

# Eng. № 8.D. Homo Rationalis

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2026-01-02

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## **H\_O\_M\_O\_ R\_A\_T\_I\_O\_N\_A\_L\_I\_S\_**

### **(SCIENCE FICTION)**

**2023**      ***Chris MYRSKI, Sofia, Bulgaria ?1979 ...***

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[ As far as this is a whole book let us give an idea about the cover (if there are no better propositions).

**In front:** On a blue background, in the middle, hang, suspended on a rope, scales (pharmaceutical), in the left and heavier plate of which is put the Earth globe (with picture of the continents), and in the right one is seen only a stem of clover (in a pot) with four leaves, as symbol of happiness.

**On the back:** whatever, or even nothing. ]

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## **PART FOUR**

### **THE MARRIAGE PROPOSAL**

It was nearly ten in the morning in one warm July day when Julia Moon Forster sat down at a small table under the painted in red and white strips sunshade of the terrace of cafe "Honey pancake", in the north-western part of eight million Detroit's megapolis, spread out on terraces and on the bottom of Lake Erie. She was 35 years old luscious blonde, with straw-yellow hair, sticking out aside like a roof of an olden village house, which hanged over her fine ear-lobes, from which dangled amber earrings in the shape of small bunch of ripe grapes. In front her hair slightly hid big and dark brown eyes with enlarged like buttons of suit pupils and curly long eyebrows, which occupied the bottom part of the painted like wheat field forehead. Julia was wearing pale-yellow summer blouse with painted in front in its lowest part glass with some green beverage, out of which flew round multicoloured bubbles, which became above bigger and bigger,

and somewhere around her left breast in one shining bluish bubble was written: "Fresh as maiden's breast!" — the advertisement of "Moon Cola". Her skin was tanned by the sun including her slender legs under the shorts imitating elephant's skin, or rather the two hind legs of a young elephant with curved aside tail, looking from the rear, and in front the skin drew together in a relief phony zipper, that began at the waist, but this was not seen because it was partly hidden by the blouse, and ended with a big buckle in the lower part. Sitting at the table she was losing some of her sex-appeal, because was hiding the elephant bottom, under which was located one not devoid of charms part of her body.

Julia waited for her friend Mary Jane, whom she has not seen for a long time, because Mary became a good modiste and found herself work in a company in Frisco, far away on the Pacific coast, and till now has come only twice here and always in a hurry and on business, so that they could not succeed to see each other, while now she intended to stay for about a week and they agreed to spend all the time before lunch in pleasant conversations and recollections. The appointed hour has just passed and Julia looked worried around at the passers-by, but because she had no idea how will look her friend now, with exception of her high growth and green eyes, which is difficult to change, she could only guess which from the ladies might be the expected Mary. The cosmetics does wonders and it is good that in the cafe were not many people in this part of the day, and also Julia has mentioned that she will be with some advertisement of "Moon Cola", like she usually did, because by a coincidence such was her mother family, so that she could allow herself to enjoy the nice day and not to be specially worried about the recognition. Most probably Mary will be in greenish colours and in something modern — maybe like a mermaid amidst green algae, or something of the kind. Besides, she knew also her manner of walking, which was fast and energetic, where her right arm made wider movements than the left one, and also a 40-year old lady will surely not be skinny as a goldfinch, at least because she has never been such, so that there were chances to recognize her from afar.

Certainly not this girl with hat like rose bud and in rose dress with white drops, as if from dew; neither this woman in yellow like a crocus free dress with greenish edge below, for she barely walks, and she also turned in other direction; nor that with dress like air balloon fastened with elastic bands to her legs and with pattern like watermelon rind — to become already so obese a business lady like Mary was impossible, and this one is as if above 50. It can't be also this white fairy with dress with painted in front apple tree and two bigger apples exactly in this place where one can expect to find something else succulent. Yet this one with green hairs and hat like enormous tropical butterfly why is in such a hurry? Well, surely will

hurry when is already ten minutes late, and will swing her hand as if holding a stick in it, because what else remains to her with this gait. And Julia raised a hand from her table as soon as she saw that the mentioned butterfly set foot on the terrace.

— Hello, Julie! — cried out Mary, who also recognized her girl-friend and went to the table swaying the edges of her dress, which was painted with big stems of green grass with drops of dew on them and a big pimped frog, having seated itself in front somewhere on a span distance under her belt. When she turned between the tables from the back of her dress emerged the head of a large grasshopper, which scratched its head with its front foot. On the face of Mary blossomed a happy smile, which complemented the sparkling of her green eyes and later, looking at her friend, she added — “Fresh as maiden's breast!”, as always. Glad to see you, dear.

— I also am very glad, Mary, because the years flow by and we still can't meet us after that time when you run to the West. I am doing my secretaryship and don't think at all to leave this anthill, while you move incessantly up in your career. Maybe you've found the water here not enough and went to the big water, ah? And is peaceful this ocean or it is just so named?

— Sometimes is peaceful and sometimes isn't, dear — added Mary. — And about the career you are not quite right, because I am doing nothing special, simply have found there a textile company which showed a wish that I worked for them, and here nobody made an offer to me. If they propose me now then why not to return, though here, still, is colder, especially in winter. And in general, with the work it is similarly like with the men — all do the same job, yet with some of them the pleasure is bigger.

