

EXTRACTS FROM “AMBASADA PANA BOGA” (“GOD’S EMBASSY”)

Translation from Polish

This time it was different. I returned home after several months spent abroad, having completed a very large assignment in record time. I felt somewhat more tired than usual, but did not pay it much attention. I dreamt only of being able to settle my remaining projects in Poland as soon as possible so that finally I could take some rest. And of taking my family to the mountains, if only for a few days, preferably to my beloved Tatra mountains or to Krynica Górska, where I am so quickly able to recharge my batteries and regain my strength. Each day I would count down the days separating me from my yearning for rest.

Increasingly often I would see the expression of complete surprise on my employee’s face . As if he no longer recognized me. He would notice the changes in me but later we would tell each other that surely he and I, as well as the rest of the boys were simply exhausted; moreover it was July, which was an exceptionally hot and dry month that year.

Blood pressure – normal, ECG – in order. The young doctor who was looking after me hooked me up to a drip. Half an hour went by and I felt marvellous, quite ready to leave. But he asked me into his office and a detailed examination began. He said nothing but watched me carefully, asking various questions and requesting simple things from me, for example to extend my arms in front of me as if I was about to begin boxing.

Initially I heard that, as they suspected, my brain was enlarged but that this was nothing serious. For a fraction of a second I felt elation. Great news! I am healthy. But why was this doctor looking so solemn? What’s going on? Then he finished his sentence:

“But in another spot we found a lump, almost two centimetres across, with additional focuses of inflammation in the brain stem. It’s an astrocytoma – a tumour”.

I wondered what I should do next. In principle I was prepared to accept the fact that I would die. I was worried only for my loved ones. How could I

protect them and provide them with everything that they needed. My mother was the biggest problem. Only I was familiar with the full course of her illness and knew the details of her treatment. Would I have enough time to pass this knowledge on to somebody else and would my family know how to continue her treatment? I wondered if there was some way for them to gain information from me after my death.

Could it be said that I felt apart? I do not know the answer myself. I did not cry and I did not scream; neither did I rebel or attempt to defend myself. So how, then, did I feel? The fact is that I felt nothing at all. I felt no sadness but only an absence of joy, of laughter, of happiness. I felt an absence of all that is good, optimistic and positive. And an absence of any hope.

Nevertheless I realised that this time we had a much more serious problem. I myself was the problem and the tumour was to a significant degree limiting my ability to concentrate and think logically. A pain in one's leg, hand, heart or stomach no doubt hinders clear thought, but a headache – moreover one that is caused by a tumour – makes it impossible not only to make any decisions at all, but precludes the thought process itself. I comforted myself with the thought that as soon as I left the clinic I would go at once to my own doctor, would subsequently take rest in Krynica and all would be well. That must simply be!

I rang my friend who is quite well versed in medical matters. I described my condition to her.

“Please save me, do whatever you can but save me!”

“Roman, from what you have told me ... the condition that you're in ... there is nothing I can do”, she replied in a barely audible whisper.

The days passed by. I realized that a new problem had appeared. Something began to happen to my memory. It was as if it had stopped recording. I was unable to recall certain conversations or events. Not so much the subject-matter of a conversation, as the fact that it had taken place at all. It is a terrible moment in one's life when we become aware that it is for real. I simply did not believe that I was to die. It is very hard to describe that state of

mind. There were ten million thoughts per second, all gloomy interwoven but at the same time cancelling each other out.

My brain seemed to be a conflagration of living fire; I felt as if half my face – the right side – was being burnt by molten metal. I would creep slowly forward trying to pray, or rather to make the sign of the cross and give thanks for my life and for the care and support that I had received. From my early childhood the Virgin Mary had listened to my pleas and had been very prompt to answer them. On my part, I would make her various promises but, as often happens in life, I would sooner or later forget some of them. I would remember about them only at times when a new situation forced me to return and kneel afresh before the Miraculous Icon, to recite once again my prayers, my further pleas and promises. But this time it was different. I knew it was the end. There was nothing more I could ask for. I had had so much time. I had wasted so many chances and opportunities that had been given to me. I now saw everything rise up before my eyes. How could I have been so stupid and irresponsible!

