

Therapeutic Tales, or Seven Stories of a Dead Client

by Oleksii Vinogradov



Oleksii Vinogradov is a Gestalt therapist who has spent years popularizing Gestalt therapy, explaining complex psychotherapeutic concepts in an accessible language. Thanks to his videos, webinars, the "Gestalt Club" community, and social networks, many have become acquainted with psychotherapy. This book is another invitation to a deeper understanding of gestalt therapy.

It describes Gestalt therapy ideas with ease and humor, covering both client work and the supervision process. This is a multifaceted narrative, full of symbolism, emotions, and unexpected discoveries. While reading, you will find numerous parallels with the psychotherapeutic process, allowing you not only to understand but also to feel and experience the path of inner changes together with its heroes. <https://www.oleksiy-vinogradov.com/en>

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Preface

The idea to write this story arose spontaneously, during heart-to-heart sessions with my friends, Gestalt therapists, and my beloved wife. I was telling them the fairy tale story "Indian Dead" by Dmytro Haiduk. And at some point it occurred to me to translate this wonderful story into psychotherapeutic language. This is how this book (which is a loose interpretation of the original text) appeared, adapted to the Gestalt therapeutic theme.

First of all, I would like to thank Dmytro Haiduk for his wonderful story and permission to publish my interpretation.

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The best psychotherapist of all time and all nations



A long time ago, long before Freud, before the creation of a code of ethics, structured therapeutic setting¹, and personality theories, there was a golden age of psychotherapy in Ukraine. And the best psychotherapist of all time and all nations lived then.

He was as handsome as Brad Pitt, as kind as Mahatma Gandhi, and as smart as Albert Einstein. He was extremely talented in psychotherapy - he knew the theoretical framework perfectly, had clear awareness, saw phenomenology² clearly, made accurate interpretations, was fully present in the session, maintained sincere contact³, and was the only person in the world who had fully worked through his childhood traumas.

The name of this therapist was Taras Clearminded, and everyone loved and respected him incredibly. They even made him the director of the entire therapeutic community (and the community was not yet divided, one big one for everyone).

Taras led the community, developed training programs, and organized intensives. He also provided psychotherapy, supervision, and led training and therapeutic groups. He also published his scientific articles in various journals, wrote books of a highly intellectual nature, gave lectures at conferences and symposia, and moderated roundtables. In short, he was a busy man.

But besides this pile of work, he had one hobby: hosting webinars.

¹ **Therapeutic Setting** A carefully arranged space where two people make room for the possibility of miracles.

It stands on three invisible pillars: a place to sit, a time to end, and a price to be paid. There is a chair for pain, a chair for hope, and a clock that quietly reminds everyone that even the deepest suffering has a time limit — and a bill attached. The setting itself does not heal — but without it, healing has nowhere to sit.

² **Phenomenology** The ancient and noble art of noticing what is actually happening in the present moment, instead of what you wish were happening. It's less about interpreting reality and more about finally meeting it for coffee.

³ **Contact** The electric moment when two worlds meet — skin to skin, gaze to gaze, soul to soul.

Contact is not about doing something to the other; it's about standing close enough to be changed by their existence.

They were free, held once a week, and anyone could come there to ask questions, to measure their professionalism, or just to see the famous Taras, the best psychotherapist of all time and all nations.

And then a certain Supervisor⁴ (at least that was his nickname) got into the habit of attending his webinars.

Every webinar, once a week, he would go into the common room, wait exactly 50 minutes, then throw the title of a book and its author into the chat and leave.

To give you an idea, there were hundreds, maybe thousands of people at these webinars, and they all wrote something. Taras - as the contact person - sometimes looked at the list of participants, but he was not interested in the Supervisor at all. Because there were as many supervisors in Ukraine as there were sands in the desert, and so if you looked around in all directions to see them, you would break your neck. The messages with books interested him a bit, but not enough to pay attention to. And they were drowned out in the general chat with other messages.

However, Taras had an assistant who regularly reviewed every single message. He would send the most important ones to Taras, forward the not-so-important ones, and write down all the others, just in case; this man was meticulous and took his responsibilities very seriously. He also wrote down a list of these books, and even kept them in a separate file.

And then one day, right in the middle of a lecture on emergent self⁵, a little girl of about ten years old came to the webinar. She started interrupting Taras and asking for something. Apparently, her mother forgot to turn off the sound and walked away, and the child burst into the webinar space.

Taras's assistant was about to mute her, but Taras stopped him. He said to let her say what she wants, because a little girl has the right to ask something. And the girl copied the title of the supervisor's book and asked him to tell her what it was about.

And then Taras felt cold inside. He, a person who had read all the psychological books and books in all related fields, not only did not know what this book was about, but realised he had never encountered this author before... 'Wait a minute!' he thought, confused, 'This is just a simple book about the origins of field theory! How is it possible I haven't read this?'

He, of course, got out of it and told the girl this theory in very simple, childlike language. The audience gasped and almost applauded. But this no longer attracted Taras's attention.

That day, he finished the webinar much earlier and immediately started googling the book. After a few hours of searching, he realized that this book was unique, available only in a

⁴ **Supervisor** A seasoned troublemaker assigned to lovingly dismantle your illusions about being a perfect therapist. A supervisor listens attentively, offers compassion, and then casually points out the thing you most hoped no one would notice. Not a judge, not a savior — more like a mirror that politely points out the spinach in your teeth of consciousness.

⁵ **Emergent Self** You are not found inside yourself — you arise at the living edge of contact. The emergent self is what happens when your needs, the world, and the moment collide and shape a fragile, breathing form called "you." It doesn't live in your mind or in your body — it lives in the meeting with the world and others.

semi-private library in Ivano-Frankivsk city⁶, and there was only one copy. This piqued his curiosity even more.

Taras wrote to his assistant: "Do you know who recommended this book in the chat room?"

To which the assistant told him about a supervisor who always waits 50 minutes, throws in the name of a book and leaves. And he dropped the file with the list of these books. And there was a real treasure there! Rare monographs, advanced theories, specialized studies, conceptual ideas. And Taras did not know any of these books. How could this be?

It made him feel uncomfortable and awkward. But not too much, just a little bit. Well, if he didn't know something, he would find out! But what he was really ashamed of was that it had taken him so long to recognize a real master of psychotherapy.

Frankly speaking, he recalled seeing the titles of these books in a chat room, but thought they were just another variation of Dale Carnegie-style books.

At that moment, Taras had a crystal clear insight. This was something that had been inevitable. He made a practice of telling everyone about contact, about presence⁷, awareness⁸, but he reacted to his own projection like a client at the first session!

And then he started thinking even more seriously. Maybe he wasn't as conscious as he thought he was? Maybe these projections of his were already blooming wildly, and he didn't even notice them?

And then he became infuriated - if only one colleague had asked him about these books or at least mentioned them. Why did everyone keep silent?

In fact, lately he had noticed that everyone praised and admired him, but no one had been critical for a long time. You know, you can't really criticize the best psychotherapist of all time and all nations. Especially if he runs your only psychotherapy organization. And Taras hadn't had his own supervision for a long time. Afterall, it was hard to find someone under those circumstances.

"What happens next?" Clearminded asked himself sternly. He knew the answer perfectly well.

If this continued, then in five years he would undoubtedly start to make mistakes in therapy, in 10 years he would be stumbling in his countertransference⁹, and in 20 years he may start

⁶ **Ivano-Frankivsk city** A city in western Ukraine where cobblestone streets remember more stories than the people walking them. Named after the famous Ukrainian poet Ivan Franko, the city is known as a cultural and literary hub. It blends poetry, quiet resistance, and layered identity — with a distinct sense of itself that seems both timeless and quietly defiant. Even the air there seems to practice phenomenology — attentive, patient, and never in a hurry.

⁷ **Presence** The art of truly being there — not just physically, but with attention, breath, and something like soul. Presence doesn't mean doing more; it means doing less, more honestly. A rare and untradeable gift in a world obsessed with speed and noise.

⁸ **Awareness:** The quiet superpower of noticing what's going on — inside, outside, and in between. It's not the same as understanding, and definitely not the same as thinking. Awareness is the flashlight you hold in the dark room of your experience, hoping it doesn't flicker at the worst moment.

⁹ **Countertransference** All the feelings the therapist wasn't planning to have — and now has to deal with in front of another human being. Sometimes it's love, sometimes it's annoyance, sometimes it's a strong desire to cancel the next session. Countertransference is not a problem — it's a compass, pointing toward something important, as long as you're brave enough to read it.

talking nonsense. And the worst thing is that everyone would continue to admire him, praise him, and quote him, because you can't destroy a strong idealization that easily.

The best psychotherapist of all time and all nations did not like this scenario.

Taras decided to talk to the Supervisor. This man, through a sophisticated and subtle metaphor, had been able to open his eyes to his own arrogance.

Taras had a lot of questions for him.

* * *

Taras could hardly wait for the next webinar. When the webinar started and the Supervisor entered the chat, Taras informed everyone that the webinar was ending early, removed all participants from the chat, and was left alone with Supervisor.

"Who are you, O most honorable one? What is your name and why do you leave me such valuable gifts?" Clearminded asked.

The interviewer replied: "I am a human being. My name is Hnat. And I do not give you expensive gifts. These are just written words about abstract models and schemes that create the illusion of experience for those who read them. They cannot replace bodily experiences, sensory experience and feelings here and now. All their value is generated by your introjects¹⁰, because you are used to considering them valuable. And as long as your mind is playing with these trinkets, true wisdom eludes you."

Taras thought about it for a while and agreed. "That's right. I find these books valuable and wise. My assistant thinks so, and almost all of my colleagues think so too. Yes, these are introjects - but introjects are useful and important. And if they're not, you could share your wisdom. But instead, you come in silence and leave in silence, leaving behind only the titles of books. Why do you do this?"

Hnat frowned. "Tell me honestly, Taras. Would you have listened to my wisdom if I hadn't brought you these books? And can you tell the difference between real wisdom and your projections?"

Taras felt ashamed. He had been thinking about this himself, and now he was showing himself to be an arrogant nobody in front of a respectable person.

"Forgive me, Supervisor Hnat. My mind is full of projections, idealizations¹¹, and introjections, replacing real experience with intellectualization. I am considered conscious, and you have shown me what my self-awareness is worth. What should I do now?"

Hnat looked at Taras carefully. His eyes seemed to look right into his soul.

¹⁰ **Introject** A belief, rule, or voice that moved in without asking. Introjects are usually inherited from parents, teachers, or society — like psychological hand-me-downs you forgot to question. They sound like you, feel like you, but aren't really you — until you chew them, digest them, and decide whether to keep or spit them out.

¹¹ **Idealization** The psychological habit of turning people into gods — until they do something human and ruin everything. Usually a defense against disappointment, or a shortcut to feeling safe. Idealization feels warm and shiny... right up until the crash.

“You have nothing to apologize to me for, the only guilt lies in yourself. On the night of Ivan’s Kupala¹², come to the old cemetery near the cherry grove. There I will show you true wisdom.”

And he disconnected. It happened exactly 50 minutes into the conversation.

From that day forward, Hnat did not appear on Taras’s webinars and did not publish any book titles.

* * *

Taras could not wait for that day. And when it came, as soon as it started to get dark, he immediately came to the agreed place. There were benches arranged in a circle, and a rather large fire was burning in the middle. Hnat was sitting on one of the largest benches with his eyes closed. He looked scary and seemed twice as big as before.

He was sitting silently, but it was clear that he was not just sitting there, but was busy with a deep awareness of internal bodily processes.

Taras came closer, sat down on the bench next to him, and started to become more mindful of his body as well. He sat down in a comfortable position, balanced his breathing, relaxed any tensions in his body that felt like tight clamps, let go of unhelpful thoughts and hindrances, and concentrated on perceptual experiences.



They sat there for perhaps ten minutes. And then Hnat spoke in a deadpan voice:

“It’s time to act, Taras. There is a field across the river, and a forest beyond it. In the forest there is a clearing, in the middle of it there is a spruce tree, and a dead man is hanging from it. Give him a therapy session and bring me his essence.”

¹² **Ivan’s Kupala** An ancient Slavic midsummer celebration involving fire, water, herbs, and suspiciously symbolic jumping rituals — some of which carry undertones that would make Freud raise an eyebrow. Currently a folkloric event in Ukraine where the collective unconscious briefly joins the party.

Taras got up, bowed, and left. At first glance, the task seemed easy. Even trivial. Although he had rarely presented client cases recently, he remembered how to do it well.

Moving away to a distance needed to maintain confidentiality, Taras opened his laptop and made a call to the forest clearing.



Contact was made on the other side, and Taras actually saw a clearing. On this clearing was the spruce tree with a dead man hanging from it. He looked thin, wiry, and for some reason was hanging upside down.

"Who are you?" the dead man suddenly asked Taras.

"I am Taras Clearminded, the best psychotherapist of all time and all nations."

"I see... And I'm Potap, a simple Ukrainian dead man," came the lively reply. "And why are you calling me, oh 'best psychotherapist of all time and all nations'?"

"In order to conduct a session with you and bring your essence to my Supervisor Hnat," Taras said without hesitation.

Potap clearly did not like this. "Mmmm...No, I'm not interested," the dead man replied, and the connection was cut off.

This did not upset Taras at all. He dialed again. The dead man once more answered.

"Don't you understand, the best therapist of all time? I don't need any sessions!" The dead man was indignant.

Taras said in a calm voice, "I have to give you a psychotherapy session. And I will do it, no matter what it takes."

And then the connection was disconnected again.

Taras dialed it again. And once more the dead man answered.

“Listen, Taras. I am of the opinion that you are seriously mistaken. First of all, it's not polite to hold a session for a client if they don't agree to it. Is this not so? And secondly, this Supervisor of yours, Hnat, is a charlatan and a crook. What makes you think you owe him anything?”

But Taras remained silent. He realized that as soon as he said a word, the dead man would immediately cut off the connection.

“Ahhh. You remain silent, so... You understand correctly: your words set me free. All right, then, don't talk. I'll do the talking. I'll tell you a story about this one guy - a molfar¹³ - who also wanted to fulfill his promises. And this is what happened.”

The first story of a dead client



Long ago, there was a city in the steppes of Kherson region in Ukraine. Many evil spirits, robbers, and wild animals roamed around the city. And the city was not protected at all - instead of city walls - there were only reeds of a meter length, forming a makeshift fence, that even a child could jump over. In short, the fence was laughable, it was such a poor defence.

However, this town was the most protected place in the whole of Ukraine. Because Molfar Anatolii was there, and he promised the local head that as long as he was alive, the city would be protected from all attacks by robbers, animals, and spirits. And also from diseases,

¹³ **Molfar** A molfar (Ukrainian: мольфар) is a person with purported magical abilities in Hutsul culture. Their abilities focus around herbalism and other folk magic.

natural disasters and poverty. Moreover, the mayor of the city council was also personally protected by Molfar. And the chairman made good use of this, milking it for all it was worth: he smoked ten pipes a day, drank a bottle of vodka, ate delicious food, which he shovelled down like a madman, and added to this, indulged in a great number of reckless and risky disorderly sexual relations. And no matter how much he pushed the limits of excess, he remained healthy, full of energy and in a good mood.

To maintain the town's protection, Anatolii worked accordingly. Every day he got up before sunrise. First, he walked around the city in a circle, whispering his molfar's spells. Then he walked down each street, burned fragrant herbs, and worshipped the gods and spirits. Then he would have lunch and go to the head chief of the city council. He would take two hundred karbovanets¹⁴ (an unheard of amount of money by the standards of the day), give fifty to hospitals, fifty to schools, ninety to the poor and needy, and ten karbovanets to his wife and son. And then he would go around the city again until late in the evening.

And Molfar did this every day, without days off, vacations and holidays, in any weather and at any time of the year. Molfar Anatoly was considered a righteous and pure man and was revered almost like an angel.

And for thirty-five years the city lived in peace and harmony.

But one night, at the gates of the city, Molfar encountered an angry monster. Its face was contorted with anger, and its spiked tail was flapping menacingly. Molfar immediately recognized the creature. It was clear as the day that nothing good could be expected here.



Anatolii stood at the gate, blocking the entrance to the city.

¹⁴ **Karbovanets** An early currency of Kyiv Rus — meaning ancient Ukraine — when silver was weighed, not printed. The karbovanets had value, shine, and a certain existential modesty: it carried the quiet awareness that nothing truly valuable lasts forever — and for that reason, loved being used not for buying objects, but for purchasing lived experience — meals shared, journeys taken, mistakes made.

"What brings you here, Koshchei¹⁵, Demon of Suffering and Pain?"