— We-ell, I would not say that it is exactly the same. There are some differences, I'll tell you. It isn't that I have not tried with different men but after I met Ben Smith I will not change him for anything in the world.

— You have always been more romantic, Julie, but I see no big difference between the men. Well, some *centimeter* more or less, exists, really, but you get used to everything — winked Mary.

— O-oh, I'm not speaking about centimeters, dear, and you know this. But, listen, choose something for you, in order not to sit at empty table. They make good pancakes here, if you have not forgotten, and I would take a pair but different, plus cappuccino. Look in the menu and decide.

Mary Jane pressed the button on the table before her and there lit a flat screen, and moving with finger a small ball she scanned quickly the computer menu and murmured:

— OK, good, let it be pancakes. Also cappuccino is not bad, but I would prefer a cold “Campari”, because in such nice weather there is nothing better than a hot man or a cold “Campari”. And as far as I

have not a man at hand then I will be content with the drink, right?

— Ah, I usually don't start my day so early in this way, yet so be it this time, in honour of our meeting is allowed also a bit of vermouth, when you have so decided, my dear. Enter the order if you like also for me, so that to bring them together.

— And with what, you say, you don't start the day so early, for I have not got it entirely, with the man or with the drink? Interjected Mary.

— Only with the drink, dear, when you want to be so precise. Are you glad now? It is sometimes directly difficult to endure you when is touched the topic of sex, but OK, once in six years I will endure you.

— Seven years, Julie, and some months, because we saw each other the last time in the evening of the longest day, on the occasion of defloration of the oldest daughter of Joan, Eleanor, who has then recently turned sixteen and went with one sweet boy — George, or Jerome, or Jim, I can not remember exactly — to the Palace of Virgins in order to spend there her first night with a man. Joan all the time boasted that Eli went there in order not to be forced later to appear before medical commission when will be 18, for to check whether she is deflorated or not, and otherwise she had slept with this boy two years earlier and was long ago not virgin, but one can do nothing here — such are the laws. And the Feast of Virgins is, after all, one good tradition from before decades and every young girl or boy goes there with pleasure, because: what is the purpose of a sealed "bottle" when one can not try the drink in it — so had said the young Eli and her mother repeated this the entire evening. And a month later I went to the Pacific coast with my David Spot and with my three children, and I am now after more than seven years again here to drink a glass with my dear Julia, who does not start her day early with cooled drink, but only with hot man, and this if he is called Ben Smith. Your health Julie and for happiness in your life — uttered Mary and raised the glass with a hand because while she declaimed her monologue one robotized trolley with their order rolled to the table.

— And for you, too, Mary. Cheers, you, nymphomaniac. When there goes about sex nothing can hold you quiet. Yet tell me, you are still leaving with Dave spot, or have found yourself a third and a fourth.

— Still, my dear, don't worry. And do not think to change him because of some centimeter more, if you want to know. Not that I decline if somebody is to my liking and Dave is not at hand, but not more often than 3-4 times in an year, and don't repeat afterwards, to tell you. I am not such girl as you think about me, and only my words seem more frivolous than yours. For example, I lived with Gilbert Jones more that five years and bore him Patricia Jane Jones and, to all appearances, he is glad and she also says nothing against, even

thinks to become modiste like me; in any case she has feeling of composition and works good with computer painter. Now she lives not far from me with one young student and as if thinks to bear him a child, only all the time speculates whether a boy or a girl, and I say to her that it is better not at all to visit the physician till the sixth month, so that not to know to what kind of child she will give birth, because the young now go to see the doctor after the first month and in this way they lose the whole interest of waiting. — Mary sipped from her glass and continued. — Then after two years of, how is said, arbitrary and periodic relations I settled on the well known to you Dave, and after certain number of exercises in the morning and the evening I bore him a male child called Peter Jane Spot, who also has nothing against what I have done, and is one of the craziest in the local team of Scouts and is coming to his thirteenth year. And shortly before I went to the West I bore him, to Dave, naturally, also Monika Jane Spot, who goes now for a second year to school. Then I gave up to bear more children, not because this so much bored me, but because have fulfilled my established by the law limit, and I have no superfluous millions to pay taxes for forth child. Dave, however, has still the right to third child and I often say to him to find another girl for this purpose, but he resists this, so that maybe in the end I will marry him. Yet, why the hurry?

— It is so, Mary, but I intended to ask you also about this, I mean, why have you not yet done this, dear? With your three children, and if after a pair of years you will be 40, nobody will say anything to you, if you decide to marry.

— Thanks for the compliment, yet I have reached them not long ago, and you must know this, Julie, I think. It is clear that nobody will hinder me, but why should I hurry, when I don't yet intend to give up men? And I also can do this anytime. Let us drink again, and you can also tell me something about yourself.

— But there is nothing new by me to boast with. My daughter Eveline is now 15 and in the next year will go to the Feast of Virgins, but I think that she is still virgin, although have not asked her because ... well, you know that children get angry when you ask them much. She grew beautiful and tall like a pole, but is still fiddling with dolls and as if is good for nothing, except to bear a child when grows a bit older, although I also have not shined with anything special in her age, yet now I live my life and think that am happy. Then appeared John, who was still in pre-school age when you were here, but now has gone in his fathers steps and all the time makes various robots and teaches them. Both children are with my family as mother one and Smith as father's. Dull things, not like by you — decided she to sting her a little — yet I am glad and continue my secretary work, only that my bosses are changing after three-four years. So that because I am already 16 years with Ben and I think ... think to marry

him. What will you say to this, Mary?