I began to prepare for my departure. On the following day I brought out all my documents and spread them out on the table. What needed to be settled and how? How much did I owe and to whom? Who owed me and how much? There were hundreds of matters to resolve. I was unable to cope and lay down in order to rest and think everything through. But I found that in my head my brain had turned into a sponge. Even the simplest things required an enormous effort, whilst anything more complicated was simply out of the question. I decided that even before the day was out I would convey to my beloved as much as I possibly could. As soon as she returned home from work I would ask her to take our little girl to the parents and I would tell her how matters were.

And then I received a text message from Rafał.

“How are things with you, my friend? When are you finally going to do my balcony?”

“Rafał, I don’t have time for jokes, I’m dying”, I replied with difficulty, after correcting the text several times – even those few phrases!

“For fuck’s sake, stop trying to play the doctor. Pull yourself together and do that balcony!”

“Rafał! I’m not joking, I really am dying! There is nothing that can be done for me”.

“Then go and see Zbyszek Nowak! He helped my wife, he helped me, my uncle and many others in my family...”

Go and see Nowak!!!

ZBYSZEK NOWAK!!! How could I have forgotten!!!

I walked with difficulty, dragging my feet. I didn’t know whether I was really walking or merely standing still, almost touching the screen with my nose, watching a movie in which I was walking. Was my body managing to keep up with me, or was it five centimetres or two metres behind me? Turning around, I caught sight of myself in a deplorable state. I was either half a metre to the right of my body, or a metre to the left. At times I was looking down on it from above.

Despite being in such a terrible state, I kept walking on with the last of my strength. In the space of forty years I had managed to bring myself to ruin. Without taking anything, only as a result of hard work and stress. Each step that I took brought with it the threat of falling but despite that, I did not ask for any help.

I was given a sort of ticket, a small card of some kind. I went up to the table, sat down and began to look around me. The waiting room was full. Some people stood, others were seated. People of all ages, all rather sad in appearance. Nobody here smiled and I could only hear whispering.

I set about filling in the ticket. I wrote my first name - I managed this somehow. In the second line there was a space for my surname. What is a surname? I know! So what was my surname? The process of recalling took me a while. I knew it, but what was the spelling?

“And what is your reason for wanting to see Mr Nowak?”

“I have a brain tumour”, I replied.

Not everyone was able to hear, so I repeated myself more loudly. Within a split second there was a grave silence; there were no comments, only meaningful glances in my direction. Aha! I saw that I had no competition in this crowd; there wasn't even anyone who might know someone... This did nothing to raise my spirits but only served to depress me. The silence lasted a moment longer but since people like to talk, conversations started up again. Yet they were neither about me, nor with me. In truth, this did not cheer me.

It looked as if Nowak would not be able to help me either. I came very close to getting up and leaving. Were it not for the fact that I like to check everything out thoroughly and had made an appointment, moreover one that was on Rafał's recommendation... The door opened.

I entered barely alive, introduced myself, stated who had given me the recommendation and passed on his regards. I could see that the person in front of me was not the effusive type. Politely but briefly and in a matter-of-fact manner, he thanked me and also conveyed his regards to our mutual acquaintance, then got down to business. He did not even glance at the big pile of test results and documents, but put it aside on the table.

"Has your eye been like that from birth, or has it got like that recently?"

What eye? What did he want from me? Before I was able utter any kind of reply, he put a mirror in front of my face with a skilful movement. Once again I saw a corpse but noticed also that one eye was covered by my eyelid which had drooped together with the skin above my eyebrow. So this was what he was talking about!

"No, it must have happen somehow just now..." – I was unable to finish.