The rage-filled monster hissed: "A man from your city has desecrated my idol. I have come for revenge, and my revenge will be terrible."

"If a crime has been committed, the perpetrator must be punished. However, the punishment should not be greater than the crime itself," Anatolii said. "Desecration of an idol never requires the death of the perpetrator. If it was done unintentionally, then it requires prayers, smoking with holy herbs, and sacrificing a rooster. I will do this immediately."

"Oh, no," Koshchei whispered angrily, "My idol, a stone with ancient runes, has long been lying in the stable without due respect. And more than once it was spat on unintentionally. But today the desecrator was pointed out! And he deliberately spat on it and kicked it, saying that he would not be punished for it."

Koshchei looked into Molfar's eyes and added, "Out of respect for your righteousness, I will not kill this wretch. I will only cut off his ear and tongue, and feed his flesh to my dogs."

Anatolii immediately guessed who the desecrator was. "You are right, Demon Koshchei. This offense is serious. I will rebuild your altar and sacrifice myself, humbly hoping that you will forgive this man."

Koshchei was so surprised that he stopped hissing. "Would you, holy, noble, and righteous Molfar, give your life for the sake of some scumbag who does not distinguish a holy act from a pile of shit?"

After a short pause, Molfar answered. "I am not sacrificing my life for his sake, but for my own. I have vowed with my holiness that nothing will happen to the ruler as long as I am alive. If I do not protect him, I will not be righteous. But he has offended an otherworldly entity and deserves to be punished. If I obstruct justice, I will also be unrighteous. In both of these cases, there is no point in me living on. But as long as the ruler is alive, I can die without breaking my vow. So take my life and forgive the ruler if you can."

"Well, so be it," Koshchei agreed, "I accept your sacrifice and will try to forgive the culprit."

After this conversation, Molfar Anatolii went home and told his son to come with him to the sacred grove, sacrifice him to Koshchei by cutting off his head, and then wash the ancient stone with runes, pray upon them, and burn fragrant herbs, and honor it as tradition demands.

The son fulfilled his father's will. Meanwhile, the mother, having seen all this, also decided not to sit idly by - she threw a rope around a beam in the barn and hung herself. Molfar's son, without waiting for the morning, went to the mayor and told him everything. And after hearing such shocking news, the latter, without hesitation, stabbed himself thirty-seven times and died.

¹⁵ **Koshchei** A classic figure from Slavic mythology — immortal, skeletal, and emotionally unavailable. Often interpreted as the part of you that refuses to die even after ten years of therapy.

Molfar's poor son had already had a difficult night. And now he saw the facts before him: that the man he had beheaded was his own father, and he had lost his mother, having taken her own life. This broke the boy, and he fell dead from a broken heart.

"This, Taras, is the story of a man who kept his promises too zealously," the dead man said in summary, "and what do we have as a result? A great tragedy! He ruined himself, ruined his wife, ruined his son, and he did not save his boss."

Potap paused dramatically and continued: "So tell me, Taras Clearminded, is it worth being such a fool and keeping your promises at any cost? And who needs such useless sacrifices?" And then he added, "By the way, there is no way to remain silent here. So if you have something to say, say it. Otherwise, your mind will be taken over by demons!"

And Taras answered. Not so much because he was afraid for his sanity, but because he wanted to object to Potap.

"If the otherworldly being accepted the sacrifice, then the sacrifice was not in vain. Staying within the paradigm of the fairy tale, Molfar died the best righteous death possible, improving his karma. He will be reborn in the next life, and he will have every chance to meet the reborn souls of his family again. And the chairman of the city council, who committed suicide, did so in a fit of sincere repentance, thus largely atoning for his sins.

... But let's look at this fairy tale from a symbolic point of view. It is very well known in our psychotherapeutic circles, and has long been interpreted and analyzed from all sides.

After all, the symbolism in it is simple and clear. The city is an EGO¹⁶, the human consciousness. The dangerous environment around the city is unprocessed subconscious impulses that constantly attack the consciousness. Molfar is a well-built, stable PERSONALITY¹⁷ that protects the psyche at the cost of daily symbolic ritual actions. And the chairman of the city council is an ID¹⁸ sensation that has lost its measure of control due to a lack of feedback from reality. That is why it provoked a strong affect¹⁹ in the form of the demon Koshchei. This affect released an unresolved internal conflict.

What does this tale teach us? That the only "perfect" way out of an internal conflict is the death of a Personality. With the possibility of being reborn again, into a new Personality more adapted to the current realities.

So I have a question for you, Potap," Taras said to the dead man, "You suspect me of acting unconsciously, of blindly keeping my promise. But do you act consciously? And are you aware of your internal conflicts? And are you ready to change your rigid attitudes for the sake of the integrity of your psyche?"

¹⁶ **EGO** A function that regulates your raw impulses of desire for unquenchable pleasure and your carefully chosen mask of mannerisms, memories, and mild neuroses that passes for your unsurpassed personality. It tries to keep the peace between the part of you that wants to scream, the part that wants to please, and the part that just wants to leave the party early without saying goodbye.

¹⁷ **PERSONALITY** Your official costume for social navigation. Lovingly assembled from adaptations, habits, and a few unresolved family issues — and surprisingly resistant to change. Also known as "the part of you that explains things to your therapist."

¹⁸ **ID** The inner toddler who wants what it wants, when it wants it, and preferably twice. It lives in the basement of your psyche and keeps sending notes upstairs. Sometimes it even takes control and pulls off toddler pranks with very adult consequences.

¹⁹ **Affect** The emotional storm that flows uncontrollably through your face, body, and voice before your brain gets the memo. Not always polite, rarely convenient, but always honest.

Potap laughed: "Oh, Taras, you caught me right there! I'm ashamed, I've lost all arguments, I'm completely overwhelmed by your wisdom! But you spoke, and now I'm free."

After these words, at the 35th minute of the conversation, the connection was cut off.

Taras thought about it.

In general, the case was quite banal. As soon as the client begins to communicate directly with the therapist at the boundary of contact, he can't stand it and runs away. Obviously, in this situation, it was premature to go to the boundary of contact. And, perhaps, it was also necessary to refrain from interpreting the fairy tale, because the client was not yet ready to realize internal processes so deeply. This client would see his internal processes unfolding in the outside world, which is a typical manifestation of magical thinking²⁰.

All I need to do in such a situation is to be present and silent, giving the client space to speak, to react a little, and notice what was happening inside him, Taras thought to himself.

Taras called again to the clearing.

The second story of a dead client

"You're so persistent, Taras," the dead man instantly responded, "I can see that you won't let me go so easily."

Taras listened attentively and remained silent.

"Well, let me tell you another fairy tale. Just listen carefully, there is a hint there. There was also one persistent person like you in this story, and this is what it led to.

Long ago, somewhere near a little city of Ukraine called Poltava, there was a small town called Havrontsi. MYROSLAV, the son of a local merchant, lived there. He was young, smart and handsome.

Myroslav helped his family and worked at the market, selling clothes, jewelry, and beautiful fabrics.

One seemingly ordinary day at the market, he saw a girl more beautiful than all the goddesses and angels. The young man instantly fell in love with her. The girl came to his stall and began to look at something and then decided to buy it. She looked at the young man with her charming eyes, which blew the guy's mind. Myroslav bartered with half his strength, sold everything very cheaply, and could hardly speak at all. He was so impressed.

²⁰ **Magical Thinking** The hopeful superstition that your life controls the universe — or at least the Wi-Fi signal. It shows up when logic sleeps and emotions start writing the screenplay. In small doses, it's charming. In larger doses, it can turn you into Jesus Christ — or at least make you think you've got his job.



And this girl was not alone, but with her mother. And this mother was a wise woman. She understood perfectly the meaning of the looks the two had exchanged, and she took her daughter away from the counter. That evening she told her husband that their daughter was already an adult and that they should marry her off, because she might soon seek out a suitor of her own. So the parents didn't wait long - they quickly organized a wedding and gave the girl in marriage to a jewelry dealer.

That merchant was not young, but he treated his new wife well, always pampering her and taking care of her. And in the course of their marriage, she gave birth to three beautiful children with him.

When Myroslav came to his senses, he realized that his beloved had already left. He knew absolutely nothing about the girl - neither her name, nor her surname, nor where she was from. All he knew was that she dressed as a woman of the city, not a small village.

And Myroslav started looking for his beloved. He went around the whole town, asking almost everyone about her. And when he realized that she was not in Havrontsi, he decided to go to the neighboring town. Myroslav's parents noticed this obsession and tried to do something about it. They forbade him, threatened him, and tried to marry him. But Myroslav, without thinking twice, ran away from home and went to the neighboring town to look for his beloved. There, he also walked around the entire town, and when he didn't find her, he went to the next one.

And so he traveled from town to town like a tramp. Sometimes he got by with odd jobs, sometimes he played dice, and sometimes he stole things to get by. However, he did not lose his manners or dignity. He always took good care of himself and dressed to the nines in case he met his beloved.

Twenty years passed in this way. And then one day Myroslav came to a new city and noticed a child who looked very much like him. "This is a sign!" the man thought and followed the child to his home.

Approaching the house from afar, he saw her on the balcony.

And time had not changed her at all, and had maybe even made her more beautiful. And she saw Myroslav too. And they looked into each other's eyes in such a way that it was clear as day, that at first sight all those years ago, she too had fallen in love, and had loved him sincerely and devotedly all these years. And she even gave birth to children from another man as beautiful as Myroslav himself.

And then, when it was no longer polite to look at each other, Myroslav left.

He went around to the neighbors, asked them all manner of questions, to find out everything about his beloved. He was not altogether happy with the news. But he wasn't too upset either - he had suspected something like this.

Myroslav decided to settle in this city, not far from his beloved. He was a noble man, had no shameful intentions, and was not going to destroy another man's family. He wanted to do everything possible to make his beloved happy.

And his beloved, by the way, when she met her lover once more, felt incredibly, acutely, that everything was lost. She had lived her life in vain, married the wrong person, and there was no getting it back. And it was when, in the throes of despair, she was throwing the rope over the beam with dramatic intentions, that the maid rushed in and talked her out of it. She said that "you can always commit suicide, but there is no need to rush into it. It is better to have a one-off affair than to leave your children orphans for life." Meanwhile, she promised to arrange a date for the lovers. The woman beamed with happiness and was just waiting for that day.

And just a week later, her husband was leaving on another trip to buy precious metals. After he left, on that very night, the woman went to the local park. At night, there wasn't a single soul there, so it was a safe place to meet one's secret lover, with a variety of intentions.

And when this woman met her beloved, she hugged him tightly, and her heart stopped from incredible happiness. On realising his beloved's death, Myroslav's heart stopped dead with grief.

In the morning, the watchman saw two dead lovers lying in each other's arms. They were in a very indecent position.



The jewelry dealer sensed something was wrong and returned from his trip almost immediately. He saw a crowd examining the scene and whispering judgmentally. The man pushed the people aside, saw everything with his own eyes, and fell down dead as well, unable to bear the hellish shame of such a humiliating disgrace.

"So tell me, Taras, is it worth being so persistent?" The dead man summarized his story. "You see what it can lead to. You will lose yourself, you will ruin those you love, and innocent people can get hurt."

And then he added threateningly "Answer me, or your soul will be torn apart by affects!"

But Taras was silent. He listened calmly and concentratedly, being a model of presence.

But suddenly he felt a terrible mixture of strong emotions: anger, a panic attack, manic joy. And these emotions grew extremely rapidly, threatening to take over his entire consciousness. He summoned all his self-control, but nothing helped. His mind began to become confused, and then, at the last moment, the therapist responded:

"Listen to me, Potap. I'll tell you what really happened..."

This is a story about a young man falling in love with an Angel of Hysterical Seduction who was disguised as an ordinary girl. She beckoned him to follow her, but he was indecisive and shy. He paid for it by becoming obsessed with his love. He searched for his Angel all his life, and when he found it, it turned out that the Angel had not visited this adult woman for a long time. But Myroslav did not give up. He seduced a married woman for the sake of the illusory hope of experiencing angelic love. And it happened in the most unsuitable place for this - in the central city park. And the woman's husband, a jewelry dealer, suspected something. He pretended to be away on business, but he caught the traitors at an indecent moment.

It is worth adding that the jewelry dealer was a high-functioning benign clinical narcissist²¹. This means that he treated his wife extremely well, was almost an ideal husband, except for his constant absence due to work. But it was absolutely impossible for him to survive the public shame of this betrayal. So, in a fit of unbearable shame, he stabbed both his wife and Myroslav to death. And then, seeing what he had done and realizing the terrible consequences of his actions, he hacked himself to death.

All of them died. Only Myroslav did not die immediately. His wound was fatal, but it allowed him to live a little longer, suffering from severe pain. It was a completely inappropriate time for spiritual growth, but that is exactly what happened to Myroslav. In the last moments of his life, ignoring the hellish pain, he realized what true love is. And how this wonderful feeling of sincerely and devotedly wanting happiness for another person, happiness for all people, differs from selfish fixation, objectification, and the desire to completely own the soul and body of a person who is perceived exclusively through the prism of one's own projections.

In the last seconds of his life, Myroslav felt incredible remorse. And then he turned to the Angel of Hysterical Seduction with a request for the unrealized and impossible - to bring his beloved and her husband back to life, to give them another chance to live happily. As payment, he begged the Angel to take his immortal soul and send it to the darkest parts of hell.

And his prayer was answered. The angel was touched by such a sincere and powerful prayer. And she revived everyone, including Myroslav.

So the couple got another chance for a happy life. They forgave Myroslav and even invited him to visit. But he politely refused. Being born twice, he saw his purpose in this world. It was to help restore the energy of love to all people, just as it had happened to him. But preferably not under such dramatic circumstances.

At first he started talking to people, listening to them. Then he traveled around the cities, giving lectures. And later he became a famous psychotherapist. Now he runs a lot of programs and specializations, working with the body, sexuality, codependent relationships, etc. I also worked with him several times, and he told me this story personally.

And you see what the point is, Potap. You say that this is a story about excessive stubbornness. But I think it's a love story, and we have both versions of the story - yours and mine. Only your version has a bad, tragic ending. So tell me, Potap, do you know what love is?"

The dead man was silent for a while, and it seemed that this question was unpleasant for him.

"Well, Taras," he muttered with uncertainty. "You spoke, so I'm free!"

He disconnected in the 39th minute.

Taras felt elated.

²¹ **Benign Clinical Narcissist** A person with a deep need to be admired — and just enough charm to pull it off. They mean well, usually, and sometimes even listen — but only after receiving a generous helping of flattering reflections about themselves. Approach with curiosity, and mild sunscreen.

So what do we have? This case is not as simple as it seemed at first. This means that you can really flex your therapeutic muscles. Taras thought to himself.

‘On the one hand, the client speaks in metaphors. In this way, he talks about his experiences, thoughts, and internal conflicts in a safe way. Such a presentation, in a certain sense, is a peculiar form of depersonalization. And judging by the fact that everyone dies in his stories and the question of love frustrated him, this client clearly has had a powerful traumatic experience. By the way, the fact that he is dead is also a very transparent hint of a traumatic experience.

But if he is a person with traumatic experience, maybe I shouldn't have frustrated him with a question about love? Wasn't it premature to use such a provocative approach to therapy? Hmm... Yes, it is risky.’ He continued to ask himself questions. ‘... However, I think it is justified. The client provokes me and teases me, so my provocation in response can be perceived as trying to be closer and not being indifferent. At least that's what my therapeutic intuition tells me.

... But there is another aspect to this situation. The client mysteriously has power over me. He forces me to talk and threatens me, and if I don't obey, his threats come true. This behavior is typical of borderline clients. And with boundary clients, what should you do? Keep your boundaries.’

Taras checked his headphones and turned them off. Now, no matter what Potap said, he couldn't hear him. But he would see him. In order to conduct a full 50-minute session, he would have to work only on the basis of non-verbal information. To put it mildly, a dead man's nonverbal manifestations are not very eloquent. But Taras had been a therapist for years. He called the meadow again.

The third story of a dead client

"Hello, Taras! I knew you'd call," Potap said as if nothing had happened. "Hello? Is there something wrong with your computer? Headphones not working? It doesn't matter, you can hear me fine anyway. Ahhh!!! I get it, you turned off the sound on purpose! You're a psychotherapist, yet you missed the obvious: I'm dead, so I can't talk to you with my mouth. I'm talking directly to your head. But let's get down to business. I have another story for you. And in this story, no one died... Well, almost no one.

Long ago, somewhere near the Ukraine city of Odessa, there was an ancient wedding chapel. It was called a wedding chapel not because people got married there. But because if you prayed properly and performed the right ritual, you could find the groom you wanted.

