. Let this negative experience become history. Your actions were justified by the challenging situation.

Patient: Yes (crying).

Doctor: Try to calm down. You need to take some rest, get away from it all, better yet go back home to your family. Get your teeth into something. A hobby, do you have a hobby?

Patient: It was my mistake (crying).

Doctor: You know, one of my friends – after his father's death – remained in a state of deep depression for a great while. He drank a lot, his wife, frankly, had a tough time. And guess what? He got busy in woodcarving: he shaped such stunning figures out of wood, usually of animals. They looked lifelike. And things straightened out, he went on the wagon, and now he is very much alive.

Postscript



Letter of the 19th of July

Hi, Mum!

I know I haven't been writing to you for a while, and you're probably worried. Forgive me please, but it's very difficult to bore the misfortunes that have rained thick upon me in the last six months. It's been the hardest time in my life.

Things are going well for Michael: he visits a soccer club and recently acted in a school play. He was cast for one of the leading roles, and I'd like to tell you – he did an excellent job. I look at him: mischievous twinkle in his eyes and gestures, he does take after his father after all. He's smart, and I'm very proud of him! As, I guess, you are, too!

Everything is as usual as far as I'm concerned – everyday routine: home-work-home. Pretty much, same old thing.

I'd rather not speak about sad things, but I'll have to. Though the doctors assured me that the new drugs could fasten recovery, I still see no gain in health. When George had just come back, I thought that a week, maybe, two would pass and he would be back in the saddle. How silly of me, we have fallen into some bottomless pit. Mum, he drinks every day, drinks much, taking horse drench of antidepressants at the same time. He often locks himself up in his father's study in the evening and sits there till morning. In the afternoon he takes his car and goes somewhere for a whole day. He takes no notice of me at all, as if I didn't exist. He doesn't talk to me, doesn't look at me. From time to time I catch his eye – I wish I didn't do it: his look creeps me out, my blood runs cold. The only thing that cheers me up is that he's started treating Michael with a lot of warmth and spends plenty of time with him. Mum, maybe, there are still chances that things will come right. Next weekend we'll go to the waterfall for a picnic. Perhaps, it'll help us, and George will feel better.



Author: Sergey Minin

English translation: Voronina Elena

2015