Hiss, hiss... He sprayed some water onto his hands and began to attend to me. I was barely able to stand, hungry, tired, whilst he was waving his arms around in child-like manner. Now he is placing his hands on my body, now brushing something off. Hiss, hiss – first from one spray bottle, then from another; he was doing this very expertly – now from behind, now from the front. Head, back, now sit in the chair, arms, legs, stomach, now get up, now lean over... What was going on?

I emerged from the consulting room not so much surprised, as downright stupefied. I felt nothing, absolutely nothing! Only the water stains

on my clothes bore testament to the fact that he had done something to me. It had taken ten minutes altogether, including the conversation and his directions for the further treatment. I am not sure what my expectations were, probably nothing specific, but in any event it was not that! He had sprinkled me with water, charged me, suggested a further consultation and... had he already cured me?! I thought that... I really didn't know what I thought about it, but something of that nature!!! What is more, when he looked at my ticket and I told him I had a brain tumour, I heard him say:

“Let's not call it anything yet”.

I am trying to establish what is true and the extent of that truth. Whether I believe or do not believe; whether I should leave or stay; whether I should go for the second consultation or not. A tornado rages in my head; whilst Nowak is showing me images of someone's brain scan. One shows a tumour, the other does not. They were taken several months apart. I am unable to believe it. All right, someone was lucky, someone managed to get away with it, but that doesn't mean that I will be able to get away with it. But that someone managed to recover and his tumour was even bigger. There is hope. And now he is telling me about a little boy whose brain tumour pushed out his eye. They fought it for several months and the boy, now already an adult, is still alive and well.

“Oh, your eye has recovered!”

“What fucking eye?!” What does he want from me now?! I had barely completed the thought when a little mirror had been shoved in front of my face. What I saw was unbelievable! Incredible! The arch of my eyebrow and my eyelash had resumed their normal positions, but my face... My face had become somehow radiant and the deathly greyness had gone from it. Well, this couldn't be, this was surely impossible!

Hiss, hiss, he was again patting me, brushing something off, flicking something off me. Hiss, hiss, from the front, from the back, get into the chair, get out of the chair, get up, sit down, pat, pat, hiss, hiss...

“Please stand in front of me”.

He held his hand above my head, slightly to the front and about thirty centimetres away; he held it quite still, but I felt an enormous blow – as if from

a red-hot pickaxe – right in my tumour. During that time we were talking, or rather I was talking. I asked whether it would be a good idea to come for three days because I had heard about such a possibility during my appointment.

“Of course”, he replied.

And at that very moment I felt like I was struck with a big blow. I lost my sight and as if through a fog I vaguely remembered falling into a chair. Mr Nowak was still saying something to me but I heard him as if I were under water. I was unable to answer, I felt completely stiff. My picture of Zbyszek Nowak and his “surgery” began to dissolve; I tried to signal with my hands that I couldn’t understand anything, that nothing was getting through to me. Only one thing came over clearly:

“Don’t worry, you’re not the only one to have fallen here...”

He laughed heartily and slapped my arm vigorously.

I tried to get up but was unable to do so. Nowak caught me from behind, pulled me up and hauled me to the waiting room like a sack of potatoes. I tried to help as much as I could, but was unable to do very much.

I sat there for a while longer and then we set off towards the car. The fresh air revived me somewhat.

We were getting close to Lublin, so I telephoned the clinic to make an appointment. My doctor friend began at once to ask me how I was feeling and suddenly remarked:

“You seem today to be somehow... full of energy!

Then I rang my Swedish partner to ask about our plans, but he asked:

“Roman, how come you have so much energy today?”

I began to laugh and told him that I had begun to feel much better.

From breakfast time on Sunday morning I was trying to figure out how I could leave as soon as possible because I was feeling worse by the minute. At last we sat down in the car and got going. We had barely moved off when I began to feel better. And later, the closer we got to our destination, the better I felt.

My appointment was at nine but I went along earlier. I bought a ticket, as well as several bottles of water and sat down in an armchair by the door. Here, at last, I felt safe and well. Here, it would be unlikely for me to die. If anything were to happen they would call Mr Nowak and he would save me.