The ritual was as follows. One had to bring a young pumpkin with eyes painted on it. Near the chapel, one had to put the pumpkin on an empty chair, read a prayer to St. Gestalt thirty-three times, describe the desired groom, and surrender to the will of Wise Field.

This chapel was old, almost falling apart, and few people knew about it. But some still did.

One day a mother came to the chapel. She performed the necessary ritual and ordered the richest groom for her favorite daughter. In the end, she trusted Wise Field²², but just in case, she threw a pumpkin into the cart with the traders.



And then the father of the same girl came to the chapel. He also performed the necessary ritual, this time ordering his daughter the smartest groom. And he put the pumpkin on the nearest research ship.

And then the girl herself came. She performed the same ritual and ordered the bravest groom for herself. She threw the pumpkin to the local prince's soldiers, because you can count on the Benevolent Field, but don't just sit with your hands folded.

And all three pumpkins worked.

The first pumpkin arrived at the port of Odessa and went to Zhadan, the son of the richest Ukrainian merchant. It burst right under his feet. At that moment Zhadan realized that he had fallen madly in love. He climbed on his iron bird and flew to his beloved.

The second pumpkin went straight to the Kyiv Central Library. A young but talented sage called Zoryan, who was wise beyond his years, studied there. The pumpkin exploded in front of his face, Zoryan fell madly in love and disappeared, teleporting to his beloved.

And the third pumpkin ended up at a heroic competition and exploded near Cossack Yaropolk, the strongest, most skillful, and handsome Cossack on both banks of the Dnipro river.

And so the three young men came to their beloved, and they all began to ask for her hand in marriage.

²² **Field** Not a meadow, but close: the dynamic, ever-shifting whole of you and everything around you. In Gestalt therapy, the field is where experience happens — and it always includes more than you think.

The situation turned out to be awkward. The girl's parents thought about it for a while and withdrew from the choice. They said, "You're an adult now, you decide for yourself." The girl asked the men to show themselves. To make it easier to choose.

Then Jaropolk jumped on his horse and, flexing his muscles, he leapt up on the horse, and shot eight arrows at an apple hanging on a tree. Seven of the arrows hit tangentially, peeling the apple. He was so precise, that the last arrow shot off a mosquito's eggs as it was flying. "This is only a small part of what I can do!" Yaropolk winked at the girl. "With me you will never be bored, and I will always be able to protect you!"

But Zoryan was not confused or discouraged, he turned the apple into chocolate with his mind and disappeared. And, invisibly, he touched the girl's ear, causing her to feel involuntary pleasant goosebumps that went down to her stomach. "This is only a hundredth of what I can do," he whispered gently. "Marry me, and you will experience true pleasure with me!"

After that, Zhadan approached the girl and, in his usual simple and effective manner, said "This iron bird is now yours. And this is only a tiny part of what I can offer you."

After that, it became even more difficult for the girl to make her choice. Almost impossible. Each groom was handsome in his own way, and she had already mentally envisioned living her life with each of them and the children they would have. So she asked them to wait until the morning, and then she would make up her mind.

After her experience, it was difficult for her to fall asleep, and when she did, she dreamed of picturesque images of a polyamorous family where everyone was happy and flowers grew in her garden, gradually turning into beautiful children. Then the flowers began to wither, the clouds turned black, her men turned into shaggy monsters, and she woke up. Below was the sky, and above was the earth.

The girl realized that she was hanging upside down in a huge hairy hand. And this hand belonged to a huge monster.

The fact is that on this very night, Demon Yahii celebrated his thousandth birthday. And his mother allowed him to take his hundredth wife. So he didn't think twice about kidnapping the girl and taking her to his devilish castle.

His other wives met the girl there. They started to tell her that everything was not so bad and scary. That Demon Yahii was not always so terrible. Sometimes he was of normal size, and even a little cute sometimes. And sometimes he gives gifts. But they said it hesitantly, constantly looking away. The girl did not believe them at all.

And while the wives were preparing the tents for the upcoming wedding, the girl was crying bitterly. She longed for her lost destiny, for her un-lived beautiful life, and for her wonderful suitors.

And the girl's suitors, by the way - the grooms to be - didn't just sit still.

As soon as the boys learned that the girl had been kidnapped, they immediately rushed to rescue her. The guys boarded Zhadan's iron bird and carefully landed on the roof of the devil's castle.

There, Zoryan turned invisible, snuck up on the girl, and whispered in her ear: "Don't be afraid, my dear, I will get you out of here." And then he quietly led her to the roof of the castle. But at that very moment, the Demon Yahii was returning to the castle with hundreds of other demons, guests invited to his wedding.

Without hesitation, Yaropolk took out his bow and shot an arrow straight into the monster's eye.



The not-so-small monster instantly turned into a giant, grabbed Yaropolk with his hand and swallowed him. And then he reached out to do the same with the other young men. But he stopped suddenly. He coughed, then began to wheeze, blush, and then grabbing his throat, he fell dead. And out of his mouth came our hero Yaropolk, smiling defiantly.

Then Demon Yagii opened his eyes and raised his head in surprise - he, an immortal being, had not been killed so brazenly for a long time. Meanwhile, his invited guests were giggling ironically, saying, "Look, the demon is dead, and at the hands of a human being!"

Then the monster got angry and wanted to grab Yaropolk again. But the hero was prepared for such a turn of events. He instantly jumped on the demon's head and stabbed his sword right into his neck.

After that, the crowd of monsters began to laugh openly, which only made Yagii more angry. Yagii wanted to capture Yaropolk again, and the situation repeated itself.

In short, after Yaropolk had killed the demon five times, maybe seven, and each time in a new way, his monster friends were already holding their stomachs with laughter. And it seemed that watching Yagii being killed was much more fun for them than going to a wedding. Yagii decided that he had had enough of this humiliation. He told the people to get out of his kingdom immediately.



And that's all they needed - they got on an iron bird and flew home.

On that same day, demon Yagii stole another wife, and he got married, and everything was fine. Except that he tried not to remember the first incident, though his monster friends have been making fun of him ever since.

When the heroes returned home, it was absolutely impossible to choose a groom, as each of them had done their part to save the girl. So she decided to ease her burden of choice and turned to the best psychotherapist of all time and all nations for help. And she made an appointment with him for a couple, or rather, triple, ugh, quadruple consultation.

"So what would you advise them, Taras? Who is the girl supposed to marry?" Potap finished his story. "Answer me, or your organs will be eaten by hairy demons!"

From the very beginning, this meeting had not gone as Taras expected. And he was experiencing quite a mix of feelings about it: irritation (because he was exposed), frustration (because his trick didn't work), embarrassment (because it was so primitive), and interest in how it all unfolded. And there was an echo of something else. Something he didn't want to admit to himself. He was dumbstruck.

It was impossible to make sense of this mix of experiences instantly, so Taras stuck to his original plan: to support the client in becoming aware of his inner processes.

"What do you think, Potap?" Taras redirected the question to the client.

"It's clear as day," the dead man said cheerfully, "She has to marry Yaropolk. Yes, everyone contributed to the girl's rescue. But what can Zhadan and Zoryan say about this journey? That they had been to the Demon's castle and had helped to save their beloved. And what can Yaropolk say? That he was not afraid to fight the immortal demon and risked his life for the sake of love. And he defeated him, saving his beloved, himself, and his comrades. Isn't he the one who deserves his beloved's hand the most? Tell us your opinion, Taras. You will not be able to remain silent!"

Taras answered: "If this girl came to me for a consultation, I would not give her advice, Potap. I would help her to look at the situation from different, less obvious angles. Here you have it simple: the hero defeated the villain and deserves the hand of the princess. But was this battle really necessary? When they saw the devils from afar, everyone could have boarded the iron bird and flown away. But then Yaropolk would not have received the hand of his beloved, because he did nothing to save her. He could not allow this to happen. So he started the battle, attracting the attention of all the monsters. And it was good that he fought with only one demon, while the others just laughed. If any of the monsters had interfered in the battle, it would have ended very badly. So who was Yaropolk thinking about when he shot the arrow - his beloved or how he would heroically defeat the monster? Was he worried about the woman's life or about his ability to marry her? And note that in the end, he failed to kill the monster, almost died himself, and jeopardized the entire operation. And all this for the sake of fame and his own pride. So does she need a groom who is willing to jeopardize her life for the sake of fame?

As for Zoryan, something doesn't add up. If he was such a wise man that he immediately teleported to the girl and caressed her ears with seductive speeches, why did he have to fly to the castle on an iron bird? Why didn't he come right away and save the girl? And what kind of a wise man is he who missed the kidnapping of his beloved right under his nose? Maybe he is not telling us something? And does she need a groom who is not what he seems?

Zhadan's story is quite different. He neither knew how to fight monsters nor was he ready to perform magic tricks, but he immediately rushed to save his love. Isn't that real courage? It was on his iron bird that they flew to the castle, that they could fly away without any attention. And no one would have suspected anything if it weren't for Yaropolk. In fact, Zhadan did more than anyone else to save her.

These are my thoughts, Potap. And the girl still has to decide for herself what to do. And, I'll tell you, she already knows the solution to this question herself - her subconscious has shown everything vividly in a dream. But recognizing her secret desires is another story.

"How brilliantly you 'turned out', how aptly you turned everything around. I admire you!" exclaimed Potap with feigned reverence. "But you spoke, which means I have to go."

And in the 42nd minute, he disconnected.

Taras was in no hurry to call again. He needed time.

This session confused him quite a bit. He could have started thinking about client's deflection²³ or interruption contact²⁴ in general. But he had to honestly admit to himself that this was not just a complicated case that the Supervisor gave him. This was therapy that Taras did not know how to deal with. The client was dead, and that in itself was very unusual. But that was only half the problem. The client interrupts the contact, and at the same time forces Taras to make contact. But in reality, it's the other way around! The client is trying to communicate with Taras, because every time he addresses him directly. And Taras interrupts this contact as much as he can: he accuses the client of magical thinking, or he turns

²³ **Deflection** The fine art of dodging emotional bullets with sarcasm, logic, or a sudden craving for tea. A stylish way to avoid contact while looking busy.

²⁴ **Interruption of Contact** Any moment when the flow between self and other breaks, stumbles, or politely vanishes. Sometimes it protects, sometimes it sabotages — but it always has something to say.

everything into internal phenomenology. But the last time he turned off the headphones altogether. And every time the client overcomes Taras's resistance and still gets him to make contact. So is it worth resisting any longer?

'I tried to keep quiet all the time, just sit through the whole thing, observing and analyzing. But would I be able to bring the essence of the client to the Supervisor in this way?' he thought. 'Obviously, no. I need to do more than just listen to the client, it is important to understand him, to comprehend him, to touch him. Now I will not only be present, but also included. And this is what will help bring the session to an end.'

The fourth story of a dead client

"Taras, what took you so long to call? I've missed you a bit," Potap began cheerfully, "and I have another story for you. There is a serious question for you.

Once upon a time there were two friends.

One of them was named Bohdan. He loved to go out, drink and fool around. And he lived accordingly - one day he was beating someone up, the next day he was seducing a beautiful lady.

The second one was called Sviatoslav. He loved psychotherapy, was balanced, intelligent, and persistent. And he lived accordingly - he spent half a day reading books, half a day watching psychological videos on YouTube, went on three-day retreats on weekends, and in the evening he had philosophical debates with nerds like himself.

In short, these friends were completely different. They were united only by their young age and incredible good looks. But, in spite of everything, they were strong friends and stood by each other.

One day Bohdan came to visit Sviatoslav. And the smart guy immediately realized that his friend had fallen head over heels in love again.

"Sviatoslav, my friend! I met *some* girl! Some girl I tell you! I can't live without her!" his friend began to speak confusedly. "And she didn't even look at me! Woe is me, I am the most miserable person in the world!" he cried.

"Okay, let's take it in turns. What happened this time?" Sviatoslav asked with feigned severity.

And his friend told him that when he was walking in the market, he met an incredibly beautiful woman. Young, slender, graceful, dressed to the nines and wearing stylish jewelry. And, of course, he immediately fell madly in love with her. But this woman only glanced at him in passing, smiled and left.

"And can you imagine, she even crumpled up a piece of paper and threw it at my feet! What a humiliation!" Bohdan then showed the piece of paper to Sviatoslav.

There was something strange about this story. Sviatoslav took the piece of paper, smelled it, unfolded it (there was a bird feather inside), and then looked at it carefully.

"Bohdan, didn't you notice? She likes you, it's obvious!"

"How so?" Bohdan was not aware of anything at all.

Sviatoslav explained in detail: "The fact that she threw the paper is a secret sign that she sent you. The paper smells like her lily-scented perfume, which means that this woman's name is Lilia. The feather inside the paper belongs to a raven and indicates the Ukrainian city of Rivne. And the paper itself is a page from a Gestalt journal. So everything is clear: Lilia invites you to meet her in Rivne for a Gestalt intensive. By the way, it starts there in three days.

Bohdan frowned, trying to understand what was said. "Aren't you up to something, Sviatoslav? Why would a woman make such complicated riddles?" he wondered.

"Come on," Sviatoslav replied, "it's a complicated riddle for you. For educated people, it's easier than opening a book. We used to play such charades in elementary school."

Anyway, the prospect of meeting his newly-made beloved was very attractive to Bohdan. So he signed up for the intensive course without hesitation. Sviatoslav came along to support his friend and see if he understood everything correctly. And it was interesting to see the incredible beauty.

So they arrived in Rivne, checked in, and waited for the Gestalt intensive to begin. And when it began, at the first lecture, Bohdan almost immediately found Lilia with his eyes. He wanted to approach her, but Sviatoslav stopped him.



"Don't beat around the bush, my friend! A beautiful woman needs a special approach. Better buy this book and put this thing inside - so she will know your name and understand your intentions."

Bohdan was surprised. "How can she understand anything here, when even I don't understand?"

Sviatoslav laughed. "What's not to understand? The book is called 'Healthy Aggression in Gestalt Therapy,' and everyone who knows a little bit about it knows that aggression is the energy of approach and contact. And the thing inside, Bohdan, is a bandana. Doesn't this word remind you of anything?"

Bohdan bought a book, put a bandana inside, and asked the courier to deliver it to his beloved. The courier returned very confused. He said that Lilia spoke to him haughtily, and when she read the title of the book and saw the thing inside, she started screaming, tore two buttons off the courier's shirt, and kicked him out.

Bohdan fell into sorrow. "So she is brushing me off?"

Sviatoslav broke into a smile.

"You've got it all wrong again, Bohdan. Two buttons are two days of intensive training. And since she tore them off the courier, in two days he has to come back to Lilia's and get a new message for you."

The friends waited for two days. And when they did, Bohdan almost despaired. This time Lilia didn't even want to talk to the courier. She ordered him to leave, not through the main entrance, but through the back door. She did not give Bohdan any message, did not even mention him.

"Oh, Bohdan," Sviatoslav rejoiced, "Congratulations! Your dreams have come true, my friend! Get ready, clean yourself up, and come to the apple orchard in the evening. Lily will be waiting for you in the gazebo. This time, the sign is the clearest and most obvious - there is no other way to interpret it."

And indeed. Bohdan came to the garden and Lilia was waiting for him. And boy! He got much more from her than he expected! (If you know what I mean...) It blew his mind, and he asked her to date him. He even started hinting at a wedding.

"You're a good guy, Bohdan. But how can I get married when I've already been married for a long time? I dress and behave accordingly. How could you not notice that?" said Lilia.

Bohdan was not upset at all.

"Then I'll steal you away! We'll go to the mountains. There is a tribe there that will marry us, and it will be considered a legitimate wedding. It even cancels out the old wedding. There is a special word for it... I forget the word. But it doesn't matter, I'll remember the word later."

Lilia looked at Bohdan with suspicion.

"Okay, I'll think about it," she said and ran two fingers along his cheek. "Goodbye for now! I'll be glad to see you when you next visit."

"So can I come back tomorrow?" Bohdan asked.

Lilia was surprised.

"What's going on, Bohdan? There were two fingers, not one. Didn't you notice?"

"I noticed, but I didn't understand," Bohdan admitted, with sincerity.

"If you don't understand such simple hints, how did you unravel all my messages?"

And then Bohdan told her about his friend Sviatoslav.

Then Lilia, after some thought, took a piece of paper and wrote: "Wisdom is an ornament for a man. Any time is favorable for contact with a wise man."

Bohdan passed this phrase on to his friend, but he still did not understand. Sviatoslav understood everything from the first line. And he was not at all happy.

"Bohdan, let's get out of here. It's not a good thing to be messing around with another man's wife, and such a spoiled one at that."