— To mar..., you say to marry him, ah? — nearly choked Mary, who just swallowed a morsel of her pancake with fig jam and the remark surprised her a lot. — We-ell, you see, it isn't that you can't do this, it is allowed by the law, but why this hurry, i.e. why have you decided to do this, can you explain this to me?

— Well, when I live with him for more than ten years, then I have the right to marry him, and I have also two children, and have reached 35, so that I decided that can make him a proposal sometime.

— Surely, when you are in this age and with children, who carry his family, nobody will forbid you. Now, if you were younger than 30 and if you had no children then it might have been necessary to search for witnesses, and if you were also younger than 25 then they would not have allowed you, but I asked you *why* you want to marry, right?

— Well, Mary, I live so long with Ben, and he with me, and I think, well, think that love him, and because of this ...

— Ho, ho, ho-o, you'll kill me, my dear! — answered Mary. — But it is natural that you love him, for otherwise you would not live with him, would you? Yet I have asked you why is it so necessary for you to marry him, or ... But do you really think that when you love somebody then you must obligatory marry him? It is true that earlier it was so, but you know that in the last century has begun gradually to become so, that on three marriages there happened to be one divorce, then on two one, until in many countries the divorces exceeded 70% of the marriages and continued to grow higher. Well, the divorces have not succeeded to become more than the number of marriages, for the simple reason that, after all, in order to divorce one must first marry, and it happened also that some married people just died before they have succeeded to divorce, but after the moment when they exceeded 50 percent the people have begun to ask themselves: what is the point to marry, and then to divorce, in order to marry again? We-ell, there was no point, and because of this somewhere when I was born was already decided, at least in the American States, that nobody has the right to marry before is born at least one child and he or she reaches at least the age to go to school, or until there pass at least 10 years of their life together, but as a rule nobody does this before 40, and even 50 years of age. And due to this now the divorces are less than 10% of the marriages and nobody complains about this. Is it clear to you? — Mary stopped a little in order to finish her pancake, tasted also from the next, and then continued. — You marry, when so eagerly want this, yet first put aside the money for the divorce, because half of yearly payment of a secretary as if will not suffice. People marry, usually, when they abandon the sex and begin the platonic old-age love, and as I look that you are still "fresh

as maiden's breast", I somehow don't believe that you have decided to do this, ah?

— We-ell, to do such a big sacrifice because of the marriage I have not yet decided, of course, but a woman is as if more quiet when her lawful husband is with her, don't you think so?

— But listen, Julie, about what quietness you are speaking to me? The women searched quietness before, in order to be able to catch the men stronger, for not to allow them to run away, because then they were forced to work and to care for the children, and else the men liked not much this. But now you know pretty well that, at least in the American States, every man or woman in the age from 20 to 50 years pays the official from 5 to 15 percents for children support, depending on the income and the number of children, and then each child receives the established minimal support, only that before the child has reached 14 years this money receive those who bring him or her up, which are again the same persons, most often. This is socialism, my dear, haven't you heard this — the children belong to the state and for this reason the nation cares about all of them; well, this isn't communism, how have thought before, when also the women must have been common — although they are again common, but if you alone want it. So that the point isn't in the tranquility; I think that you are a bit old-fashioned, but there is nothing bad in this, and I have one girl-colleague in the company who has married even in 30 years, with only one 9 year old boy. If you are so worried about this then do it, but it is better if you think more, or wait until you reach at least 40. ... A-ah, listen, let us repeat this liquor, because it is like with the men: not once is possible, but only once, for nearly two hours, can't be endured, ah?

— Thank you, Mary, but I don't want to drink more, except, maybe, one of my colas. So I also think like you, but in the last time it seems to me that if I will not make a proposal to him then he might do it, you understand? And he can later regret it, because, what will his friends say when they learn about this?

— But why on earth should he? It was he, who has born your children, ah? What an impudence! Now, this is really serious, because you can neither reject, no accept it. Only if you give some evasive answer, yet this also is not good. But listen, why you don't try to live for a while separated, at least for a pair of weeks, ah?

— Oh, Mary, I have tried this, too, Every year I go alone on vacation. Not for to search other men, you see, but simply to have a rest. And what you think? — After a week he also jumps to me! Not that he does not ring to warn me, or that he comes to spy after me — no-ot, he simply grew bored alone. And I am not angry at him, because I also become bored already on the third day, so that ...

— Well, listen now: for a man to propose this, really, is pretty outdated and happens, perhaps, only in a pair of percents, if one can

give credence to these sociological surveys. Something has to be done, for to prevent it. Do you know, I as if have come to something. Why you do not consider the idea to visit me in Frisco? Not now, you see, because it is very hot now, we are, in fact, on the latitude of Athens, but to the end of September or even October it is really nice there. Or also in April, but this is very far. And then when you both come you can leave him one evening to speak with my Dave — man to man, as is said — and I will explain him the situation before and this can help. And till that time you try to hold somehow the ball, deceive him with something, if necessary, hint to him that it is good that little John become of age, in order that the children in school will not laugh at him, something of the kind.