The second treatment that day was also nothing exceptional. We exchanged perhaps a couple of sentences and the rest of the appointment passed in silence. It wasn't that I didn't have any questions but simply seeing the number of patients, my conscience did not allow me to waste Nowak's time. The day was slowly drawing to a close, the last patient came out and Mr Nowak followed him.

"You are still here?" he asked loudly and sharply. And he gave me a stern look. He had told me off again! I felt thoroughly stupid and ashamed. Yes, everyone had left a long time ago, yet I was still sitting there since the morning. Now it occurred to me that I had not even had any breakfast. I felt an enormous hunger, said goodbye and walked to the Alkano¹. Alkano - what a silly name!

I had something to eat and went to bed in my clothes as I was feeling cold. After half an hour I felt incredibly light and well. Oh, how very well!

Rafał arrived, went in to see Mr Nowak, came out again and we spoke for a short while; then he drove off. I returned to the waiting room, Mr Nowak ushered me in and asked:

"Who is Rafał to you?"

"A friend".

I replied without hesitation and suddenly my throat went dry. What had I said? Rafał had been here a few moments earlier and had probably said something else – that he was an acquaintance or a colleague – and here I was, bragging that he was my friend. I quickly began to explain.

"Well, he's a friend but we don't drink or go out together... only... well... our friendship's different... We've known each other for fifteen years but we haven't even drunk tea together..."

I could see that I was digging a hole for myself.

¹ It is clear from the main text that "Willa Alkano" (Villa Alkano) is the name of a hotel, so references to "Alkano" have been translated as "the Alkano".

“But why do you ask?”

“Well, you see, Rafał has been coming here for over fifteen years, he has brought various people to me, but he has never asked me to help anyone as much as you”.

I began to cry. I would have expected anything but this! Absolutely not. I could see that Mr Nowak also felt moved.

I told him then about Częstochowa.

“That is my Mother”, he said.

I took hold of his hand.

“Mine too, Mr Nowak. Mine too”.

At the Alkano I told the dog lady that Mr Nowak had suggested that I should build him a floating house. I was delighted with this idea and felt like jumping for joy right up to the ceiling. Because this implied that, first, I would live and secondly, since I had received such a proposition, that Nowak clearly recognized that I was good at what I did. The lady listened to my account and said:

“Ah, that’s a good thing. You’ll have the chance to get back what he’s charged you for your treatment”.

Although I still harboured some doubts and a certain amount of distaste towards Nowak, what I heard shattered me. It occurred to me that my attitude to this whole business was still not too bad.

And so from one extreme to another. But not for long because I quickly fell asleep. My sleep was unusually deep. And I felt an incredible lightness.

I returned from Podkowa on Thursday and until Saturday I felt well. On Saturday I began to feel worse and by Sunday I was very bad, but nonetheless better than before the first consultation. On the one hand it saddened me to part from the girls, but on the other I couldn’t wait to get away because truly, I only felt safe in Podkowa.

Platforms and trains make partings even more sad. I looked through the window at my fiancée and my little girl and thought: God, they have no idea that they might never see me again. They walked together holding hands and

the little girl was hopping along happily. It is not true that at times like this the heart is fit to burst from sorrow. What happens is much worse.

Zbyszek agreed to see us already on the Sunday evening. I could see that Håkan was approaching the matter with respect but feared that the whole treatment would appear worthless in the eyes of a university physics lecturer, perhaps even hilarious. I was curious to know what his views would be on it later. Yet he didn't make fun of it and maintained a particularly serious demeanour. Instead of scoffing I only heard one repeated question:

“How does he do it, what is it?!”

Each time I replied:

“It doesn't even make any sense to think about it. Instead of trying to get to the bottom of it, I just prefer to benefit from it and to do *sz* as well as possible”.

At the Alkano we sat down to some tea, feeling increasingly sad as the time for saying goodbye drew nearer. We spoke mainly about Nowak.