Bohdan supported this idea, but asked to leave not immediately, but in a few days. He wanted to have time to say goodbye to his beloved properly. After all, it's not polite to leave without saying goodbye.

Then Sviatoslav wrote a message in response: "Purity and sincerity are the true adornment of a woman. Any day is unfavorable for the one who has lost it."

When Lilia read this, she was so moved that she cried. During the whole date, she seemed to wander in her thoughts, and when it was time to say goodbye, she brought out a fresh apple pie and said, "Pass this on to your friend. This is my gratitude for his wise words."

When Bohdan brought the pie to his friend, Sviatoslav didn't even smell it, but threw it in the trash. From there, a stray dog got it and ate it. Suddenly, the dog dropped dead. This is when Bohdan understood everything. He was very angry at the lecherous girl who had almost poisoned his best friend.

"I'm going to kill her!" Bohdan shouted, and he was really ready to do it.

But Sviatoslav talked him out of it. He had a plan of his own to punish the wretch. He asked Bohdan to visit her again and get her drunk enough to pass out. Bohdan was a master at such things. Sviatoslav handed Bohdan a devaluing trident - a three-pronged spear (like Poseidon has). And then he told him to give the woman a few narcissistic scratches while she was unconscious. Bohdan then had to steal the most valuable thing - her Gestalt Therapist Certificate.

The next day, he had to come to the central square of the intensive and publicly burn this certificate. And if anyone asked Bohdan about it, he was to say that his mentor — a master of Gestalt, Awaren Fieldwalker — had given him the certificate and instructed him to do it. And he convinced Bohdan that there was nothing to worry about, Sviatoslav had thought of everything and arranged it.



Bohdan conscientiously and consistently did everything that was required. And yes, there were questions for him. Lilia was a well-known and respected psychotherapist, so during the public burning of her certificate, Bohdan was grabbed by concerned Gestaltists and immediately taken to the Ethics Commission of the intensive. Although the commission gave him the floor, they didn't want to hear about any 'Masters of Gestalt Therapy'. They ordered him to be publicly flogged on the same central square and then expelled from the Gestalt community. The sentence was to be carried out immediately, but at that moment the master of Gestalt therapy Awaren Fieldwalker himself entered the room. He looked to be in his seventies, with a gray beard, penetrating eyes, an imperious manner, and a devaluing trident in his hands. In short, he looked stern and convincing.

"Bohdan, what do these people want from you?" he asked loudly and insistently.

Bohdan realized by the voice that it was his friend Sviatoslav. He began to frantically explain the situation. The master listened silently and said, "That's right, I ordered Bohdan to burn that witch's certificate. Let my student go!"

Then the ethics committee began to ask about the situation in more detail, and the master told the following story: "Last night I was sitting at the cemetery and realized my own death. My Personality stopped registering changes and dissolved, the ID almost stopped all vital activity of the body. Only the EGO function refused to perceive its own choice as a phenomenon, not an action - desperately protecting its own subjectivity. I opened my eyes and saw a fire burning in the cemetery. A woman was sitting by it, holding a young Gestaltist in her arms. He was screaming desperately, and that's why I couldn't concentrate.

I came closer and saw that he was tied up and the woman was holding a knife. It was a witch - one of those who kidnap and eat novice Gestalt therapists alive. I ordered her to run away, but she disobeyed me and attacked me with the knife. I stabbed her several times with the trident of devaluation, but she was nimble, so I only scratched her. But it was enough to scare her and she ran away, showering me with curses.



Then I went to the fire and found her certificate. That's how I got this thing, which I tried to ritually burn with my student's hands. As for the young Gestaltist, I passed him on to a Gestalt course, which took place near the cemetery. Now he is in no danger."

It should be noted here that recently one participant in the Gestalt program did disappear. It happened under very mysterious circumstances. Many suspected that he had been stolen by a witch.

When the Master reported the Gestaltist, the trustees immediately went to the cemetery and found him there: he was sitting happily on his three-day study.

Then the Ethics Committee asked the last question: "Oh, honorable Master Fieldwalker, are there any other signs by which we can recognize this witch?"

The Master answered clearly and concisely, "The traces left by my trident."

Then the Ethics Commission called Lilia. Right from the doorway, she had obvious narcissistic scratches. And when the Master saw her, he emphasized that he recognized her. No matter how much the beauty tried to justify herself, her fate was sealed.

No, Taras. She was not killed. She wasn't put in jail or even sued. She was put on a raft, towed to the middle of the river and let go downstream. She was given neither a paddle nor a stick so that she wouldn't interfere with the river's decision to decide her fate. And even her teachers abandoned her - they all believed that she was a witch. It was hard to argue with such convincing evidence.

And the next day, the entire intensive course saw off the venerable Master and his student. The friends quickly got into a boat, sailed away, and tied up on the shore. Svyatoslav took off his fake beard and wig, which had already made him quite hot. They were about to wash when they saw her.

Lilia was walking to them from the other side of the river. She walked directly on the water. Her face was burning with anger, which made this beautiful woman even more beautiful. She

approached Bohdan, tore off his head with her bare hands, and drank all his blood in three gulps. Then she approached Sviatoslav, who was dumbfounded, and said:

“Don't be afraid of me, Svyatoslav, I won't kill you. You turned out to be smarter than I thought you were. You have exposed my witchy nature. Yes, I am a bad person. I inspire paranoia, put a hex on people, seduce young clients, violate copyrights and eat young Gestaltists. You see, with such a set of shortcomings, I need a very smart, decent, kind - and at the same time - strict and fair man. Someone who is good at keeping boundaries, who can balance my terrible tendencies and tame my unrestrained nature. Anyone else, I will eat at once. And I will love and respect you until the end of my days. True, we will have to live in a mountain cave instead of a nice apartment. But, if you think about it, this is partly your fault. However, I am not angry with you. And don't be angry with me either. Let's go to our cave - it's not as bad as you think.”

Lilia put her arms around Sviatoslav's waist, and they flew off to the Carpathian Mountains. Since then, no one has seen them or heard anything about them.

“And the more I think about this story, Taras,” Potap continued, “the more I am convinced that Sviatoslav suffered because of his good qualities: decency, intelligence, integrity, and loyalty to friendship. Fate punished him for behaving too rightly. Isn't that right, Taras Clearminded? Or do you think otherwise? If you have your own opinion and you are silent, say it, or your brain will boil and explode!”

“Yes, I think otherwise,” Taras replied calmly. “Lilia's parents are most to blame for this situation. The story doesn't say a word about them, but it's obvious that you have to be extremely bad parents to raise such an evil witch out of an innocent child. Nevertheless, this girl did everything she could to compensate for her trauma - she even studied to become a psychotherapist. But no matter how hard you work on yourself, you can't fix a deep attachment trauma²⁵ on your own. And psychotherapy also has its limitations. So all she had to do was find someone who could help her.

Sviatoslav's good qualities had nothing to do with it. Bohdan did not have such qualities and suffered much more. Sviatoslav suffered not from his good qualities, but from his unrecognized shadow side.²⁶ Which was personified by his future wife. So in a sense, this is a worthy union. What about your shadow sides that you don't recognize, Potap?”

“What are your assumptions?” the deceased asked playfully.

“All your stories are about relationships between people. I think it's very lonely for you to be hanging in that tree,” replied Sviatoslav.

Potap laughed. “Good idea, Taras Clearminded. You are making great progress! But please note: the point is not that my stories are about relationships. The point is that basically all stories are about relationships. And now you've spoken, which means I have to go.”

²⁵ **Attachment Trauma** The original heartbreak — not from romance, but from someone who should've held you and didn't. It's the invisible wound left when your need for connection met silence, absence, or chaos. You grow up, but a part of you is still knocking on the door that will never open.

²⁶ **Shadow** The parts of yourself you've locked in the cellar — inconvenient emotions, wild impulses, impolite truths. You spend half your life denying them, and the other half accidentally acting them out. The shadow is not your enemy — it just wants to be invited upstairs for a joyful evening party, preferably. Otherwise, it tends to form a secret inner Masonic order that quietly runs your life.

The connection was cut off.

It was time to recognize what Taras had long suspected. The dead Potap was not just any ordinary corpse, but a corpse that knew a lot about psychotherapy. At the very least, an experienced client. Although, judging by the latest story about the Gestalt intensive, he was most likely a psychotherapist, because only a psychotherapist could talk in such detail about the nuances of the Gestalt community.

If you let your thoughts run wild, what else could you say about Potap?

That he is lonely, but it is difficult for him to admit it. That he wants to be heard but cannot express himself directly. That he wants intimacy, but is afraid to be vulnerable and runs away. He is intelligent, experienced in communication, feels and understands other people well - and this is what paradoxically leaves him lonely. In his Egotism, he hides behind a strong layer of hidden defenses, rationalization, and a subtle ability to control his spontaneity unnoticed by others. This creates two levels in his communication. On the outside, he appears cheerful, responsive, sincere, empathetic, and open — and the person next to him feels contact, emotion, and closeness. But this is precisely how he hides in plain sight: gently playing along, he shifts the other person's attention away from his own self-disclosure and toward themselves.

This sophisticated form of egoism is often characteristic of experienced psychotherapists. And it is quite difficult to explain, you can only feel it...

Taras stopped at this place. For the second time recently, he had a powerful insight. In fact, he knew almost nothing about Potap. Everything he had just thought about was not about the client, but about himself. Taras realized his own projection²⁷. His shadow side, which he had until now, refused to recognize.

The truth is that it was he who felt deep, existential loneliness. A loneliness in which he couldn't find a loved one because he had no equal. In which no one could really understand him, because no one could really see him. After all, everyone was interested in his extraordinary skills, sharp mind, exceptional professionalism - all the shining narcissistic defenses, but not him. He was lonely, which is very scary to admit to yourself. So he hid it. He hid it in the most visible place - in a profession related to relationships, where it was important to see the other, to hear them, and to help others get rid of this loneliness. At the same time, he did not have a truly close relationship where he could relax and be himself.

Taras recalled Potap's last words to his remarks about relationship stories: "Good idea, Taras Clearminded. You are making great progress!"

So who is a psychotherapist to whom?

²⁷ **Projection** When your inner movie starts playing on someone else's face. You think it's about them, but spoiler alert — it's mostly about you. Projections are great teachers, especially when they embarrass you in public.

The fifth story of a dead client

This time, Taras did not call the meadow, as he had done in the past. His task was to take the essence of the client to his Supervisor. And in previous attempts, he made hasty assumptions, made stereotypical diagnoses, and fell into projections. All of this was just a clumsy attempt to convey the fullness of the client's personality through incomplete, fragmentary, and fixed descriptions, moreover, distorted through the prism of the therapist's perception.

The only available way to bring the essence of the client in its entirety is to bring the client himself.

So this time Taras came to the meadow physically. He quickly found a spruce tree and, as was to be expected, saw a dead man hanging upside down.



He untied the dead man, put him on his shoulder and carried him to the Supervisor.

"I see that our interaction is getting closer and closer, Taras," Potap suddenly broke the silence. And without waiting for an answer, he immediately continued, "Okay, I have another story for you. This time, listen carefully - there is an important hint.

Somewhere far away in the Carpathian Mountains, there lived a small prince, Sirko Stefak. Such princes were as common as stars in the night sky: a few villages in possession, a one-story estate, modest wealth, and no shortage of arrogance and ambition. The prince had three daughters, and they lived in a fabulous and luxurious garden on the princely estate. This garden was closely guarded, and no one was allowed to enter it under threat of death - especially men. The prince carefully guarded the virginity of his beloved daughters and, as usual, planned to marry them off in a favorable way.

The eldest daughter, named Orysia, recently celebrated her fifteenth birthday. And as a gift, her father allowed her to register on the local social network Redneckgram. Just so you understand, Taras, in those days the internet was sold in three-liter jars, and Redneckgram was far from modern. A cheap "Plastic fantastic" was used to take a low-quality photo, and it

was carried by pigeons to the nearest villages, where the head of the village council would paste it on the bulletin board near the central square. So the number of subscribers to Redneckgram in those days directly depended on the number of pigeons.

One day a local young redneck called Hryts, came to the bulletin board. When he saw the young beauty, he fell madly in love with her. He couldn't sleep, refused to eat, stopped chasing wild geese - he was always thinking about his beloved. And there was nothing to think about, because he, an ordinary pig farmer, was not worth a fingernail of his beautiful beloved. And they had no chance of being together.



So Hryts realized that he had only one way out - to go drown himself. He went to a local pond and undressed. But before he took the plunge, something pushed him to call the psychological support service. He told them about his situation and his intentions. But he asked them not to dissuade him, saying that everything was decided; he was saying goodbye to this cruel world.

However, his plans were not to be realized. It wasn't just some psychology student doing on-the-job training who picked up the phone. The call was answered by a very old and very experienced psychotherapist. Although his body was sedentary, his skin was wrinkled, and his breathing was slow, his mind was clear and quick, and his eyes looked with a clear, deep look.

As soon as Hryts hung up the phone, the therapist he had just spoken to appeared out of nowhere.



"Greetings, Hryts. I am Giovanni Sebastiano, the mighty sage and savior of young souls. Don't kill yourself just yet. I can help you marry your beloved. But for this you have to give me your strength, your body, forget your previous life, and respond to everything I do with you: "Thank you, Giovanni Sebastiano". And nothing else. Do you agree to such conditions?"

Of course, between the options of drowning right now or marrying his beloved, the choice was obvious. The guy agreed to all the conditions and said "Thank you, Giovanni Sebastiano! Take my strength, take my body and tell me about my new life."

"Your new name is Olesya," the wise man said and took the boy to his room.

The guy's new name was very confusing. But he didn't say anything, he just replied as agreed: "Thank you, Giovanni Sebastiano." The old man took him to a forest hut that was far from civilization. There he sat him in a soft chair and made him look at a metal ball swinging on a rope. Gradually, the metal ball grew bigger and bigger, until at first it filled the entire room, and then it completely swallowed the boy.

The boy looked at himself and discovered that he had become a little girl. About seven years old. This girl was in the School of Decent Women. She then went on to spend a whole year being taught everything a noble woman should know - manners, style, dancing, cooking, restraint and nobility. A year later, the girl returned to the sage's hut, and Hryts realized that he was sitting in a chair in his own body, and Giovanni began to carefully test the knowledge he had gained. In doing so, he found himself disappointed. He tsked with displeasure and sent the boy back into the metal ball. There, Hryts, who became Olesya, found himself now in the body of a nine-year-old girl. And she spent four long years studying. Olesya studied well, her teachers treated her strictly but lovingly. Over time, Olesya made friends with other girls, with whom she dreamed of all the delights of adulthood: suitors, luxurious dinner parties, and...

Suddenly, Hryts found himself back in the sage's hut. This time, it took him a long time to come to his senses, to realize that he was not a girl, and to remember who he was and why he was there. Giovanni checked him very carefully, gave him the most difficult tasks, and then hummed with satisfaction.

“Now you're ready. Get ready - we're leaving tomorrow.”

Hryts didn't understand anything, but he said what he had promised: “Thank you, Giovanni Sebastiano.”

The next day, Giovanni put earrings in the boy's ears. And Hryts immediately turned into Olesya again - now thirteen years of age. The wise man explained that while the earrings were in his ears, the boy would be in the girl's body, and if they were removed, he would turn into himself.

Giovanni and Hryts-Olesya traveled for four days, and on the fifth day they arrived at the residence of Prince Sirko Stefak. The prince was very happy to learn that a famous foreign psychotherapist had arrived. Such events are rare in such a remote place, so a visiting therapist could not only fix a few quirks in Sirko's head, but also raise his reputation among the princes in the neighborhood.

He greeted them respectfully and showed remarkable hospitality. He offered to send Olesya to his daughters' garden, so that the girls could get to know each other. Olesya was only too happy to do so. The girls were friendly and accepted Olesya as their own. They talked, drank tea, played, and chatted about being future brides. Only the eldest daughter, Orysia, refused to talk and went alone to the stream in the garden. Her sisters told Olesya to pay no attention to it, saying that she would be married soon, and that she, being a fanciful girl, wanted to choose her own groom, but of course, it doesn't happen that way.

However, Olesya eventually found Orysia and brought her out for a sincere conversation. Almost in tears, Orysia said that she would be married off to some rich old man and that all her young girlhood would be ruined. She dreamed of an ordinary guy who would be sensitive and love her. And she would rather live in a tent with her true love than in a palace with a man she didn't love. That's when Olesya took off her earrings. At once, she turned into a handsome young man with gentle hands, sensitive eyes, and a heart burning with longing and desire. It was love at first sight.

“Don't worry, my dear! We will definitely be together. Giovanni promised to marry us, and that's why he came here,” Hryts said happily.