— Why not, Mary? Thank you, dear. So I thought, that you will come up with something. I will explain him that before the defloration of Eve, which will be next year, it is not decent to think about our marriage. Yes, surely, this will help. And after this can be possible to agree to wait until I also reach forty and everything will be OK. Bravo, Mary! In this case I also will drink one more glass — and she made the order on the console on the table, adding: — And for you, ah?

— Thanks, Julie, only that this will be the last, for I am sitting already quite a big time, and have also other things to do. Well, and if there absolutely nothing will work, in what I doubt very much, don't you think that I will not be glad to see you in black dress for the marriage — it will surely suit you.

— Well, sometime I will put it on, I suppose. Like also you, maybe. Sooner or later everybody has to marry, in order to live quietly the remaining years and to enjoy grandchildren, but it is pretty early now, dear, so that I will try to manage to visit you.

— You both come when you can, even now, but better after a pair of months, when the heat subsides. This is my address, so that to have it at hand, although you can always find it in the computer net. Well, your health again, for our meeting and for success in the case.

— For the success, Mary, and for your health.

— And do you know, Julie — continued she, after has swallowed a decent sip of the cold liquor, — I have read somewhere that in Slavonic languages people even have not said that they marry, but have used some such word like garbage, trash\* — something like this — so that I thought that these Slavonic souls have, maybe, felt better the things, ah? Because it is so, really, when one marries one is capable of nothing anymore, except to prepare oneself for one's funeral. One is already scratched out from the list of living people, isn't it so?

[ \* For those who don't know this it is interesting to mention that "marriage" in Slavonic is 'brak', what literally means waste, refuge, botched detail, what, I suppose, comes from the ... fairy tales, as well

also from old Latin novels, when the book ended with the marriage, because there can happen nothing interesting more with the heroes; on the other hand I suppose that the word "marriage" is somehow related with "merry", i.e. it is a merry festivity (though there might be also something related with the holy Maria). ]

— Well, as if it is so, like you are saying, Mary, but this also has to have its charms, when was practiced for so many centuries. Anyway — everything in its time! Your health for the last time, my dear.

A bit later the elephant bottom rose up and swayed to the exit, accompanied by the green grasshopper that still washed its face with front foot and was probably happy because had not to decide such complicated problems like throwing healthy and strong people to the garbage, only because they could not live with the other people, but preferred the narrow society of two lovers, being not able to grasp that on this world everything is temporary and people must separate themselves from the society only when it also starts to exclude them from itself. Such intricate situations.

\* \* \*

Approximately two years later, in one early afternoon, having remained alone at home, Benjamin Smith, electronic engineer, who after an year must have reached the middle age of 40 years, and who has spent nearly the half of this time with some Julia Forster, with mother's family Moon (due to what she liked much "Moon Cola"), and who, in fact, loved him much, like he also her, leafed through a folder with different junk from his student years and found some yellowed piece of paper containing computer listing with 10 female names and addresses below them, the third from which was enclosed with red ballpoint pen, and in front of the first and second were put small ticks. He just thought to throw it in the basket, together with some incomprehensible notes written with already forgotten by him childish cipher in his school years, some clumsy rhymes from that time, some amulet placed in transparent frame, where on green velvet background was mouse tail twisted like an eight and pinched in the middle, between the circles of the digit, with a claw of a crayfish —the best in this part of Galaxy amulet protecting against evil forces from fourth dimension — and various other unnecessary nonsense, when noticed that the encircled name was of Julia Moon Forster, or, in fact, of this Julia with whom he lives already 18 years happy and inseparable. Then he recalled ...

He recalled that in his student years he has read in some book that a man can not succeed to sleep with all women of the world, but he has, still, to *try*! So he began to try, following precisely the rule to avoid repetitions, in order to increase the number of girls. In the beginning everything was brilliant, after half an year everything was

perfect, after a pair of more months everything was still very good, and after an year and a bit in another old book he read that there was nothing new under the sun and at once agreed with this, based on his accumulated personal experience. Then he was just ending his study in the university and as man of exact sciences he did the simplest, i.e. this, what also a heap of other young people like him did — he collected his scholarship for about half month and sent a request to the centralized computer database, which contained all possible individual physical and psychical characteristics for nearly the half of 27 milliard population on the Earth globe, or for all countries which were included in this base. The request was wholly standard — he searched for a partner for living together. After two weeks, or less, he received by mail a piece of paper — this piece of paper with the ten names — in which were listed the first ten best woman candidates from American States, where he limited his wish, ordered alphabetically. In the very beginning was — and he looked at the listing — some Betty Stevenson from the area of Salt Lake City, then some Diana Mulligan from the neighbourhood of Memphis, and on the third place was some Julia Forster from Detroit; the left names in the list were quite away, and he has already given up to try all women in the world, so that he choose the nearest possible to his hometown and to Chicago, where he finished computer engineering, and has decided to try his luck. In the nearest weekend he jumped to Detroit and using the address and photo of Julie, which he received at once from the computer net, managed to catch her when she went out from the nearby supermarket. When people are aged 20 they have no problems with making acquaintances, so that on the next day they walked around the Lake Erie, during the next weekend again, and it happened so that when he received his diploma he found quickly work in Detroit. Julia was three years younger than he and fully met his wishes, so that nothing else remained to him, unless to begin to live together. Then came the children, then the time passed, and now he was again with this forgotten piece of paper.