“You know, he made an enormous impression on me. As a physicist and mathematician I have no doubt that this energy exists and works. He mended my eyes, got rid of the pain in my joints and muscles and probably a number of other ailments, but this” - he pointed to his bad knee which gave him considerable pain when he crossed one leg over the other, having to use both hands to do so – “this he won't be able to repair. This is mechanical damage, an injury going back several years. But no matter, I am very pleased anyway”.

This conversation took place just before the final, one-to-one, evening appointment. The two men said their fond farewells and we returned to the Alkano. The tea hardly had time to get properly cold before we had returned. We began to chat. Håkan, as was his habit, placed one leg over the other. He did not use any hands to do this and did not cry out in pain. We both looked at each other. Suddenly he jumped up!

“Oh fuck! Oh fuck! He's mended my leg! I'll be bugged! (*nie jestem pewna czy “bugged” wyraża odczucie tej osoby?*)

He began crossing and uncrossing his leg repeatedly, time after time. He was standing up, sitting down, jumping up, shouting, almost demolishing the chairs. I tried to calm him down, pleaded with him not to act stupidly, but he

paid no attention. He was overtaken with happiness, but finally asserted: “you’re quite right, there’s no point in wondering how he does it”, and then he went to bed since he was leaving at dawn.

During my final consultation before left, Zbyszek at one point placed the palms of his hands on my back and said:

“Ah, your kidneys have got going”.

It seemed to me that I felt something, as if some cramp, but thought that I must have imagined it. However, when I went to bed I could clearly feel some tickling and cramps, even some pulsating. Sometime later, in the toilet, I encountered a further shock.

Thanks to Zbyszek’s energy I felt increasingly better and thanks to my chats with his employees I was able to smile more and more often.

Yet there were also very difficult moments. It occurred to me that before I had found this place, I had felt very ill but had not panicked. Now I was feeling much better but would panic at each, even slightest worsening of my condition. These fluctuations in mood became a dreadful nuisance. On each occasion I would seek some means of dealing with them. I wondered whether I should continue with the therapy, or not. What was I to do?

At a certain moment I came to the conclusion that it had only been a coincidence. There was an improvement because an improvement had been due. It had nothing to do with Nowak. That is what I thought while I was feeling well. But when the next low arrived, my attitude changed. Sometimes I would feel that he was helping, at other times that he had cheated me. Had cheated me and was continuing to cheat. When I was seeing him I felt well, but when I left, I felt ill.

And so on, endlessly. A little voice had positioned itself just behind my ear and would repeat day and night: “Cheat, cheat, cheat...”

It was at its loudest when I was packing my suitcase preparing for my departure: “He’ll take all your money, but you’ll die anyway!”

As if I didn’t already have enough pain and suffering to endure, “the voice” nagged at me and was constantly cackling: “Kill the cheat, don’t let him

rob people! Don't go! Don't go, give yourself a break, you can go next week". Always new ideas and tricks. On the one hand something was constantly drawing me to Zbyszek but on the other, something was always getting in the way. Either the car wouldn't start or something at home would go wrong.

Unable to cope with this whispering entity, I decided to tell Zbyszek about it.

I entered his "surgery" and, as I was apt to do sometimes, began to speak before I had even got through the door:

"Mr Nowak, something is sitting on my shoulder and inciting me to evil. Against you. What should I do?"

Either he would see me as a nutter or he was going to pick up some magical objects and set about driving off my persecutor. But nothing of the sort happened. As if quite casually, Nowak merely said:

"Then don't listen to it".

How simple! If someone is being a pain and muttering nonsense, it's enough to stop paying him any attention. I even felt quite ashamed that I had not thought of it myself. He had said something brilliant but did not even pause for a moment and carried on busying himself: hiss, hiss, please sit down, hiss, hiss, please stand up...

I imagined myself in his shoes. Would I be able to stand before someone who was seriously ill, frequently before someone who was dying, and look them right in the eye while swindling them out of their money? I would not be capable of something like that. Not for all the money in the world. What kind of a monster would one have to be to cheat people out of their money in that situation! A few, perhaps umpteen, or even several dozen people daily! Thousands, hundreds of thousands of people in the space of over 30 years! Falsehood is incapable of going undetected; if I were a swindler, people would... A load was lifted from my heart but the words: "One man is capable of anything" – continued to bother me.