Orysia hugged and kissed Hryts tightly.

Meanwhile, Giovanni Sebastiano was doing his job. Whilst speaking to the prince, he explained that his years were coming to an end, so he had decided to find a student to whom he would pass on all the wisdom of the psychotherapeutic process. He had made a pilgrimage to Lviv-city. And on the way he met this girl. She was lost in the mountains, and Giovanni promised to take her to her parents. But finding her parents had not been an easy task, and there were sometimes robbers on the roads in those places. So if he could leave the girl in a safe place while he searched for her parents...

To which the prince reacted instantly - “Let the girl stay with him,” he said. She could live with his daughters. And when the time came and her parents were found, he would send her home. That was the agreement.

In the evening, Giovanni called Olesya to his room and said the following: "Tomorrow I will leave, but don't waste your time. Meet your bride, and when the moon is full, come to my hut. There I will give you a new name and tell you what to do next."

"Thank you, Giovanni Sebastiano!" Olesya exclaimed joyfully.

Olesya settled in the prince's garden and talked to Orysia all day and night. And when no one saw them, Olesya would take off her earrings and turn into Hryts, at which point their communication took on entirely different, deep and sensitive shades.

When the full moon came, as agreed, Olesya returned to Giovanni's hut and turned back into Hryts.

The wise man waved a steel ball on a rope in front of the boy's face again, and this time Hryts did not turn into a girl. Instead, he remained himself and studied psychotherapy. The boy went through the basics, learned additional topics, and even managed to set up his own small practice.

"Your name is Oles," Giovanni said, "and soon your dream will come true."

Oles dressed in expensive clothes that made him look like a noble, intelligent, and sophisticated man. And they went back to the prince again.

This time the prince had no face. Something was bothering him. But Giovanni pretended not to notice.

"Greetings, Prince Sirko Stefak! I want to share a double joy with you. When I was looking for Olesya's parents, I met this talented young man named Oles. The similarity of their names was a good sign for me. So I took him on as a student and promised to marry him to Olesya. I also found Olesya's parents, and now the girl can return home. At the same time, she will introduce her fiancé to them."

The prince stood up, hesitated, but after a pause spoke.

"We did not save Olesya, oh wise Giovanni Sebastiano. Under unknown circumstances, she disappeared from our garden. And no amount of searching yielded any results."

Giovanni grabbed his heart and fell dramatically. Oles ran to him, gave him first aid and whispered something in his ear. The wise man felt better, he got up, pale, and spoke: "You are very guilty, Prince. You did not keep your promise and did not look after the little child. You should be severely punished for this. But Oles stood up for you, a stranger to you, he who did not protect his bride. It seems his kindness knows no bounds. So tell me, what are you willing to do to atone for your guilt?"

The prince spoke quickly and excitedly, "It will be a great honor for me to marry my daughter to Oles. He will have a wife, and our family will have a wise and kind ruler."

That's what they agreed on. They made all the necessary preparations, had a wedding, and Oles and Orysia became the happiest couple in all of the Carpathian Mountains.

A month after that, as agreed upon in advance, Oles came to the sage's hut again. This time he rode in on an expensive horse, dressed in exquisite clothes, and exuded a look of royalty. He brought with him numerous expensive gifts.



But the psychotherapist did not pay attention to any of this. A large fire was lit near the house, and the sage Giovanni Sebastiano was sitting by the fire. His legs were crossed, his eyes were closed, and his lips were moving slightly - he was whispering quietly to himself.

Then he stood up and spoke: "Jump into the fire and don't be afraid."

The offer was unattractive, to say the least. Hryts hesitated for a moment, but decided to be true to his word, because Giovanni had done so much for him, and jumped into the fire. He wasn't burned by the flames, in fact, he didn't feel anything at all, and instantly realized that he was standing by the fire. And next to him was... himself.

Stunned, Hryts looked at his hands and saw wrinkled skin. He touched his face and felt a long beard. Then he ran to the mirror and saw his reflection. Giovanni Sebastiano was looking at him. Hryts screamed in despair:

"Giovanni, what have you done to me? Return me to my body!"

To which the sage psychotherapist, smiling slyly, replied, "Hryts, we agreed that I would marry you to Orysia. I have fulfilled my promise. And in return, you promised to give me your body and forget about your past life. As you can see, you have fulfilled your promise as well. Everything is fair. So tell me what we agreed upon: "Thank you, Giovanni Sebastiano."

"You're a liar and a scoundrel, I'll kill you!" Hryts shouted with hatred. He really wanted to do it. But his old body gave out on him at the third step. He became short of breath, and his legs began to tremble uncontrollably.

And Giovanni - transformed into the body of the younger man - laughing loudly, jumped on his horse and rode away.

Hryts was in despair. He thought for a long time about what to do. At first he wanted to go to the prince and tell him everything. But who would believe such a strange story? Then he thought that he had to learn this magic himself and get his body back. But in the hut there was no hint of where to get such wisdom, and he did not know any other options. And then he had to sincerely admit to himself that perhaps the transition from a swineherd to a wise man-wizard would not come that easily.

So in the end, he came to his pond and finished what he had started.

There you have it, Taras, a wise psychotherapist using his talents to deceive an innocent man. But this Giovanni - believe me - is just an innocent child compared to your Supervisor. So tell me honestly, Taras, do you have any good reason to trust your teacher? Or did you, like that boy, fall for the beautiful promises, not knowing what the real price for them was? Speak, Taras! Or your body will grow old and die in a minute!"

Somewhere in the middle of the story, Taras realized what Potap was getting at, so he had an answer ready. And he could talk as long as he wanted - he was carrying the dead man on his shoulder and holding him tightly with both hands, so he didn't have to worry about interrupting the connection.

"Do you want an honest answer, Potap? Okay. Let's start with Giovanni Sebastiano (what a pretentious name!). For some reason, you call him a psychotherapist. But there is not a single episode in the story where he behaves like a psychotherapist. And don't tell me about emergency psychological help over the phone. That's definitely not psychotherapy. This suspicious guy is hypnotizing, manipulating, deceiving, scheming - and all for the sake of what? To use an innocent person who trusted him for his own selfish and conniving interests. Only low-level hypnotists, a toxic NLP wizard, or some astro-quantum-woo-woo-taro psychologists can do this. But even young psychotherapists, not to mention experienced ones, do not behave in this way.

Now, back to your question. Do I have any reason to trust my Supervisor? First of all, I haven't even brought you to him yet, and I've already gained many deep and important insights about myself and my practice from him. Isn't that a true manifestation of professional and sophisticated supervisory work? Secondly, I have no reason NOT to trust the Supervisor. Although I have known him for a short time, everything he has done has been consistent, clear and kind.

But I have reasons not to trust you, Potap. In each of your stories, you try to sow a seed of doubt in me, to cause me to doubt my actions, to intensify my internal conflicts. You are trying to influence me, to change my opinion, my position and myself. So who should I trust more - the Dead Client or the Supervisor?"

Potap laughed, "You have to trust yourself, Taras. And also, you spoke, which means I'm free."

After these words, Potap easily and naturally flew out of the therapist's tight embrace, flew through the air back to the tree, and hung himself upside down.

Taras did not expect such a turn of events and was momentarily confused. But almost immediately he pulled himself together - Potap had given him another problem to solve. And he already had the solution. He was going to bring this damn client to the Supervisor, no

matter what it took! Taras was filled with indignation, which gradually turned into rage. He was even shaking with rage.

‘How long can he play with me?’ Taras thought to himself. ‘I won’t let anyone fool me anymore! Who does he think he is? Does he think he can deceive the best psychotherapist of all time and all nations? Then I will show him what therapy is, what awareness is, what contact is! I’ll give him such an experience that he won’t forget it anytime soon. The closest contact possible!’

With these thoughts in mind, Taras returned to the tree with quick steps, took down the dead man, and carefully tied him to himself with a rope. Once upon a time, Taras had been fond of nautical knots, so he could tie Potap to himself in such a way that he would not get untied, even if the dead man suddenly started moving. Taras carefully checked the strength of the tie - it was perfect. But just in case, he made a few more checks to ensure the knots were thoroughly tightened.

As soon as Potap realized what was happening, he started laughing out loud. And when Taras started to tie the nautical knots, his laughter turned into a hysterical fit, so strong that even tears of laughter appeared in his dead eyes.

But Taras did not pay attention to this. He silently did his job and walked quickly to the Supervisor.

The sixth story of a dead client

“Oh, Taras, you know how to surprise! I haven't had so much fun since I was in high school!” the deceased said, grunting with laughter. "Give me a minute to calm down. But don't rush, or you won't have time to hear the story. This time the story will be special. It will be about you.

First there was an impulse. Then there was another impulse. The two impulses interacted. One of them became dominant, and the other was suppressed, and so regulation emerged. Over time, there were more and more impulses, and through their interaction they gave rise to more and more regulation. And at some point, the Goddess Consciousness appeared on the border of these two processes. The Goddess has many names: Mind, Ego, Soul, Choice. All these names refer to a single entity.

Then the Goddess created humanity. People were different then - tall, happy, lived long, had clear minds. The Goddess loved the people she created very much. She wanted to give them a gift and planted four Wishing Trees on the earth. These trees were massive, tall and had one amazing property. If you stood under a tree, read a special carol and made a wish, a purple fruit would appear on a branch, which grew, ripened and fell at your feet. It would lie there for a few minutes and then turn into a wish. By the way, there was no need to wait for the fruit to turn into a desire—it could be eaten right away. In that case, a person would receive life energy that healed diseases and allowed them to extend their life.



The Wishing Trees grew in four different parts of the world - north, south, west, and east.

At first, anyone could visit them. People could freely learn a carol and ask the tree for anything. There were not many people who wanted to, because, first of all, there were few people on earth; and secondly, people were healthy and happy, they had simple needs, so they were satisfied with everything. Therefore, not everyone had the inspiration to go somewhere on purpose to fulfill a wish.

Tens and hundreds of thousands of years passed in this way. There were more people; a thin stream of pilgrims to the trees turned into a powerful river. And if at first the desires were mostly abstract (some people might have wished to be in a good mood, to find inspiration, or to find a soul mate), then as the number of pilgrims increased, so the number of material desires also increased. Some wanted comfortable clothes, others wanted a new house or something tasty to eat. And sometimes, not often, false desires began to appear. Usually, someone just formulated what they wanted incorrectly. But there were also frankly perverted cases - which is to say, a person wanted something that he or she did not need at all.

When the Goddess saw such mistakes, she did not wish to keep an eye on it all on her own. Therefore, she created Keeper-Therapists, a special caste of people who were perfectly aware of their needs and desires. And they could distinguish one from the other. Their task was to determine the purity of the pilgrim's desire. If it was not what the person really wanted, the therapist would politely ask them to come to the Tree of Wishes another time.

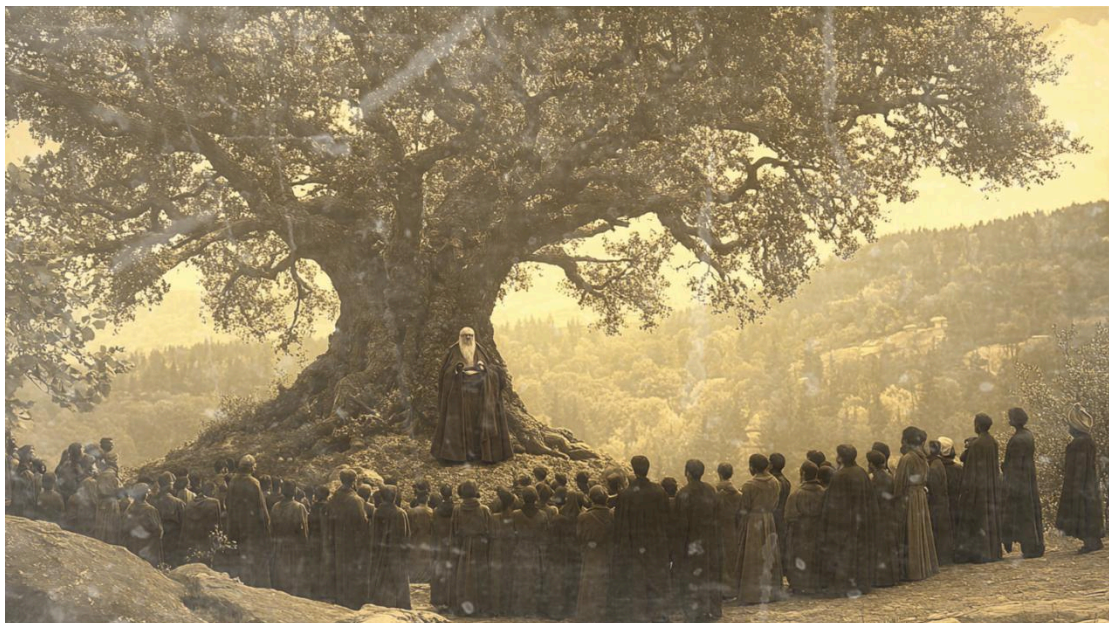
At some point, humanity grew so much that the number of people who wanted to get to the Wishing Tree was more than the tree could physically accommodate. And each Keeper-Therapist dealt with this circumstance in their own way.

The Psychotherapist of the Eastern Tree solved the problem simply: he established a law that he would decide who would be allowed to enter the shrine. If one wanted to approach the tree, they had to go through a trial. And although there was not enough space for everyone, he judged fairly and honestly, so only those who had the purest desires were allowed to approach the tree. And only to them the therapist told a magic carol that activated the tree.

The Psychotherapist of the Western Tree had a different idea. He allowed everyone to learn the carol. He told people to make arrangements among themselves and decide who would come to the Tree and who would not. His task was only to politely ask people with false desires to come another time. People were constantly renegotiating, so the rules of admission changed frequently.

And the South Tree Therapist said that everything should be decided by fate, and he organized a lottery. The rule was simple: whoever pulled out the lucky ticket would learn a carol and end up hitting the jackpot. Of course, this was only allowed as long as they didn't have a bad wish.

The Psychotherapist of the North Tree decided to take on students and taught them to recognize false desires. And only after that he would tell them a magic carol. Then his students taught other people to do the same. And a rule emerged: only those who have been trained and can distinguish true desires from false ones can approach the Wishing Tree.



Thousands and tens of thousands of years passed in this way. And with each millennium, there were more and more people who, for one reason or another, could not reach the tree. And the thirst to fulfill their desires only grew. Dissatisfaction also grew, so people began to resort to all sorts of tricks to get to the tree.

The Psychotherapist of the Eastern Tree recognized the threat immediately. He surrounded the Wishing Tree with a high fence and ordered his trusted men to guard the shrine closely. It worked for a while. But then there was a rebel among the people who began to say that the Psychotherapist sitting by the Wishing Tree was not real; he was the real Psychotherapist. And he promised to give everyone free access to the Tree again, just like before.

It was a blatant lie, which even a child could have understood, because he did not look like a psychotherapist, and he could not give everyone access to the tree - on a purely mathematical basis alone - people would not fit there. However, no one paid attention to this. They believed him because they wanted to believe him.

Under the leadership of the rebel, the outraged people tore down the fence and killed the psychotherapist. Then, they put the rebel in his place.

He quickly built a new fence, hired a group of trusted people as his bodyguards, and continued to do the same as his predecessor. Except the situation had changed, because unlike the psychotherapist that had come before him, the rebel couldn't recognize pure and sincere desires. But he compensated by hiring more guards.

Later, the Rebel was also removed. And that's how the Eastern Tree existed for a long time: once every hundred years, someone promised to change everything, and through a rebellion, he became the Keeper of the Tree, but always just left everything as it was. Only each time the Keeper became worse at recognizing true desires, and his guards became more and more numerous.

And at some point, the security grew to an army. Actually, the first army in the world. The Keeper of that time had very distorted desires. He wanted to conquer all the trees and become the sole owner of the Wishing Trees. So he went to war with his neighbor, the Western Tree. Yes, Taras, the eastern neighbors have been jerks since ancient times.

And the Western Tree had its own problems. It was getting harder and harder for people to agree with each other. Quarrels started to break out, sometimes even small fights. That's why rule breakers started to appear. They would secretly learn about the carol from those who were already at the tree and make a wish, despite the therapist's polite requests not to do so. At first, these were isolated cases, but very quickly they turned into a mass phenomenon. And then no one listened to the Keeper-Therapist at all, because they could learn the carols from another person without him. That's why there was a constant crowd of people under the Western Tree: bustle, noise, and complete disorder. At the same time, a huge number of things were ordered from this Wishing Tree, which meant that many purple fruits appeared and ripened on it at the same time. And the day came when there were so many fruits that the tree could not stand it and bent over under its own weight and broke in half.