He has decided to throw it in the waste basket, for it has long ago fulfilled its purpose, then thought to show it to her, but in the end took the decision to leave it again on its old place in the folder. The women are usually more emotional and eager to command and would not have accepted the fact, that computers can take better decisions than they alone, so that there is no sense in disturbing her. Let her think that *she* was who has chosen him, and let her propose marriage to him after an year or two, when there will come time to scratch him out of the society of free men. When she so much insists that the initiative originated from her then he will not object. And Benji took the listing away and smiled happily.

July 1998

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## RIGHT OF CHOICE

Dieter sat absentmindedly in the dining room of children's home "Jolly Bears", built on a small hill in the north-east from Frankfurt, looked through the window and poked with fork in the plate. He was neither specially hungry, no thought about food, but under the strict glance of Ingrid, the teacher on duty, he forced himself to stuff in his stomach one sausage and drink his milk. Not that he was grieved, but he has also no particular reasons to be happy, because the half of his friends from previous years were already adopted and they scattered in quite various places, and another five were taken a few days ago, so that at the breakfast were present only about ten boys and girls. And as far as they were not many then today for the second time in this week he must again clear away the plates and shove them in the washing machine. Well, a ten of plates is not pretty much, so that this also did not bother him particularly. He was not bothered also by the meeting with his father, who must arrive today, because this was not the first time for him, yet the expectation, still, is not very pleasant, so that he was just bored and wondered how to kill the time.

At the next table sat Martha and he could easy throw one small bread ball which, with a little luck, can drop in her cup with milk, but he did not like to repeat himself often, so that rejected this variant. There buzzed the videophone and while the teacher went to answer it he scratched slightly with fingernail under the table and made some special squeaking sound, which had to represent mouse squeak, yet either the girls did not hear it, or were already used to this, but this trick also failed. With big delay in the dining room rushed his friend Kurt, and Dieter shouted to him to close the pants fly, though Kurt did not at all look down and went at once to get his breakfast. It remained him nothing else except to eat up his sausage and clear the dishes of already breakfasted.

After he finished with this task he went to collect his things. In the last year, when he was seven years old and had to go to his first father, he asked himself all the time how he will recognize him, yet now he knows that this was not at all necessary. Johann knew very well how his future son looked. He only gave the necessary documents to the teacher on duty and checked whether the number on his left shoulder was 17CAF073528. Well, surely it could have not been different. Then Johann took him by the hand and led him to the garage of children's home. He was large man, in the age of

45, how he later understood, with shaggy brown hair, bright eyes, clean-shaven face, and constant playful smile on the lips. He was quite jovial fellow and they lived well a whole year. He took him to the Munich megapolis, on the 47th floor of a pyramidal building called Tutankhamun. Next to it was small lake with mechanical crocodiles, on which he often rode also alone, because their driving was very simple. He climbed on their back by one of their feet, with which they fastened to the pier, sat on the seat, removed the feet, and switched on the tail. When it was necessary to make a turn the crocodile paddled stronger with one of the front feet. Their engine was in the mouth (he saw some of them with opened mouths when was necessary to repair something), and their eyes were headlights for night time. If the transparent cover was lowered then they could sink and flow under the water and also on the bottom, but the children were allowed to use them only as boats, so that under water he rode usually with Johann.

How his present father will look, asked he himself when collected his toys. And where will drive him? He could have asked the teacher, but did not do this on purpose, for to be more interesting for him. And what if this will be a mother? Dieter did not want to have a mother because he was a boy and it was better to have a father. Kurt, yet not this now but that from the series DEX, who went last year from here, got a mother and wrote him once that she was very nice and beautiful woman in the age of 55, but he liked not much mothers — maybe because of the girl of Johann. Still, he does not think that will lose his appetite if it will turn that he will have mother. In the incubators were born both boys and girls, what means that when they grow older there will be as much mothers like fathers, for the future children. All the same, he hoped to have father, because the teachers knew well his individual characteristics and would hardly propose to him something that he will not like much. In fact, no matter who will be his future parent, he will differ from his first father, so that there was no danger to become bothered. Neither Johann will reject to take him for a visit, if he will write him that have begun to miss the crocodiles.

He looked around the room again, has he not forgotten something important, folded the bedsheets, left them on the bed and looked out through the window. Then some thought came to him and he returned to the bed. In the upper part of the mattress some of his predecessors has written with blue "place for the mug". Dieter pulled out one of his ballpoint pens and added in its lower part "place for the exhaust pipe". Looked at it glad and threw the sheets above the new inscription. Now he could quietly go down in the study hall and wait for his father. He shouldered his bags and dragged his feet along the corridor to the ground floor.

