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## My Friend Ledvedik

### Chapter 1

#### *About the prevision and kinship*

On that day, Maxim woke up very early. As mother and father were still asleep, he strolled through the apartment and waited until they woke up. He wanted to tell them that this morning was the first time he had his prevision.

Just for the record, all the adults in his family had previsions and premonitions. Maxim's mother, for example, always felt and suspected something terrible, which fortunately was rarely fulfilled. Maxim's father, on the contrary, had only optimistic visions, which also were only rarely fulfilled. The whole kinship was in this sense very sensitive, except for Maxim. He had none of these foresights. And now something had finally appeared to him—a bit unclear as with his mother but as cheerful as with his father.

Maxim felt that he could no longer wait and had to tell someone about it immediately. He approached the phone, trying to decide whether to call his uncle Sasha, who didn't really look like an uncle and was always ready to join Maxim in his games and pranks. The uncle had just graduated from high school and toyed with the idea of becoming a famous doctor. He was much older than his nephew, but as Maxim's grandmother said, not much more intelligent.

Sasha immediately picked up the phone.

"Paracelsus on the line," the sleepy voice rasped.

"Hi," said Maxim, by no means astonished by his uncle calling himself thus. He recently told everyone that he had decided to call himself Sasha

Paracelsus in honor of the great medieval doctor and reformer of medicine. He even went so far as to sign the university's application form using the doctor's full name, Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim, and it was promptly rejected. Only Grandma's tears and Mom's pleas defeated Sasha's stubbornness, making him change the application form. Now Paracelsus was awaiting feedback from the university.

"Oh, it's you, my little monster," said the uncle. "What's up?"

"I had a prevision," Maxim stammered in excitement.

"I had a premonition," Sasha replied sarcastically.

"What's the difference?" Maxim wondered.

"The difference is that a premonition is very unpleasant!"

"Which is..."

"That I will not be accepted into the university!" retorted Sasha and hung up.

Maxim feared that his prevision could also turn into a premonition.

Terrified, he decided not to tell anyone about it, since adults can easily spoil joy for any child. Hence, when his parents finally woke up, he told them nothing and nobody noticed his absentminded expression. But when he ate less than half of his oatmeal at breakfast, his mother began to worry about him.

"So, what's going on?" she asked Maxim, as if the world were about to perish.

Maxim remained silent as he was absorbed by the thought of what would now become of his own prevision.

But it continued to grow into the PREVISION par excellence!

Something had to happen, something very mysterious but pleasant. Maxim had no more doubts.

Grandma was to visit them after breakfast. Maxim loved her very much, although he was a bit disappointed that she did not look like an ordinary grandma. According to him, a real grandmother should be old and gray-haired, knit sweaters, and make strawberry jam, just like

Andrew's grandma from the fourth floor. Maxim's grandmother, on the other hand, was still young and dynamic, held an important position in her company, and had no intention to retire in the next 20 years.

Maxim also had a great-grandma. The word "great-grandma" would seem to take him back to the Stone Age, or cave-dwellers. One of Maxim's classmates, red-haired Peter, had a great-grandma—very old and hunchbacked, her face full of wrinkles.

In contrast, any ordinary grandmother could be envious of Maxim's great-grandma. She was a slender, spontaneous, and an enterprising woman. No one knew how old she was, and when asked, she said that people were as old as they felt. And since she felt young, she still worked as a designer for the best fashion house in town.

The clock in the living room struck 12. At the last bell, the door opened, and on the threshold appeared a graceful and cheerful woman. It was Grandma—extremely punctual as always.

"It is not difficult to be punctual," her neighbors commented enviously, "when you have a limousine with a chauffeur at your disposal." And they were right because Grandma always travelled in a big black Mercedes that was as elegant as her chauffeur, who always looked gloomy and whose face did not show the slightest emotion. Maxim liked Grandma a lot, although his father thought the mother-in-law was spoiling the child with all the attention, which Maxim did not understand at all.