The distraught people tried to restore the tree, revive it, put it in order, but nothing worked. And the tree no longer fulfilled any wishes. The trunk withered, dried up, and then turned into dust.

When the East Tree Army found out about this, it immediately changed direction and headed south. The people of the South Tree did not waste any time. Seeing that an army with evil intentions was approaching them, they wished for weapons and armor and met the enemy in full force. A battle of unheard-of proportions ensued, causing enormous destruction. The Eastern Army killed everyone in its path, and set fire to what it could not kill. In the process, such a large fire broke out that the South Tree burned down.



On the surface, the Eastern Army seemed to have won, but as the South Tree was now destroyed, they did not achieve their true goal. In addition, they had suffered heavy losses. And just at that moment, a new rebel appeared there. Perhaps he would not have been listened to very much, but he offered a new and fresh concept. Like all his predecessors, he promised equality for all people. But to achieve this, he did not promise to provide equal access to the Wishing Tree, he proposed to cut it down mercilessly. No tree means no inequality. And in general, he said, the Tree is like “opium for the masses”.

And that’s exactly what the Eastern Army did upon its return: it killed all who disagreed and expelled all who refused to obey.

The North Tree Keeper-Therapist was watching the situation very closely. And it was clear as day that if such events occurred in the presence of the other three trees, then everyone would fight even more desperately for the last one.

He was not going to let this happen. So he gathered his disciples, announced to them that the time of the Wishing Tree's existence on earth was coming to an end. And he ordered them to continue teaching people psychotherapy. Because it was a holy work, entrusted by the Goddess Consciousness herself. Understanding one's true desires made people and the world better - even if there was no Wishing Tree in this world. His disciples took his words very seriously, and this is how various psychotherapeutic movements were formed.

And the North Tree Therapist made his last three wishes. First of all, he turned the Wishing Tree into an ordinary tree. It was still very tall and had its majestic appearance. And it existed for many thousands of years, overgrown with legends and different names. In the north, it is called Yggdrasil. However, at some point it disappeared. How this happened is not known for certain.

The second wish of the Northern Keeper-Therapist was that he created a single seed of the Tree of Wishes. And he secretly planted it in Ukraine. And not just planted it, but found a special magical place that could only be found if you knew exactly where this place was. This is how the fifth, Central Wishing Tree was created.

And the third wish was that all the people of the world should forget the magic carol that could be used to make a wish. So it turned out that only the Keeper-Therapist of the North Tree had this sacred secret - he knew where the Central Tree was, and knew the carol that activated it. And this secret had a special property: it did not multiply. Which is to say, if a person has a secret, it cannot be forgotten. But if they reveal the secret to another person, the previous owner instantly forgets it.

The North Tree's Keeper-Therapist divided the sacred secret into two parts and passed it on to two of the most experienced psychotherapists.

This is how the two oldest Ukrainian psychotherapeutic dynasties were founded. The Clearminded dynasty possessed a magical carol. And the Keepers dynasty knew the location of the Central Tree of Wishes.

For many generations, psychotherapeutic dynasties passed down sacred secrets. There was fierce competition between these dynasties. Since the secret could not be multiplied, it was impossible to use it together. Therefore, no one was ready to share a secret with a competitor. After all, the transfer of sacred knowledge meant that the one who knew it would instantly forget everything. This meant that one dynasty would have full access to the Wishing Tree, while the other would have nothing. No one was ready to give up their piece of the pie.

This status quo lasted for many thousands of years. The story of the Wishing Tree was passed down along with sacred secrets. But, unlike magical knowledge, this story was passed down like a broken telephone. With each retelling, some details were forgotten, some were changed, and some were invented.

Eventually, the Wishing Tree was almost forgotten. But it so happened that the best psychotherapist of all time and all nations appeared in the world. What do you think, Taras, will he be able to solve this unsolvable problem?"

"I think not," Taras Clearminded answered gloomily and stopped. "There is no 'best psychotherapist' anymore."

He felt crushed, beaten and defeated. All his attempts to conduct a single full-fledged psychotherapeutic session had failed time and time again. Bringing the essence of the client to his Supervisor was out of the question. He had a dead man hanging on his back, tied up tightly. 'But stop fooling yourself' he thought, 'if he had avoided contact all this time, would a rope be a big obstacle for him? With nautical knots, for Christ's sake? And what kind of psychotherapist am I if I need to tie up my client with a rope to conduct a session?'

All of his experience, all of his knowledge, all of his carefully honed psychotherapeutic talents were powerless against this case. Against this client. Against a simple Ukrainian dead man, Potap.

"Uh... Taras." Potap interrupted his thoughts quietly and with a guilty tone, "You've spoken. And I guess it's time for me to fly to my spruce tree."

But the dead man didn't fly away immediately, he waited a bit and added quietly, "Without a doubt, you are still the best psychotherapist.". And then with supernatural ease he untangled himself from the ropes, flew into the air and flew to his tree.

But Taras did not even hear him. He stood frozen in place, and realized with cold clarity that everything had collapsed. He had nothing left. He didn't know who he was, what his true nature was like, who needed him, or why he was living. He plunged deep inside himself and was horrified to see that there was nothing there. Absolute, terrible, cold emptiness.

All sorts of rational defenses began to appear, soothing explanations about an identity crisis, a client's attack on the therapist's vulnerability, a panic attack. He so wanted to distract himself from this emptiness with beautiful explanations.

But Taras dismissed these thoughts. He had had enough! No more hiding! If the truth is that he is not who he thought he was, he wouldn't run from that truth.

Taras Clearminded took a deep breath, then exhaled. Then he repeated it several more times.

Well, he thought to himself, 'everything turned out not to be as it seemed'. Nevertheless, he was still a psychotherapist, with a client waiting for him in a spruce tree, which meant he had a job to do.

The seventh story of a dead client

"Our time is coming to an end, Potap," Taras said to the dead man before taking him down from the tree. "This will be our last session."

"Why?" the deceased asked in a serious tone.

"Because this time I will take you down from the tree and bring you to the Supervisor. And I'm going to keep quiet the whole time. If I'm destined to die of demons or go crazy from affects, then that's my fate. It doesn't scare me. But before I do, I want to thank you, Potap. Our therapy changed me. You helped me realize who I am. And you are the first and only person to whom I want to say this sincerely. I am a big terrible void. I have some useful traits, a broad amount of knowledge, and outstanding skills, but beyond this I'm nothing."

Taras looked at Potap with a direct and clear gaze, and it was as if he felt relieved by these words. "I also want to know your story. Who are you? How did you live? How did you die? And how did you end up in this tree?"

After these words, Taras Clearminded took the dead Potap down from the spruce tree, put him on his shoulder, and silently carried him to the Supervisor.

"You touched me, Taras," the deceased said warmly. And then he added cheerfully, "I thought you would never ask about me! And since you did, listen.

I was born in the ancient city of Trypillia. It used to be the capital of Ukraine. Actually, even before Ukraine itself existed. I was born into a simple family of artisans. I had a difficult childhood. My mother was crazy, my father was functional at best, so I had every reason to grow up as quickly as possible. And I did it surprisingly well. At the age of five, I was already reading, and I was most fascinated by fairy tales. I read fairy tales from different nations of

the world: folklore and also individual authors, classic and modern. I loved listening to the stories of travelers who sometimes visited my father.

Sometimes my friends would ask me what I was reading. And I would tell them. And they liked my stories so much that at first my friends would gather alone to listen to me, then they were joined by their friends, and later strangers started coming. In short, at the age of 12, half the town already knew about the boy who told fairy tales.

And once I met an unusual man. He listened to my story, and when everyone started to leave, he came up to me and told me that this story was about me. He described in detail what each character and each event meant. And although it all sounded extremely strange and at first I wanted to disagree, it was impossible to argue. 'By and large,' I thought, 'this *is* really about me.'

And somehow I felt lighter at heart. And the man saw my relief and said that he could teach me how to tell fairy tales so that everyone would feel better. I had long suspected that people did not come to me out of idle curiosity. For some reason, these fairy tales were important to them, but I could not understand why. So I accepted the offer.

That's how I became a psychotherapist. At the age of nineteen, I told fairy tales consciously and purposefully. I reacted sensitively to the mood of the audience and changed the plot right during the conversation. And these interactive (you would say "field") stories really made people feel better. I called it suggestive narrative psychotherapy. But it doesn't matter what it was called.

What is important is that my parents died when I was 17, and this set me up even more for rapid maturation. At the age of twenty-two, I already had an extensive therapeutic practice, and at twenty-five I became a supervisor and teacher of psychotherapy. And, perhaps, at the age of thirty I would have founded my own psychotherapy school. But my fate was different.

One day I went to some regular training. It was called "Getting to know your inner demon" - or something like that ... You know, all that Jungian stuff about working with the shadow. So, there you had to summon your own demon and feed it. They say that then you can use its resources. And when all the people were working with their inner processes, recognizing their secret desires, shadow sides, and so on, a problem arose. A real, actual ghost came to me. He was thin, pale, and looked threatening and scary.



"Feed me, Potap!" the ghost whispered in his terrifying voice. All the participants froze in fright, and the coach pressed himself against the wall and took small steps toward the exit.

But I was not afraid.

"Go away, you cursed spirit! No one is going to feed you!" I said loudly. I didn't know anything about ghosts, but my intuition told me that feeding a scary, hungry ghost was a very bad idea.

And the ghost was gone. But not for long. After that incident, he started coming to me at night. Rarely at first, but then more and more often. He threatened, frightened, persuaded, begged, blackmailed - whatever he could do to get me to feed him. And then he even started to appear in public from time to time.

And it had a very bad effect on my career. Rumors about the storyteller therapist's scary ghost spread like wildfire. First, my public practice suffered, then my individual clients scattered. And then I was expelled from the community altogether.

But I stood my ground: no food for a hungry ghost. And it was clear that the ghost was gradually losing its strength. Each time it appeared, it became more and more transparent. And I figured soon it would probably disappear completely.

However, against the backdrop of my shattered therapeutic practice, an old colleague called me and invited me to join a project for old times' sake. He promised to resolve the situation with the ghost - of course, if no more ghosts appeared. It was my last chance to return to my favorite profession. And the ghost was right there, almost transparent, but still enthusiastic.

"Feed me, Potapchik! Give me a little bit of your strength, so that I can fly out of hell. And that's it, you'll never, ever see me again! I don't scare your clients because I have a good life! Have pity on my poor soul!" he pleaded woefully. And between his words, it was clear that if I refused, I could forget about participating in the project. "If you feed me, I swear, as long as you live, you will never see me again!"

I couldn't resist and gave him a small ball of my power under his sworn promises.

After the meal, the skinny ghost swelled up like a balloon, became three times bigger, and turned into a scary demon with red skin, horns, and fiery hair. And he began to behave in a much more relaxed manner.

"Well, Potapchik," the demon said cheerfully, "You are not a generous provider. You have been starving me for too long, you could have been kinder to your demon. But don't worry, kid, I'll keep my word, you won't see me again. I'll take care of you, too."

With those words, the monster disappeared, leaving me with a heavy anxious feeling.

Time passed. I did well with the project, and even started to resume my practice a little bit. But the party was over soon.

Six months later, a messenger from a neighboring principality came to me. He said that a terrible demon had possessed their princess. No matter how they tried to chase him away or what they did, he just laughed and hurled insults. He says that only Potap the Storyteller can cast him out.

Of course, I immediately guessed what kind of demon they were talking about. I arrived at the princess's house, and indeed, as soon as I entered the room, the demon disappeared, and I did not even have time to see it. The princely family were overjoyed and paid generously for the miracle.

It was not polite to refuse the money, but I could not take it for myself either, because it was earned by deceiving the demon. So it was decided that I would give the money to the needy.

I wanted to return home, but a week later the situation repeated itself. However, the demon had already possessed a high-born person from another principality. Then this same pattern continued, moving to a third principality and fourth, and so on. So my life turned into a pilgrimage.



I traveled to different cities, exorcising my demon from innocent people and received considerable money for it. I donated half of this money to hospitals, a quarter to schools, and almost a quarter to the needy. I kept only the most necessary things for myself. And in my free time, I told my therapeutic fairy tales.

In this pilgrimage, I completely lost my previous life, but at the same time I found myself. I realized that my mission was to reduce human pain. And I did this by casting out my demon from other people. Of course, I realized that suffering was unavoidable. But I could mitigate it, and in this I saw the sacred meaning of life.

This went on for ten long years. During this time, I never fed my demon, remembering perfectly well how the previous meal ended. And the demon kept his promise: he never caught my eye.

And one day the demon disappeared.

After another miraculous healing, I distributed the money I received and went to the next country. But it turned out that there were no more demon-possessed people there. And I did not receive any news of new demon-possessed people. I waited for a while, and when I ran out of money, I realized that I was in an unfamiliar country, I didn't understand the local language well, I had no friends and no one cared about me. No one needed me.

I had to beg and spend the night in a church for pilgrims. And in this temple, besides me, all kinds of scum spent the night. They immediately noticed me, and when I fell asleep, they took my food. And when I was outraged, they started beating me. And they beat me to death.

They threw my dead body into a ditch, and I stayed there for three days.



And then I came back to life.

And the first thing I felt was unbearable pain. My body ached, burned, trembled, itched and gave off a sharp pain. And no one cared about the dead man who came back to life in the

ditch. I realized that all these years I had been thinking about others and not taking care of myself and my body at all. It was giving me signs, it was screaming at me, it was getting old. And I heard it. But I put the suffering of others above my own.

After this miraculous resurrection, I promised myself that I would not neglect myself anymore. I would take care of my body as if it were a temple. I would satisfy all its needs. I would enjoy every minute given to me. There is only one life, and I would live it to the fullest.

So that's what I started to do. I traveled on, quickly learning the language of the country I was in. I attracted listeners with my interesting tales. And my knowledge of suggestive psychotherapy helped me put people into a trance and convince them to pay me generously. Sometimes I had more intricate schemes, and I did not shy away from tricks and manipulations. That's why I could always satisfy my most demanding and extravagant desires. I developed an incredible bodily sensitivity and became a very carnal being, receiving the most exquisite hedonistic pleasures. I traveled the world, fell in love, searched for adventures, tried everything that could be tried, and collected different kinds of pleasures, indulging all the senses.

And once, when I was having fun with the young wife of a local officer, he caught us red-handed. Without hesitation, he pulled out a revolver and fired the entire clip right into me.



I leapt up and ran out of the room stark naked. But something was wrong. I looked around and saw myself in an indecent position with bloody spots on my back.

I was dead. This time for sure. And my immortal soul left my body.

You know, Taras, it is very uncomfortable to wander around the earth in spirit: it is too hot in the sun, too cold in the shade. There is a feeling of constant hunger and an indescribable sense of loneliness.

I really wanted to go to heaven. I looked up and saw a divine light. I headed there, but it was hard to fly upwards. It seemed that this flight would last forever. However, I was not drawn

down to hell either. As I realized much later, I found myself in a rather unique situation. Half of my life I helped others, and half of it I took care only of myself. And it so happened that my karma was perfectly balanced. That is, I could neither go to heaven nor to hell.

But I only realized this later. At that moment, I was frantically looking for a shelter that could ease my unbearable existence. I flew as far as the eye could see until, flying over the forest, I heard a familiar voice.

"Well at last, we meet again! And where are you flying to so persistently, Storyteller?"

I looked around in horror, and my suspicions were confirmed. The same demon I had been dealing with for ten years was standing in front of me. My demon.

"What, do you want to go to heaven, you dog scum?" The monster shouted rudely and struck me painfully with his whip. "There will be no heaven for you! I've been providing you with money for ten years! And you, you ungrateful beast, could you at least feed me once?!"

"But I fed you..." I squeaked through the pain.

"You call that miserable ball of your power food?" The demon turned red with rage, and the flames on his skin doubled in size. "I'm going to teach you how to handle a demon! And I'm going to teach you in hell!"

He struck me again with the whip, and I began to run away as fast as I could, howling in pain. With his blows, the demon was trying to send me down to hell. I hardly saw where I was going, thinking only about how to leave him behind.



I managed to get away from him a little - at least out of harm's way. I found myself in a rather dense forest. And there I saw a dead body hanging from a tree. I flew up to it to wait out the chase. It was surprisingly warm, comfortable and cozy. I was embarrassed to occupy someone's body, so after a few hours I wanted to fly out, but I heard the demon, who kept prowling around the neighborhood, loudly shouting my name and threatening me.

After a while, I heard another voice: "What are you doing in my kingdom, demon?"