\* \* \*

Because it was only 23rd of August, and the school classes did not begin before the first of September, most of the boys were in the open and played football. In the study hall girls watched children's movies or read something on the monitors. Dieter sat down before one of the screens and chose some space game. Put on the headphones in order not to make noise and grabbed the controls. He has gone so deep in the game, that did not at all remark when his father has come, and even slightly startled when the teacher patted him on the shoulder. He removed the headphones and switched off the game. Turned back and looked at the man, who stayed behind him. He was a man and this was good. He was tall and thin, with a beard and mustaches, black-eyed and well-dressed. Dieter knew that he had to be older than 40, because otherwise he would have had no rights to chose himself a child, but the man looked quite young. This also was good. When he greeted him his voice was deep and pleasant. He said that he is called Siegmund Wolf, that he was 42 years old and worked as designer in a large construction company, and then began to ask him how is his name and why he has chosen it. Well, because he liked it, of course, thought the boy, but because many times has answered similar question then he has invented an interesting, according to him, answer. Only that this is a long story and he will explain it on the road, if he wants, answered the boy. With this they finished the official conversation, checked the documents, he said goodbye to the teachers and went after his new father to his airflyer.

— And where will we fly to, if this is not a secret? — asked the boy, after he placed himself next to Siegmund in the car. — Not that I have some objections, dad, because till now I have been only in Munich, and two days in Paris and Vienna, so that for me will be interesting everywhere.

Siegmund started the engine, raised the machine on air-cushion and drove slowly to the nearest highway, where chose the route and switched to autopilot. The airflyer rose to the necessary height and having waited a little merged with the stream over the track. He sat back in the seat flattered by the child's informality and the unusually sounding word "dad", and looked at the kid beside him.

— Well, this time we will flow to the North, when you have no objections. I live in the eastern part of Hamburg, in one village house on the left bank of the Elbe. Around there are a hundred similar houses, with rabbit hutches and hens in the courts. For one thing you are in a village, but for another one for half an hour I ride to the place of work. Only that I haven't rabbits because there is nobody to look after them, for I am living alone.

— Rabbits, ah? And they can bear little rabbits, can't they? In the same way like the women have done before, ah, dad? I would have

liked very much to look after some rabbit, if this is possible?

— When you like then we shall think about the matter. It seems that the problems are two: the first is that you will have to care about them and to feed them in the morning and the evening, and the second is that your lessons must not be neglected because of this. Do you agree with the conditions?

— You think, you have to ask me? And where will I go to school? My previous father drove me every day and took me in the evening. Will you also drive me?

— Maybe I will, yet it is better if you ride in the school bus with the other children. Do you really think that you will be the only child in the region? — answered his father. — Besides, there have to be at least two rabbits, I think that you know this, if you want that they bear small rabbits.

— Yeah, I know, one male rabbit and one female rabbit and they will multiply themselves pretty often, right? As if it was two-three times in an year. We studied something similar, only that they did not show us how this is done, but I am not such little boy so that I guessed — added Dieter and began to stare at the landscape under the machine. They rode at several hundred meters above the ground and flew over various fields, in places black, and in places green, yet sometimes yellow. It was more interesting than the stereo, because one was amidst the landscape and did not watch from aside, before the screen.

— So good, when you promise then we will find some solution. We have enough time. You will, won't you, live with me a whole year?

— Most probably, and after this you will have to decide, will you adopt me permanently, or will try with another child. You have the right to try up to three times, and then, if you want, can buy yourself some child on the stock market. I am your first son or not? You look pretty young to me, dad. And how long we will travel more, have you some idea?

— The autopilot says 93 minutes. And to your first question: "yes", you are my first child. And you was already with one father, as I have understood. — He wanted to ask whether they have got along well and whether he wanted to be with him, but decided not to force too much the matters, because the trial adoption for him has barely begun.. — Do you want to drink something, my son? — said Siegmund, chewing with satisfaction the new word.

— Well, I don't know what you have here? I would preffer a lemon shake, or a glass of cold milk. — The father typed something on the keyboard and pressed one button. After half a minute on the console opened one window and inside stood a misty glass with yellowish drink.

— Please! I don't know whether this is to your taste, but if you alone type sometimes a recipe, then the computer will know it. I

have named for me one "cocogn-3", what means coffee with three spoons of cognac and quite a bit of sugar, and will also treat myself — and he typed his order, after what asked. — But you intended to narrate me how you have chosen your name, ah?

— Well, then listen. You know that each child must choose him or her -self some name when will become seven years old, and later, if will be adopted by someone, then he /she will have also a family, and if nobody adopted him till 14 years then he must choose himself also a family name. I all the time could not choose myself a nice name and because of this wrote on a wooden disc about 20 names, made small hole in the middle, and hung it on one nail in my room, so that it could be easily rotated. Then I rotated the circle and threw small arrow to see what name I will hit. Yeah, but there each time happened different names, and they all began to sound good to me, and then I again began to think which one to choose. And so came my seventh birthday, and I have still not decided how to name myself. Then, when I got up in the morning and washed myself and dressed, gave a strong push to the disc to make it spin, stepped back, closed the eyes, and, because I already knew where to aim, threw the arrow and it fell in the sector where was written the name "Dieter". So I decided that from that time on this will be my name. Do you like the story?

— But well, this is a very interesting way, and also correct one, because when you like all names, and must choose only one of them, then this means that here has to be applied some arbitrary method.