It turned out that lots of doctors gladly made use of Zbyszek's help. Some, of course, concluded after several visits that he was not helping them, although they themselves would give their patients medicines which had no

effect for months. But there were also others who knew very well that Nowak was their only hope.

An unusual story that is close to my heart is that of a lady doctor from Lublin who was offered an operation for her haematoma of the brain, but as she was in the trade, both the chances of success and the risks were explained to her in detail. She knew very well the significance of the words: here we'll drill two holes, there we'll make an entry and that's what we'll extract... She decided against any intervention on the part of her professional colleagues. She chose the energy. She spent weeks and months travelling to Podkowa, attended the consultations and applied the poultices. And when one would think that there should have been an improvement, there in fact occurred a deterioration. The buzzing in her ears and dizzy spells got worse. The lady doctor did not break off contact but when the time came for her next check-up it turned out that the haematoma was no longer there. It had disappeared without trace. Her colleagues even tried to convince her that the test results had been mixed up, that those without the haematoma were not her results.

How many stories like that Nowak has to his name!

I already felt well enough to be able to search the Internet and in medical literature in an effort to find evidence either confirming or undermining Zbyszek's effectiveness. My searches ranged from the realm of religion, medicine, philosophy, science – chemistry and quantum physics – through to the worlds of legend and myth. I came across a mass of information, some of which was mutually exclusive. There was only one thing that I was unable to find. Nowhere did I come across an assertion that helping others, but in particular the saving of lives and preserving health, was something bad or worthy of condemnation. In all cultures, religions and ages such people were endowed with enormous respect and surrounded by particular care. In all times that is, apart from our own.

I had yet another way of dealing with myself. I would constantly seek out new reasons for living. When I got bored with one or it stopped working for me, I would reach for another and use it as a support. This worked quite well for a while, but there came a day that I had not anticipated.

I scrolled through “film of my life” to the end, calmly and thoroughly and concluded that there was no single reason for living. I repeated the whole process for a second time, but to no avail. I could find nothing that might influence my decision.

This time, however, the “film” wound on further and images appeared which had not been there previously. I saw my own funeral. It was my corpse in the coffin and gathered around it were people wearing black; the nearer they were to the coffin, the more tightly crowded together they were. My closest family stood in silence, crying, blowing their noses, the women sobbing. In the second row were my more distant family members and friends, fidgeting a little; and in the third row I could hear whispering and conversations. The further away, the louder they became. As I approached them, I could hear clearly what they were talking and laughing about:

“He kept on going to see that Nowak but he didn’t help him anyway”.

“Just took his cash”.

“Yet he believed in him, believed in him so strongly...”

“What an idiot!”

“And he always seemed such a wise person...”

What a bunch of fools! I got so mad that I jumped up with rage. Perhaps I no longer have the will to live and have not the slightest motivation, but I won’t have these blockheads speaking ill about Zbyszek. I won’t give them any easy arguments. Nobody can possibly say that he didn’t help me. I found myself to be already in quite good form. I got up and drove to Podkowa to seek help and to complain about this “friend” of mine who was constantly perched on my shoulder and who had again gone on the attack, and in such an underhanded way.

I was still spending quite a lot of time in the waiting room. I had probably met several thousand people, had observed them and listened to their stories. For the most part I myself stayed silent. I decided not to engage with them or to upset myself. I contemplated these sad and troubled people. I felt sympathy for those who had succumbed to illness, who had been wronged by fate, who were looking on submissively and awaiting any gesture or word of comfort. I felt sorry for all of them and wondered how I could help

them. So on the few occasions when I sparked a convivial conversation, I would try to pluck up the courage and describe the conclusions that I had reached.