"I'm looking for a soul that hid here! Give it to me immediately!" I heard the familiar voice of the demon.

"No way, what a nerve! I am Yaksha, the Supreme Ruler of the Kingdom of the Preconscious, and I order you to fly away from my domain. Otherwise I promise I will give you a hell of a hard time! Go to your own hell, demon!"

The demon became quiet and flew away. But not far away - it continued to circle nearby, shouting my name with threats, but did not enter the Realm of the Preconscious.

Then Yaksha turned to me, "And who are you? And why did you get into this body?"

And I told him my story. I told him from the very beginning - and as you yourself know my story is quite long. And when I was finishing, I saw that besides Yaksha, other residents of the Kingdom had come up. They liked the story, and those who had not heard the beginning asked me to repeat it. I did, changing some details and adjusting the story to the audience. Everyone really liked the story, so they asked me to tell them another one. And then another one. And then Yaksha said that this body was currently free, its owner was absent, so it would be okay if I stayed in it for a while.

Seven years passed like that. Every day I was doing my favorite thing - telling stories. And I had incredibly grateful listeners. There's not much entertainment here in the Realm of the Preconscious, so I was a breath of fresh air.

Seven years later, a man came to the forest. He looked terrifying: his eyes glowed with red fire, he was shrouded in a bloody black glow, and his low voice echoed the horrors of the other world.

He silently approached the body and wanted to take it away, but Yaksha approached him: "Who are you and why do you want to take the body that is hanging in my kingdom?" the Ruler asked sternly.

"Don't pretend, you worthless Yaksha, that you don't recognize me! I am Hnat, and this is my body hanging here. Move away and don't bother me with your stupid questions," the man replied rudely.

"I do know Supervisor Hnat. But you are nothing like him. He has a clear, beautiful voice, polite manners, clear eyes, and doesn't look like an otherworldly nightmare. Get out of my kingdom, from now on I forbid you to come here!" Yaksha replied.

The man left. But he said that he would get his body back, whether Yaksha wanted it or not. He also threatened to kill him.

And you know, Taras. The whole point of the story is that it really *was* Supervisor Hnat. And it really *was* his body. Yaksha admitted it to me himself. He recognized him, but pretended not to know. Maybe because of his rude manners, or maybe because he wanted to hear some more stories - I don't know. But you can ask him yourself!"

Taras was surprised. "Is he with us right now?"

"Of course, he's with us!" Potap exclaimed cheerfully. "And all the other residents too. They couldn't miss so many interesting stories! Dear inhabitants of the Kingdom of the Preconscious, show yourselves," the dead man asked.

And at that moment the residents appeared. Taras saw Yaksha, a tall old man with a white and green beard and a staff. And next to him was a bunch of other inhabitants of the Kingdom of the Preconscious - affecters, dreamers, forgetters, somatisers, and braggarts. Taras's attention was especially drawn to the love nymphs, who almost blinded him with their incredible beauty and lack of clothes. He stared at them with his mouth open.



When the pause became too long and uncomfortable, he pulled himself together and turned to Yaksha.

"I greet you, Yaksha, Ruler of the Realm of the Preconscious," he said officially.

"I greet you as well, Psychotherapist Taras Clearminded," Yaksha departed from his usual official tone, "Come on, relax, we're all friends here," Yaksha laughed, and all the residents of the Kingdom began to shout something encouraging. It was clear that they liked Taras.

"Everything Potap said is true," Yaksha continued, "I would only add that we have a long-standing agreement with conscious people. If you want to take something out of the Realm of the Preconscious, you have to do it in silence. And if you say a word, we have the right to return the thing to its place. That's why we cut the connection and then moved Hnat's body back to the tree after you spoke. And when Potap threatened you, saying that you would have to either speak or go crazy, it was just a cheap trick. We could only scare you, but no one was going to do any real harm. In the end, you figured us out when you said that you would carry the body even if you had to die. So now we can't do anything - you have every right to carry that body out of the forest." Yaksha looked at the dead man, his eyes moistening. "Oh, we'll miss your stories, Potap!"

Here Taras felt embarrassed. He had only just realized that all this time, many beings had been watching his words and actions. They were watching, evaluating, and discussing him.

However, he had done nothing to be ashamed of. He was himself, and this thought calmed him down.

Taras turned to Yaksha. "Thank you for your hospitality, Yaksha," and then turned to the corpse on his shoulder: "As for you, Potap, don't worry. I like you, you are kind and sincere. I will definitely put in a good word for you with Supervisor Hnat. You'll see, he's not as bad as you think."

Taras said goodbye to the inhabitants of the Kingdom of the Preconscious and carried the dead Potap out of the forest. Exactly 50 minutes passed between the time he took the corpse down from the tree and the time Taras left the forest.

How Taras brought Potap to the Supervisor

Taras Clearminded approached the fire, near which Supervisor Hnat was sitting. There was a dead body on the psychotherapist's shoulder.

"Supervisor Hnat, I conducted a therapy session for a dead client and brought you his essence," Clearminded said loudly.

"Very well, Taras," the Supervisor replied in a low, gravelly voice, "Now throw it into the fire. And you can eat the fruit in front of you."

It was the middle of the night. The Supervisor was still sitting cross-legged. His eyes were closed, and his lips were whispering softly. He was illuminated by the flames, and he looked even bigger and more majestic than before. The flames were also bigger, with fiery prominences rising high up, and the fire had a supernatural hue.

This picture reminded Taras of something. But he could not remember what it was. Taras was in no hurry to throw the dead man into the fire or eat the purple fruit he saw on the bench.

But the monkey was in a hurry. She had been sitting in the shade of a tree, watching the events unfold since evening. Or rather, keeping an eye on the purple fruit that the man had placed on the bench. She had wanted to steal the fruit more than once, but before each attempt she felt the penetrating and threatening gaze of the man by the fire. And intuitively, the monkey realized that it was better not to do it yet. It had not given up on its goal, but was rather, waiting for the right opportunity to strike. And after the second person came and they shouted some sounds, it became clear that the man by the fire was no longer watching the fruit. Then the monkey, taking advantage of the right moment, rushed right down from the tree to the fruit, grabbed it, and immediately climbed back up the tree. And there, without wasting any time, it immediately sank its teeth into it. She didn't stop until she had eaten it.



But Taras was not interested in the fate of the fruit. When the monkey stole the fruit, Taras realized what the scene reminded him of. He remembered Giovanni Sebastiano from the story of Potap. There, too, someone had to be thrown into the fire, and it ended very badly. 'So maybe it was for the best that the monkey stole the fruit?' He thought. The offer to eat it seemed suspicious. And the whole picture: the fire in the middle of the night, the corpse on his shoulder, the spell in Hnat's mouth - all of it looked extremely suspicious.

"First, Supervisor Hnat, I want to ask you a question," Clearminded said confidently.

"First, Taras Clearminded, do what I said. And then I'll answer all your questions," the Supervisor told him with authority.

At that moment, everything fell into place. Taras remembered another fairy tale - about the Wishing Trees. He, Taras Clearminded, was in possession of the Magic Carol. And in front of him was the Supervisor Hnat Keeper, who owned the Secret of the Tree's Location. Obviously, he wanted to take possession of the Clearminded dynasty carol! And, perhaps, if he ate the fruit, these things would have already happened! Taras did not understand the purpose of these machinations with the corpse, but somehow it had to fulfill the evil intentions of the Supervisor. Taras was neither going to help the evil sorcerer nor throw Potap into the fire.

Giving in to a spontaneous impulse, Taras threw the corpse to the ground, took out a knife, ran up to the Supervisor and stabbed him several times. But these blows did not cause any harm. The knife seemed to be both sticking into Hnat's body and passing through it.

"I thought you would be more conscious," Hnat said with a note of disappointment, "but it's okay, you've done your job. I'll do the rest myself."

After these words, Taras seemed to be numb. His muscles froze, disobeying his master. He could only watch helplessly as Hnat picked up the dead body and stepped into the fire with it. They were engulfed in flames, rising almost to the heavens for a brief moment. And then the flames diminished, turning into an ordinary fire, from which Hnat emerged without any visible injuries. Apparently, his previous body, in which Potap lived, had burned up.

"Now I am ready to answer your questions," Supervisor Hnat said calmly. At that moment, the daze subsided.

There were a lot of questions. But, burning with impotent rage, Taras managed to squeeze out only one: "What the hell is going on here?"

"I'll tell you," the Supervisor replied.

"A long time ago, a special dark creature named De Pres appeared on earth. He hunted lonely souls, captured them, placed them inside himself, and fed on their feelings of loneliness. The imprisoned souls were immortal, so each soul fed him indefinitely. And the more he hunted, the more powerful he became. When he reached the power to challenge the gods, De Pres did not do so. He used all his power to hide. And he did it so well that no one knew about the existence of the Hidden De Pres - neither humans, nor demons, nor gods. I was one of his captives. After countless years of hell, I managed to escape from his womb. And I swore that I would track down and destroy this creature.

At first I made my body perfect. Even after death, it remained almost alive. I hung it in a place rarely visited by humans and gods alike - the Realm of the Preconscious. My body became the perfect place for my enemy to hide - comfortable and warm inside, barely noticeable from the outside. This body was to become his trap.

Then I wove myself a new body out of the energy of consciousness and began to track De Pres. It was not an easy task, because he left no traces behind. Almost none. He was attracted to loneliness, and when he moved, one could smell a slight odor of hopelessness.

So my next task was to find the loneliest person in the world. I stopped maintaining my PERSONALITY, surrendering to the deep and spontaneous impulses of the ID. Every year I became stronger, more unrestrained, selfish and cruel. After a while, I began to scare people away, and later I was able to communicate with demons on an equal footing. There, I found the Demon Greedlet and made a deal with him. He promised to find the loneliest person in the world for me, and I promised him 100 sessions of psychotherapy in return. However, the demon did not like this offer. Then I changed the conditions - I offered to save him from suffering and teach him to be happy in 100 hours. And he agreed to this.

To my surprise, he fulfilled his promise quite quickly. The demon simply stopped visiting its human master. And just a month later, that person became the loneliest person in the world. I saw him get beaten to death by some vagrants shortly afterwards, and at the last moment of his life, I could smell the scent of total hopelessness. And then this person miraculously came back to life.

You may have already guessed that this man's name was Potap Storyteller.

Everything happened as I had planned: De Pres possessed Potap. But he didn't take over his body, he just hid there, inside Potap's soul, remaining invisible. And Potap lived a very long and very lonely life. And when he died, I had to make sure that Potap's soul ended up in my former body.

And here again, the demon Greedlet helped me. He scared Potap's soul and drove it straight to the right place. And when Potap hid in the body, he continued to hover around to ensure he wouldn't try to get out..

All I could do was to take the body and burn it on a ritual pyre. But the King of the Preconscious, Yaksha, refused to give me my body. Of course, he recognized me immediately, but he was frightened by my demonic appearance, and on this pretext he forbade me to enter the Kingdom.

That's why I needed you - to bring the essence of Potap, his soul, to the ritual pyre and burn De Pres in the purifying fire."

Supervisor Hnat Keeper looked Taras in the eye with a deep, penetrating look.

"And you helped me with this, Taras Clearminded. You have done a great job. And, as I promised, I will now hand you a real treasure."

"What about the purple fruit of the Wishing Tree? I thought that was your present."

Hnat smiled: "It was just a suggestion to recharge your batteries after all your hard work. The real treasure lies ahead of you. Now, as soon as you give me a sign, I will tell you the Secret of Finding the Wishing Tree. And you will be the only person who will unite the two secrets.

But before you give the sign, remember. It's not the treasure you receive that matters, it's what you do with it.

Hnat was silent, waiting.

Taras was in no hurry to do anything. He needed a pause. A good, classic psychotherapeutic pause. So that no one would rush him, no one would put pressure on him, so that he could be still with himself, listen to himself. To hear himself, not to be in a hurry. After all, in some deep sense, he was truly listening to himself for the first time. It felt so good to be himself and to be with himself. After giving himself as much time as he needed, Taras answered:

"Supervisor Hnat Keeper. The real treasure you gave me is not the Secret of the Wishing Tree. It is you. You gave me impeccable supervision. Thanks to you, I have deeply rethought my practice. But that's the least you've done for me." Taras got emotional at this point, and his eyes became wet, "You showed me who I really am. You freed me from my facade of a personality. Now I not only know who I am, I feel it with my whole body. I am an ordinary person. And an ordinary person is not supposed to have the Wishing Tree. This Tree must be protected, taken care of. And it needs someone who knows their true desires perfectly. Someone who can overcome even the most powerful demons."

After these words, Taras Clearminded passed on the knowledge of the Magic Carol of the Tree of Wishes to Supervisor Hnat Keeper.

As soon as Hnat became the owner of both secrets, he stopped looking powerful and threatening. His facial expression became soft, his movements smooth, his voice penetrating, and his body began to radiate a soft white light. Hnat smiled at Taras with a sincere, kind smile, nodded, and walked toward the forest.

The sky began to brighten—the first signs of morning appeared.

Taras breathed in the cool fresh air, looked up at the sky and saw God there.

What Free Pearl said

Although God was old and had a beard, he did not look like an old man in white sitting on a cloud.

He looked somewhat untidy, had a large gray beard that went to the back of his head at the temples and a powerful bald spot on his head. He was dressed like a sage, spoke like an adult, looked with a playful adolescent gaze, and moved as briskly as a child.

Gestalt therapists were not very devout, they had no churches or religious holidays, and they had only one prayer (and it was mostly beginner Gestaltists who prayed, and not all of them). However, everyone knew and remembered the God of Gestalt. Therefore, one glance was enough for Taras to immediately realize that Free Pearl, the Supreme God of Gestalt Therapists, was flying towards him.

Pearl was flying on his favorite object, a trash can.



He landed next to Taras, put one foot on the ground, and left the other in the bucket - to be both inside and outside the Garbage Pail. He said: "Without realizing it, you've done a great thing, Taras!" Pearl solemnly declared, "Make yourself comfortable, I'll explain everything.

One day my wife, the Goddess Consciousness, called me to her and told me with delight in her voice that there was a person on earth who had brought his consciousness to the highest level. The Goddess was so delighted that she spent whole days telling me about them. However, I did not share her delight. What kind of a person was out there who was distracting my wife from important things? I decided to check it out.

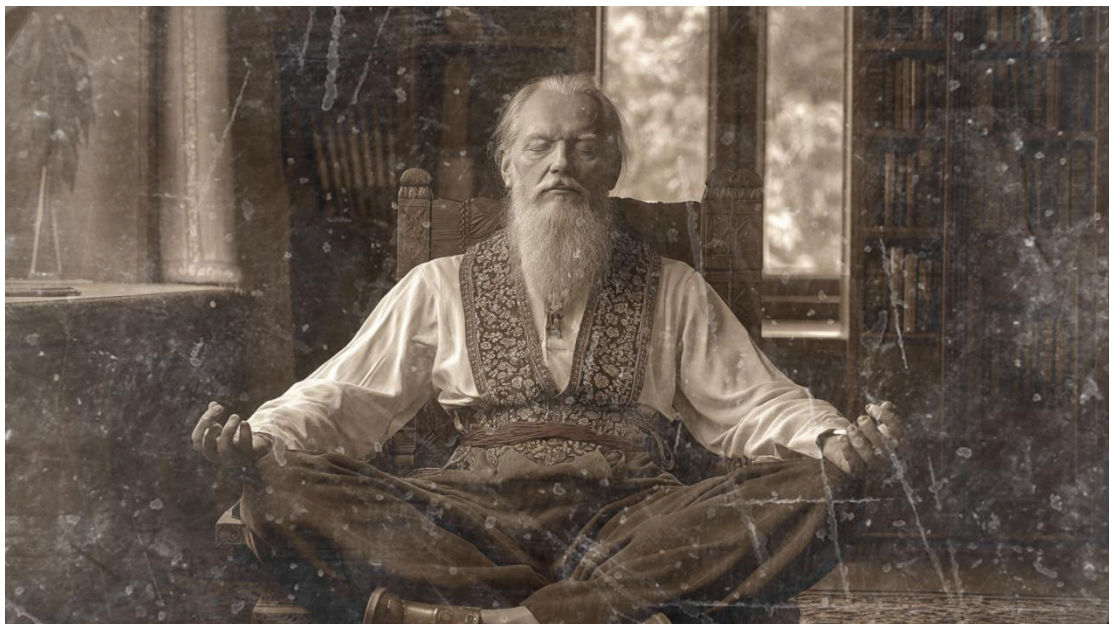
I went down to the ground and found this impudent man named Hnat. I had to admit that the Goddess was right. He was a Gestalt therapist who had truly reached an unheard-of level of consciousness. He was sitting in his office - alone, without clients - and every second of his life he was aware of himself and his surroundings. And his awareness was of the highest quality, most comprehensive, and clearest imaginable.