— Yes, dad — answered the boy and drank a sip from his shake. Looked for a while through the window, and then added. — Only that it was not exactly so, because I just liked the name Dieter, and later invented this whole story, because all teachers, as well also my first father, and my friends, too, all the time asked me how and why. And I became bored to explain dull things and invented something more interesting. I know that it is not good to deceive, but when the grown-ups sometimes alone ask for it, then how not to deceive them a little? Do you think that I must not tell this story again, ah?

— Hmm, why not to tell it? The story is interesting, and this isn't some such invention with which you want to deceive the people. I even like this, that you have succeeded so good to compose everything. So well, when you are so skillful with names then tell me how to call the rabbits? If you can not invent this at once, then you can tell me also later, when I buy them.

— And what is so difficult here? — the male one we will call Bunny, and the dame Kathy. And if we take another dame, then will call her Mary. In this way we will organize for our Bunny a folygamy, yes?

— A polygamy, from "poly", what means "many", like also the towns are called polises, because in them live many people. But from where have you learned all this? Isn't it too early for an 8-year

old boy, ah?

— Well, from the lessons, from where else? They also the people till the last century have done this like the rabbits, but the women already became tired to suffer whole 9 months when artificial mothers were invented. And later have began to give birth by governmental orders and then adopt us. They led us in the incubator — a bunch of rooms and in each of them by several lines of devices with transparent covers and in them are moving some small animals: in one room they are all tiny like worms, then in the nest are bigger, then more bigger, and in the end babies were born, and from them grow people like me and you. Brr, scary, yet interesting, I'll tell you. Don't you think, though, that this method is quite complicated, ah? The women can't lay eggs like the hens and because of this they have to poke some spoons in them and to scrape something with them, and this may hurt them. Well, still less than when they have born their babies, naturally, but nonetheless aches a bit. And if they were like the hens then this should have been easier.

— Life is very complicated, my son, and not everything happens so like we would have wanted, yet your proposition is worth to be considered. Do you know, why will you not post it by email to the European Academy, ah? — and Siegmund looked at him, trying to suppress his smile, but the boy noticed this and frowned.

— You are kidding with me, ah? I am speaking seriously with you, and you make jokes with me. However it is, when we will be there?

— Now soon, after about ten minutes. Well, excuse me. I am glad that you are such clever boy. Who knows, maybe sometimes this will also happen, or maybe the women will begin again to bear the babies. They have not forgotten how, but just, like you say, have become a bit lazy. So, and now we will leave the highway and descend to the ground and I will move to manual control to reach the very house. I hope you will like it.

— I also hope, father, even am sure that will like it. You drive carefully the machine now and I will keep silent for a while in order not to disturb you.

\* \* \*

— Hello, Siegi! Have you already taken your son, ah? And how you get along with him? — asked him his colleague Erich the next Monday morning at the work.

— Yeah, I have taken him before two days. And have already ordered two young rabbits because we will *multiply* them, how he has said. For the moment our relations are perfect. I advice you also to follow in my steps.

— We-ell, I have not said that will not do so? Everyone has the right to continue his gender, yet till 60 I have enough time for this. The more so because I am also younger than you, if you have not

forgotten this. After two years I will begin to think about. Now, bye, and nice work.

— The same to you — answered Siegmund and continued to his office. There he was teased by his secretary Inge:

— How's the new father and the new son?

— The father is new, yet the son is old. I mean that I am his second father, and he is my first son, if this is clearer for you. And besides, we are on yearly approbation.

— Like in the sex, ah, boss? Only that there the period is not fixed — threw she and continued already seriously. — You can see what our competitors offer in file REV35. And do not forget that at 10 o'clock is a briefing! I am working on the correspondence with technical department, if you have not changed your instructions.

— Good, Inge. If changes in the work will be necessary I will tell you — and he entered his office. Just he was absorbed by the work and the videophone rang:

— Hello, dear — heard he slightly hoarse voice of his girlfriend Helga. — Have you received already your boy?

— Ah, hello, Sunshine. We are already two at home and this is pretty interesting. And why you did not ring me in the weekend, ah? Maybe you have found yourself a more solid man than me?

— If you mean your kilograms then I positively can find myself more solid one, yet have not searched. But when the man is with his child then the woman retreats in background, so that I did not want to disturb you in the beginning. And maybe I was not wrong, when you also did not ring me. Well, how is it, speak!

— Well, for the moment everything is OK. Dieter is quite amicable and I will buy him rabbits. And after this maybe also hens, because the laying of eggs was easier than bearing children, in his opinion. A propos, I have one uncomfortable question to you.

— My dear, you have to know that only the position can sometimes be uncomfortable, but not the questions, don't you know this? — smiled she from the screen. — Well, shoot your question.

— So I beg your pardon, yet we have till now not come to this question and that is why I have not asked you before. Have they taken from you genetic material till the moment?

— You mean, have they scraped from me a couple of ova, right? Well, three times already, as it should be: in 20, 25, and 30 years, but as far as I have grown older they don't think to search me anymore. As also from you, I suppose, have taken, yet by a bit different technology. And why you ask?

— Well, the son talks about some spoons, and that it should have hurt more then when the hens lay their eggs, so that I decided to check whether the boy is right.