Grandma was coming to visit a few times a week and was taking Maxim on a tour of the city, either to the park or the museum. Sometimes they went to the toy or computer shops where Grandma would buy everything the grandson wanted. Maxim especially liked the craft department, from which he towed a bunch of model aircraft and ships—in a word, all that his soul desired. Grandma found this to be much better than most of the computer games, and it was the only point of agreement with her son-in-law.

Mom would say the whole thing was not educative at all and that she did not like this kind of upbringing. In some wise book, she had read that

the number of toys should be limited, or else the child would be spoiled. She had a long argument with Grandma, who managed to convince Mom that toys stimulate a child's imagination.

Sometimes Dad switched his allegiance between Mom's and Grandma's views. But at the end Grandma would buy Maxim a new toy. And maybe that was not so pedagogically rational, yet Maxim liked it nonetheless.

## Chapter 2

### *Maxim's prevision is confirmed*

Today Grandma took Maxim to a toy store. She wanted to buy him a present for the beginning of the school year.

"Sure," she emphasized on the way, "this will be a special present, not a simple child's toy, since you are a big boy now."

For half an hour Maxim was wandering between the shelves full of toys noticing along the way that the great model railroad, which he had dreamed of for so long, no longer interested him. Grandma suggested buying something useful, stimulating, a puzzle, for example.

"No, no, not that," the grandson shook his head.

Maxim's gaze slid from shelf to shelf and suddenly he felt himself being watched. He looked in all directions, however around him were adults and children who did not pay any attention to him. Maxim took another look at the shelves and noticed a little bear sitting in the corner behind a large plush lion. On another occasion, he would not have noticed such a toy, but this time he could not look away. It seemed as if the bear had blinked at Maxim. He was so taken aback that he blinked in response, just in case. Then the bear blinked again!

“Oh!” It was all that Maxim could utter. His mouth open, he pointed his finger at the toy. “Oh!”

“What's wrong?” asked Grandma, disappointed with the manners of the grandson. “Well-mannered boys do not point their fingers!”

“Grandma, I've decided. Please buy me the bear over there!”

“What for?” wondered Grandma. “Aren't you too old for such a thing? Besides, look at the color of his fur...”

Maxim was embarrassed. He felt as if the bear could hear and understand their conversation. He said that he was recently at the zoo and the bears had the same fur color.

“Without a doubt,” a salesman, who just happened to be standing by, chimed in, “this is the typical bear color.”

Maxim did not realize at first that the salesman spoke to them because his eyes were looking in another direction.

“Our shop,” the salesman continued, “has only one such toy. It is just a fortunate coincidence you came here and noticed it.”

The salesman took the bear off the shelf, shook it a little, so that the dust cloud came up and then settled on the floor, and put it on the counter.

“It's so sweet,” said Maxim, looking straight at the bear.

The bear had red boots on, green checkered pants, and a blue hat.

“Why does it have a tail?” asked Grandma, visibly suspiciously. “As far as I know bears don't have tails.”

“But Madam,” the salesman replied convincingly, “every bear would take it as a shame not to have a tail!”

Then he turned to Maxim (although his eyes were already looking in another direction), “You were at the zoo recently. Tell your grandmother that bears do have tails.”

Maxim thought briefly and said, “No, they do not have them.” Then it dawned on him and he said, “Yes, they have tails!”

Now Grandma was not so sure. The show “The World of Animals” had aired on TV last week. There were bears too, and so it seemed ... Yes, yes,

they had tails. She looked at the tail more closely and announced that this tail would fit a lion, not a bear.

“You should understand, this is not just a tail but an electrical cable, with the help of which the computer toy can run even without batteries,” said the salesman, proud of the construction.

“Oh, Grandma, that's a computer bear! You see, he even has buttons on his belly.” Maxim was fascinated and turned to the salesman, “What can it do?”

The salesman pulled the manual out of the box and began to read. He read as if he had memorized it, because his eyes were not on the paper but somewhere, apparently over Maxim's head.