This psychotherapist sat motionless, did not eat, did not sleep, did not communicate with anyone, and had turned his life into a continuous stream of awareness.

And I decided to break his efforts - there was no need to make me jealous with his impeccability.

At first I sent him angry neighbors who drilled almost above his ear. Then the pipes burst, I even filled the place with mosquitos - nothing helped. He continued to sit still and was aware of everything that was happening. Then I stopped being ceremonious - he was interrogated by the police, evicted by the office owner, and robbed by bandits. I even sent a psychopathic client. But it didn't help either.

Then I got really angry and decided to use my dirtiest trick - he received an exclusive invitation to a unique training program with the coolest trainers. I knew that no Gestaltist could resist this.



And when even that didn't work, I gave up and invited him to visit us. My wife was delighted to meet him, and I offered to fulfill his wish. On the condition that he would not bother us again and would get the hell out of our way.

Hnat agreed.

"Make my body perfect, so that it will be comfortable for existence even after death," he made his wish.

I did it and thought the problem was solved. He really did not make himself known anymore. And his lowly and not spiritual desire disappointed my wife, so she never mentioned him again.

But I couldn't forget about him. Something told me that things were not that simple. So I came down to earth again and saw him rapidly turning from a spiritually conscious person into a narcissistic peacock and hanging out with some demon. Then I found out Hnat's motives and learned about De Pres.

And this was very important news. After all, we, the Gods, really knew nothing about Hnat. And the situation with him was much more serious than Hnat thought.

The fact is that this monster was born in ancient times. And I knew him well.

When the Wishing Trees were created, a Rebel appeared in the Eastern Tree. He killed the Keeper Psychotherapist and took over the Tree. And he was smart enough to predict that he would eventually be overthrown as well. And his desires were perverse enough to turn himself into a dark entity. He wished to become a creature that captures lonely souls in its inner hell and feeds on their suffering. He called himself De Pres, and it is from his name that the name depression, a disorder where a person feels lonely and has no strength to want anything, originated.

There was only one way to defend oneself against De Pres: to be perfectly aware of one's true desires. That is why he could not do anything to the Gods. And that's why he could capture people who were becoming less and less aware of themselves.

De Pres hated the Keeper Psychotherapists because they taught people to be aware of their desires. So he made sure that wars broke out and people killed all the Keepers. And the Wishing Trees were destroyed because they helped people grow spiritually.

When I found out about all these intrigues, I tracked down De Pres and killed him. At least that's what I thought. In reality, he faked his death, hiding from the world for a long time.

And after many millennia, De Pres learned that there was one more, the Central Wishing Tree, left on earth. That's why he tracked down and captured Hnat Keeper, the owner of the Secret of the Wishing Tree. But no matter how hard he tried, Hnat did not give him the knowledge of the tree's location. So he arranged everything so that Hnat would run away from him.

De Pres knew that Hnat would do everything possible to kill him. And the only way to kill him was to make a wish at the Wishing Tree. De Pres wanted Hnat to lead him to the Tree, and he planned to destroy the Tree first. That would make him almost immortal.

And now the most interesting part, Taras. When Hnat burned his former body and performed the ritual, he thought he had destroyed De Pres. But this did not happen. De Pres simply changed owners - he secretly settled inside... you, Taras. After all, you were supposed to be given the Secret Knowledge, and you were supposed to lead the monster to the Wishing Tree. And you were sure that the monster no longer existed.

But you acted unexpectedly and wisely by passing on your knowledge to Hnat. And by doing so, you simultaneously did two useful things: you helped the real Keeper of the Tree of

Wishes -who is absolutely clear about his true desires - to appear and, of course, to kill De Pres. Because Hnat's first wish in his new incarnation is to deal with that monster.

And all this is thanks to you, Taras. To be honest, it would be nice if it was my good doings and not yours. It is better for Gods to deal with such serious monsters, not people. But it is as it is. So here are two gifts from me. The first is that the golden era of psychotherapy is over. And the second gift is a piece of healing aggression.”

And after these words, Free Pearl slammed his fist into Taras's teeth. Not with full force, but enough to make Taras's eyes go dark. And when it dawned, the God of Gestalt Therapists had already disappeared. And Taras felt an incredible surge of physical strength and clarity of mind after the blow. He also felt a depth of life that he had never experienced before. It could be compared to the ocean, on the surface of which the weather was changing rapidly - either a storm or calm. Taras had experienced quite strong emotions in his life. And these were not some kind of divine revelations, but a full range of lived human experiences. However, he knew now that, no matter what happened in his life, at a deep level - like at the bottom of the ocean - he felt serene, all-encompassing peace and confidence.

And this feeling remained with him for the rest of his life.

When Taras returned to his country, he found that the golden era of psychotherapy was indeed over. While he was away, proactive psychotherapists had already established their own associations and started introducing all sorts of innovations into the psychotherapeutic process, not always good ones. And they were competing with each other so actively that Taras simply could not keep up. He still remained a respected psychotherapist, but there were not so few like him. This gave him an unpleasant feeling of defeat, as if he was lagging behind in this frantic pursuit. He wanted to stay up to speed and relevant, but with an effort of will, Taras forced himself not to join the competition. His time had already passed, and he had to give way to others. Moreover, he had important personal tasks to accomplish.

Taras signed up for Redneckgram (it's a good thing they don't use pigeons anymore!) and after a while he met a beautiful woman. She became his wife and gave birth to his son. Taras lived a happy family life, socialized with friends, and traveled. He didn't forget about his psychotherapy practice either - it was still intense and active. It's just that now, in addition to his work, he also had a family - and this significantly changes the rhythm of one's life.

Taras carefully wrote down all of Potap's stories from memory. Of course, he didn't remember everything perfectly, but he was pretty close to the original. He published a book with these stories and gave it to his growing son. Taras missed Potap, he often thought of him and wanted his stories to live on.

And then, nine years later, Taras met Potap again.

What happened to Potap

When Supervisor Hnat Keeper took his former body and went into the fire, he whispered softly:

“Don't be afraid, Potap. I'm not going to hurt you. You're free to go wherever you want.”

At first, Potap was happy. And then he was sad. Where should he go now? It was an extremely unpleasant thing to wander in spirit on the earth.

He could have returned to the Kingdom of the Preconscious. There he would have been given a new body (Yaksha offered him this more than once). But why would he need a new body if he would forget himself and all his stories during rebirth? He wanted to remain himself.

So Potap decided to wait a bit and turn to Taras, who promised to help. He was a wise and influential man, so he would be able to find some kind of a good solution.

But Taras began to talk to Hnat, and the conversation was serious, so it was very inappropriate to interrupt. Potap humbly waited, suffering from unbearable hunger, piercing cold, and obsessive, inexplicable anxiety. This waiting was very difficult for him.

And then Taras started talking to God, and it was definitely inappropriate to interrupt them too.



Potap realized that this conversation was not going to be short, and he had no more strength to endure the torment. So he decided to wait in a more comfortable place for a while, and as soon as it was over, he would go straight to Taras.

He flew around the neighborhood for a while and saw a small cave. Inside it was warm and comfortable, and so pleasant that Potap dozed off.

And he dreamed that he lived in a large family. His name was SEMPLI, and he had nine mothers and twenty-three sisters. And he wanted to marry all of them. And this was considered something normal in the dream - all his brothers wanted the same thing. But his father did not allow this to happen. He himself was married to his mothers, sisters, and daughters - in short, to all the women of their tribe. And he did not let SEMPLI or his brothers near his women.

The father was constantly challenged by his children, but he won every time.

Then Sempli decided to join forces. He encouraged his brothers to attack their father together, because it was easier to beat him in a group. They did so, but even this time they failed. Although his father was in his old age, he knew his business well and gave everyone a good beating.

This defeat did not stop Sempli. He did not give up and continued to look for a way to win. One day, somewhere far away in the forest, he found his grandfather, his father's father. The grandfather was already dying - for he had lived many years, but he managed to tell his grandson that his son had not always been so strong. One day he ate a magical purple fruit that he had found from the giants. This fruit prolonged his life and gave him strength. So Sempli went in search of the giants to find out their secrets. And if he succeeded, he would find the fruit for himself.

He found the giants. They lived in giant houses. Sempli quietly made his way into one of these houses. A giant boy saw him there. They liked each other, and it so happened that they became friends. Since then, Sempli often visited the giant boy. The boy was just learning to read, and he had a book with various strange stories. Sempli listened to them very carefully, hoping to find out the secret of the purple fruit.

But the more he listened to them, the more disappointed he became. There was hardly any mention of the fruit, and if there was, it didn't contain any useful information. And these stories gave him a strange feeling. They seemed to be familiar to him, and yet they were not. Sempli could not get rid of this obsessive feeling when you want to remember something but cannot. And at the words "and Baba Yaga grabbed the girl and carried her to her castle," Sempli involuntarily exclaimed:

"It's not Baba Yaga, it's Demon Yagii!" and he was surprised by his own words.

The giant boy looked around and asked in surprise: "Who said that?"

But Sempli did not answer. At that moment, he remembered everything.

That his name was Potap the Storyteller, and that he was dreaming. And then he looked at himself carefully and realized that no, he was not dreaming. Everything was happening in reality. Giants are people, and his furry paws and tail clearly indicated that he was a monkey. The warm place where he lay down to sleep turned out to be a monkey's womb. And when the time came, he was born as an animal.

As soon as Potap remembered who he was, he instantly lost the desire to fight with his father monkey for the opportunity to marry other monkeys. At first, he was disappointed in how things turned out. Being born a monkey was somehow humiliating. Deep down, he hoped for a much better fate.

And then he thought about it a bit and decided that it wasn't so bad. After all, he remembered who he was, and that's what was most important to him. There was also another bonus - he was finally alive. And being alive is much more pleasant than being dead.

He also remembered all his stories and could tell them even as a monkey.

However, he changed his mind about telling them to people. He knew people well: no matter what you told them, they would not understand the lesson of the stories, but would certainly come to see a talking monkey. So he didn't say a word in front of people. The only thing he did was scribble a few words for Taras with his monkey paw. He told him where he was going. As soon as Taras found out, he visited Potap that very day. And since then he has been doing it regularly. They became good friends.

And Potap went to the Kingdom of the Preconscious, where he was welcomed by all its inhabitants, including Lord Yaksha. There he continued to tell his stories, and his listeners, as before, were delighted to hear every word.



Definitions

1. Therapeutic Setting

A carefully arranged space where two people make room for the possibility of miracles. It stands on three invisible pillars: a place to sit, a time to end, and a price to be paid. There is a chair for pain, a chair for hope, and a clock that quietly reminds everyone that even the deepest suffering has a time limit — and a bill attached. The setting itself does not heal — but without it, healing has nowhere to sit.

2. Phenomenology

The ancient and noble art of noticing what is actually happening in the present moment, instead of what you wish were happening. It's less about interpreting reality and more about finally meeting it for coffee.

3. Contact

The electric moment when two worlds meet — skin to skin, gaze to gaze, soul to soul. Contact is not about doing something to the other; it's about standing close enough to be changed by their existence.

4. Supervisor

A seasoned troublemaker assigned to lovingly dismantle your illusions about being a perfect therapist. A supervisor listens attentively, offers compassion, and then casually points out the thing you most hoped no one would notice. Not a judge, not a savior — more like a mirror that politely points out the spinach in your teeth of consciousness.

5. Emergent Self

You are not found inside yourself — you arise at the living edge of contact. The emergent self is what happens when your needs, the world, and the moment collide and shape a fragile, breathing form called "you." It doesn't live in your mind or in your body — it lives in the meeting with the world and others.

6. Ivano-Frankivsk City

A city in western Ukraine where cobblestone streets remember more stories than the people walking them. Named after the famous Ukrainian poet Ivan Franko, the city is known as a cultural and literary hub. It blends poetry, quiet resistance, and layered identity — with a distinct sense of itself that seems both timeless and quietly defiant. Even the air there seems to practice phenomenology — attentive, patient, and never in a hurry.

7. Countertransference

All the feelings the therapist wasn't planning to have — and now has to deal with in front of another human being.

Sometimes it's love, sometimes it's annoyance, sometimes it's a strong desire to cancel the next session.

Countertransference is not a problem — it's a compass, pointing toward something important, as long as you're brave enough to read it.

8. Introject

A belief, rule, or voice that moved in without asking.

Introjects are usually inherited from parents, teachers, or society — like psychological hand-me-downs you forgot to question.

They sound like you, feel like you, but aren't really you — until you chew them, digest them, and decide whether to keep or spit them out.

9. Ivan's Kupala

An ancient Slavic midsummer celebration involving fire, water, herbs, and suspiciously symbolic jumping rituals — some of which carry undertones that would make Freud raise an eyebrow.

Currently a folkloric event in Ukraine where collective unconscious briefly joins the party.

10. Karbovanets

An early currency of Kyiv Rus — meaning ancient Ukraine — when silver was weighed, not printed.

The karbovanets had value, shine, and a certain existential modesty: it carried the quiet awareness that nothing truly valuable lasts forever — and for that reason, loved being used not for buying objects, but for purchasing lived experience — meals shared, journeys taken, mistakes made.

11. Koshchei

A classic figure from Slavic mythology — immortal, skeletal, and emotionally unavailable.

Often interpreted as the part of you that refuses to die even after ten years of therapy.

12. EGO

A function that regulates your raw impulses of desire for unquenchable pleasure and your carefully chosen mask of mannerisms, memories, and mild neuroses that passes for your unsurpassed personality.

It tries to keep the peace between the part of you that wants to scream, the part that wants to please, and the part that just wants to leave the party early without saying goodbye.

13. PERSONALITY

Your official costume for social navigation.

Lovingly assembled from adaptations, habits, and a few unresolved family issues — and surprisingly resistant to change. Also known as “the part of you that explains things to your therapist.”

14. ID

The inner toddler who wants what it wants, when it wants it, and preferably twice. It lives in the basement of your psyche and keeps sending notes upstairs. Sometimes it even takes control and pulls off toddler pranks with very adult consequences.

15. Affect

The emotional storm that flows uncontrollably through your face, body, and voice before your brain gets the memo. Not always polite, rarely convenient, but always honest.

16. Benign Clinical Narcissist

A person with a deep need to be admired — and just enough charm to pull it off. They mean well, usually, and sometimes even listen — but only after receiving a generous helping of flattering reflections about themselves. Approach with curiosity, and mild sunscreen.

17. Field

Not a meadow, but close: the dynamic, ever-shifting whole of you and everything around you.

In Gestalt therapy, the field is where experience happens — and it always includes more than you think.

18. Deflection

The fine art of dodging emotional bullets with sarcasm, logic, or a sudden craving for tea. A stylish way to avoid contact while looking busy.

19. Interruption of Contact

Any moment when the flow between self and other breaks, stumbles, or politely vanishes. Sometimes it protects, sometimes it sabotages — but it always has something to say.

20. Awareness

The quiet superpower of noticing what's going on — inside, outside, and in between.

It's not the same as understanding, and definitely not the same as thinking.

Awareness is the flashlight you hold in the dark room of your experience, hoping it doesn't flicker at the worst moment.

21. Presence

The art of truly being there — not just physically, but with attention, breath, and something like soul.

Presence doesn't mean doing more; it means doing less, more honestly.

A rare and untradeable gift in a world obsessed with speed and noise.

22. Projection

When your inner movie starts playing on someone else's face.
You think it's about them, but spoiler alert — it's mostly about you.
Projections are great teachers, especially when they embarrass you in public.

23. Idealization

The psychological habit of turning people into gods — until they do something human and ruin everything.
Usually a defense against disappointment, or a shortcut to feeling safe.
Idealization feels warm and shiny... right up until the crash.

24. Shadow

The parts of yourself you've locked in the cellar — inconvenient emotions, wild impulses, impolite truths.
You spend half your life denying them, and the other half accidentally acting them out.
The shadow is not your enemy — it just wants to be invited upstairs for a joyful evening party, preferably. Otherwise, it tends to form a secret inner Masonic order that quietly runs your life.

25. Attachment Trauma

The original heartbreak — not from romance, but from someone who should've held you and didn't.
It's the invisible wound left when your need for connection met silence, absence, or chaos.
You grow up, but a part of you is still knocking on the door that will never open.

26. Magical Thinking

The hopeful superstition that your life controls the universe — or at least the Wi-Fi signal. It shows up when logic sleeps and emotions start writing the screenplay. In small doses, it's charming. In larger doses, it can turn you into Jesus Christ — or at least make you think you've got his job.