— As if your nice boy is right, only that I can't tell you about the hens, you know. Otherwise thank you for the comparing, my dear

rooster. And in addition, the point is not only in the giving of birth, but also in the washing of little bottom, in the swaddling, the feeding, in the fuss with the baby until he or she begins to walk and grows older.

— Well, I simply am conveying to you what the kid has said. And you come to us to meet him. I hope that you both will like each other. I think that he looks a bit like me, so that want to hear also your opinion.

— Well, my opinion is that the artificial insemination is planned by entirely different criteria and that this is pure randomness, which has nothing to do with you, but this does not mean that it is excluded that some resemblance between you can exist, right? Well, ciao, you silly. I will come maybe in Friday, so that in Thursday you gather your strength and don't go out with other girls. Ha-ha-ha. And I will also meet your clever boy and the rabbits.

— Bye-bye — and he switched off the videophone thinking whether the children are born very clever now, or the adults begin to infantilize themselves very early.

\* \* \*

One evening, approximately after three months, Dieter learned his lessons in front of the monitor, and his father played chess on another screen and sipped of the brandy near to him. After some time from the computer of the boy was heard some buzzing and shots and Siegmund finished quickly his party in automatic mode. The winter evening has come long ago, it was warm and nice inside, especially after two gulped glasses, and he decided that the moment was appropriate to have again a talk with his son.

— You have begun to learn pretty fast your lessons, ah? Are you sure that have understood everything?

— Well, if you do not believe me, you can check the file with my grades, father. Most of them are very good\*, and to become exactly excellent student I have no intention. Bunny and his girl I have also fed, so that what else am I to do in the evening?

[ \* In Bulgaria is used six-grade system where the highest (6) is excellent and is equivalent to A, then very good (5) means B, good (4) is C, etc. ]

— Good, sonny. Do you know that we have to decide together one important question? It comes Christmas and we have still not decided where you want that we spend it. Are there propositions on this topic?

— Well, I thought that you will make propositions and I will accept them, but when you ask then I may ponder about. I say, here is quite

cold and I think that it would be not bad if we can go somewhere, where is warmer — say, in Africa, ah? Or on some island. I have never lived on an island. Only that this can be very expensive, ah? ...

— It may be so, but may also not be too expensive. I have not checked. And why don't you make one computer request for these days, limiting the question to, say: one week, in a double room, for one and a half persons, because you are still young for whole portions, for a maritime region, with temperature ... let it be 30°C in the shade. Add, if you want, bananas as much as one can gulp, coral reefs, camels, or something of the kind. Put also price limits between, say, 1,000 to 1,200 Euro-dinars, and let us see what they can offer to us. Only that the more special terms let be optional, because I am not sure that where live camel there grow also bananas.

— This is great, father, whole thousand dinars and even above this! I will check first thing tomorrow. Only ... let us remove the camels, but add also Helga, if you want, ah? And as to the rabbits, we should ask somebody from the neighbours, right? Superb, I will surely find some island cheaper, with bananas and monkeys, and coconuts, and ... I don't know what more.

— Very good, sonny, but in regard of Helga I don't know, because she may not want to come, or may have other plans. It is necessary first to ask her.

— Come on, dad, she may not want, as if I don't see that if you decide to take her to Jupiter, she will also agree. You leave this thing to me. If she will begin to falter then I will persuade her. Because men must help one another, right? — said Dieter proudly.

Look at him, the "man", he will begin soon to substitute me also in the bed, thought the father, yet smiled contentedly. There's nothing to do, we are living in 22nd century and the children accelerate with terrifying speed. He patted him on the back and then, as if casually, asked:

— But now tell me, how do you think, will your first father want to take you permanently? Because he, right, has not applied for this?

— Ah, you think about this? Well, I don't believe that he will, and I also have not yet decided. With you and Helga it is more fun, I'll tell you.

— And why will he not want, you have not quarreled with him, have you?

— No, nothing of the kind, we get along with him very well, but his girl has messed the things. And he is also a bit naive, but maybe all men are such, when they grow up, I mean. Otherwise he is a merry man and if you want I can introduce you sometime. You will probably like one another. Only that he prefers this smelly schnapps, but this is his business. I, when am not yet drinking, have no rights to express opinions, right?

— Hmm, and what has messed his girlfriend, if this is not a secret?

— voiced Siegmund.

— Well, they quarreled somehow, and later split. And he, I am telling you, was quite naive and all the time said that from the nose and below I am very like him, but in the eyes and the forehead am like she. Old wives' tales, if you ask me, because no man can recognize his semen, right? Yet he believed in this and after they had their row I as if began to bore him. Maybe I remind him about her, I don't know. Yet despite this we got along just nice. Well, with you it is different, because you don't think that I resemble you, do you?. You don't seem to me to be so silly, dad.

— Yes, yes, naturally, — answered the father, quite surprised by the sober judgement of the boy — this is pure coincidence, a freak of nature, Dieter. I like you because we go along well, but to think that you look a bit like me — no-o, I am not so ignorant.

— Well, that's what I also thought. So let us dine, ah?

— Good, my son. You set the table, and I will go out to take a bit of fresh air and smoke a cigarette, as well as to look whether our rabbits already sleep — and Siegmund headed for the court because needed some time to order his thoughts.

Dec.1998

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