One lady asked me what in my view would be the best thing to do in her position. I told her that she should completely change the life that she had led up to that point and then there would be a chance that her illness would go into remission and not return. In response I heard:

“Surely you’ve gone mad! Why should I turn my life upside down! I wouldn’t dream of it!

It was fortunate that when I came across those most uncomplimentary, albeit fairly rare, anonymous opinions typical of hate on the Internet, it was only once I was in a very good state so that they were incapable of influencing my decisions. But who knows what would have happened if I had read this during one of the critical moments in the course of my illness. I would probably have given up and not lived to see the days in which I am now able to share my story with you.

On the day before my examination I was nevertheless tense and in a nervous state. I was unable to sleep during the night and arrived at the clinic several hours early, hungry and tired but full of faith in what I had heard in Podkowa. There’s nothing there! But in the depths of my soul I knew that things might not be all that rosy.

“I have good news for you, the tumour has not got any bigger! It may even have got a bit smaller!”

I felt stunned. It was odd that I didn’t collapse. I stood there like some kind of zombie and can’t even remember whether I was still breathing. It took a few minutes to pull myself together before I left the clinic. That was a shock and a half! Was there really nothing there?! Was everything all right?! Nothing of the kind! I sent a text message to Zbyszek. I telephoned Robert. I didn’t feel cheated but probably only because I felt nothing at all at that moment.

My rage gradually subsided in favour of what was for me such a characteristically detailed analysis of the facts. I can't deny that I was greatly influenced by Zbyszek's electrifying text message. Two months previously I had been in a critical condition. I wasn't able to recall my surname, I didn't know that I had to flush the toilet, I spoke with difficulty and could not see very much. Today I can walk without difficulty, run, read books, work simultaneously on several projects, remember everything and am able to be in control of everything, just like before my illness. A few days in Podkowa and I am like new!

So had I been cured or not? What was the truth here? What the doctor had written? The same doctor who had declared me terminally ill in August but later discharged me from hospital with such a streamlined report that I could almost have been regarded as cured. After only a few drips and injections! The tumour was still the same size. And that was supposed to be the wonderful news for me? So what was the truth here? Then I realized that a doctor is able to know only as much as he can learn from the patient himself. And so it doesn't matter what he puts down on the sheet of paper. What matters is the condition that we are actually in. How we actually feel. What is important is that we mustn't set ourselves any limitations.

Something would constantly surprise me. This time I was going after a two-week interval. My condition was now reasonably stable; my mood swings gradually less severe, although I still harboured a considerable feeling of insecurity.

As soon as I crossed the boundary of the Alkano I was attacked by a certain thought. Initially it was very quiet but then grew more and more insistent. Even at night I could repeatedly hear the same sentence, a short sentence – only two words. Eventually it transformed itself almost into a shriek. It was not pleasant to keep hearing the same thing in my head over and over again, so when morning came I had had enough. On my way to the consulting rooms I decided to free myself of it and simply tell Nowak about it.

My imagination suggested some terrible scenes to me. Nowak was grabbing me by the collar, pushing me out onto the stairs, giving me a kick and

telling me to fuck off and never to show myself again. I was awfully afraid but there was no way out. I would tell him even if he was going to kill me!

I entered, looked Zbyszek straight in the eye and, without any further hesitation declared:

“Greetings, brother! I don’t know what this is all about but I simply had to tell you!”

I told him and waited for the anticipated attack. But Zbyszek spread his arms out and said:

“Well, at last!”

We fell into each other’s arms, embraced vigorously and very warmly. As if we hadn’t seen each other for many, many years. This time Zbyszek did not even try to conceal his tears. We were both crying and happy as two small children.

“Did we already meet somewhere in the past?”

“We’ve known each other for thousands of years and have met many times. I’ve been looking after you ever since you appeared on this planet”.

I felt very light, as if I had lost ninety-nine percent of my weight.

Leaving, I turned round in the doorway and said in farewell, but a farewell meant for the next thousand years:

“Stay well, my little brother. Stay well!”

In reply I received a look filled with anxiety and concern. Would this youngster manage? Would this pre-school infant not get lost in this world?