“The above-mentioned toy has the following functions: First, moving. Second, solving of light mathematics problems. Third, speaking. In short, the toy can do everything,” he turned to Grandmother, “please read through the details yourself, if you can.”

“What do you mean “if you can”? Do you think I am illiterate to the point of not being able to read and understand a manual?”

“Hand on my heart, you are one of the most educated women with whom I have been talking lately. What I meant by this is that the font is very small.”

Grandmother pulled an elegant case from her pocket, opened it, and put on her glasses. Then she took the instructions and read, “LION.”

“Excuse me, but I believe that is the instruction for the poor lion whose tail the bear has appropriated.”

“But no, “LION” is only an abbreviation. “L” stands for Logical, “I” – for Indestructible, “O” – for Original,” said the salesman patiently.

“And “N”?” asked Grandma.

“May be for Nonpareil ... or Newcomer...”

“Surely, both of them—a nonpareil newcomer,” added Grandmother sneering. “It's not a teddy bear, it's a Terminator!”

Grandmother put the manual aside and said that the toy was surely defective, that there is a reason no one was buying it, and that this must be not the first year for this creature in the shop judging by the dust on its fur.

But the grandson would not give up: “Buy me this teddy bear! I beg you, buy me the bear!”

“The boy made a good choice,” the salesman supported Maxim, for which Maxim was very grateful—if only the man was not looking in another direction.

“I understand your enthusiasm,” said Grandmother suspiciously. “You want to get rid of old goods. Well, how much do you ask for it?”

“One hundred Euros and a cent.”

“What a strange price! What is this additional cent for?”

“That's the extra charge for the enchantment,” he whispered to Grandma.

“But I am not enchanted by it.”

“You have to understand,” the salesman whispered, “the magic is inherent!”

“This brings the barrel to overflow!” Grandmother looked extremely annoyed. “Put this beast back in its place, we are looking for a high-quality toy.”

Maxim hugged the bear to his chest and shook his head defiantly.

“Either you buy me this or I never play the piano again!”

“Ah, Maxim! With your talent!” Grandmother tried to flatter his self-esteem.

Though Maxim was not convinced.

“Just like the father,” said Grandmother somewhat disappointed. “After all, *Paris vaut bien une messe.*”

Maxim did not understand the meaning of the last words. Grandmother often used foreign languages, however when she marched to the cash register, he realized she was defeated.

“Give this precious thing to your ally,” Grandmother directed Maxim, when the salesman handed her the receipt. “It should be nicely packed, not to scare the people outside.”

Grandmother could be very scornful and make her subordinates in the company tremble. However, Maxim was not afraid since Grandmother was used to giving commands as a manager, while at home she would do what Maxim wanted.

They went out with the gift box, and Maxim asked, “The salesman was very friendly, wasn’t he?”

“Yes!” Grandma said.

“But a bit odd, right?”

“Why?” Grandmother did not understand.

“Because when he spoke, he looked the other way and it was confusing who he was talking to.”

“He’s just squint-eyed,” said Grandmother.

“Totally awesome! I would like to have it too!”

“How can you say that?” asked Grandmother, horrified. “This is not what anyone would wish on himself!”

Maxim did not want to argue with her. He thought enviously that it could be very practical—at school, you could copy everything from the classmate during an examination and read from a book under the desk. The salesman had surely done so in his childhood. Maxim liked him even more.

Grandmother suggested going for a walk, but Maxim wanted to go home as quickly as possible to play with his new toy. Although she was offended a bit, grandmother kissed him in good cheer and put him on the bus to go home.

When Maxim entered his room and put the gift on the table, he heard a dull voice from the box, “It is not very polite to put friends on their heads.”

“Ledvedik,” the bear introduced itself to Maxim, emerging out of the box. “My name is Ledvedik.”



In this way, his prevision confirmed, Maxim got a newcomer named Ledvedik. The name was as nonpareil as Ledvedik himself, all the same it sounded very dear. Did it not?