



THE INCIDENT

“Don’t be nervous, Malvina,
everything will be Argentina!”
— Uncle Vova, my alcoholic neighbour

This happened before a busy road cut through Koregaon Park.
That road erased the silence that had once filled the park—a silence alive with
birdsong, the distant chanting of mantras, flocks of parrots, the fragrance of flowers,
and the scent of burning incense.

India – Poona.

It was noon.

There was hardly anyone in the street. Not even rickshaws or scooters were in sight.

The sun was at full force.

This is the time when people here have lunch and then sleep.

By the way, I like this hour. I don’t even wear a hat. It is hot, but I don’t feel tired.
I love the sun.

On the other side of the road, some distance away, I saw an Indian family walking
towards me: a young father, his very young wife—almost a girl—with a tiny baby in
her arms, and a little boy of about three clinging to his mother's sari.
And then something unimaginable happened.

The father of the family, apparently drunk and swaying as he walked, turned round
and hit his wife in the face with his fist.
She was holding the tiny baby in her arms, trying not to fall, and did not even turn
her face away.

With her “visor raised”, she took the blows one after another.
The barefoot little boy, still clinging to his mother, began to cry loudly.

And the head of the family kept turning to the wife who followed him like a faithful dog and punching her in the face.
There was still quite a distance between us.
I shouted at the top of my voice:

“Stop it right now!”

I don’t think he heard me, or understood the order.

But he swayed, froze for a moment, and looked in my direction.

And then he hit her again.
That was enough for me.

I yanked my backpack off my shoulder. There was a book inside (not *A Course in Miracles*—a much smaller one). Gripping the backpack like a grenade, I charged towards the family.

At that moment, only one thought was racing through my outraged mind:

"Just try hitting her one more time!
You'll get it from me now!"

Running in my platform flip-flops with high heels turned out to be much more difficult—and not nearly as fast as I'd hoped.
Still, I ran as fast as I could, noticing nothing around me, my eyes fixed on the bastard's fist.
An Indian man riding a scooter along the road seemed to have been captivated by my headlong dash, my sudden impulse, and my determination.-
He looked in the direction I was running, immediately understood what had happened, and steered his scooter straight towards the family.

Stopping beside them, he began talking to the drunken husband, gesturing animatedly and shaking his head in that uniquely Indian way.

I still hadn't reached them.

I slowed to a walk.
And then, to my own surprise, I caught myself feeling... disappointed.
This bearded, grey-haired Indian on his scooter, who looked like some Eastern sage, had robbed me of the pleasure of smashing my backpack over the man's head hard enough to leave him with a lifelong reflex:
"If you hit your wife, you'll get hit on the head."

And then I remembered the forgiveness that *A Course in Miracles* teaches—the very wisdom I had spent twelve months trying to understand.

How does it put it?

Fragments from *A Course in Miracles* came flooding back into my mind.

"If you did not feel guilty you could not attack, for condemnation is the root of attack." (T-13.I.1)

"The ultimate purpose of projection is always to get rid of guilt." (T-13.II.1)

In other words... if I saw aggression, it was because of my own unconscious guilt. I needed a scapegoat—someone onto whom I could project it...

In other words, forgiveness meant making the opposite choice. Suddenly the whole situation was supposed to appear in a completely different light, leaving the other person innocent instead of burdening him with my own guilt.

Personally, I thought it made much more sense to hit him over the head with my backpack first... and forgive him afterwards.

Like a lonely heron on my platform flip-flops and high heels, I strode through the dusty, scorching streets of Koregaon Park.

The image of the three-year-old boy stayed before my eyes: his mouth wide open in terrified sobs as he watched his drunken father beating his mother.

I walked quickly, almost furiously, feeling like a red-hot pistol that had failed to fire.

Fragments from the Course kept surfacing in my mind, making everything even worse.

"Everything you see is a dream."

Yes.

A dream.

But was I really supposed to stand by and watch that dream turn into a nightmare?

And then a truly heretical thought crossed my mind.

What if this whole thick, intricate book had been planted by the very people who wanted to escape punishment for their crimes?

All those paedophiles, murderers, rapists, sadists...

We look at their filthy deeds and tell ourselves:

"It's all a dream."

"Our projections."

"Our subconscious."

"Our ego."

We agree that all those crimes were actually lurking within ourselves.

And so we forgive.

We forgive our "innocent brothers", who committed those crimes only in our perception, only in our imagination, only in our dreams, only in our projections.

And, most importantly, we take those crimes upon ourselves.

Our guilt.

Our responsibility.

By forgiving them, we are really forgiving ourselves.

Brilliant.

We forgive everyone.

We love everyone.

The world becomes a better place, overflowing with love...

And that drunken bastard will never raise his hand against his fragile wife again.

And, of course, that little boy will never cry again.

Guys...

Something is terribly wrong here.

I kept walking the streets for a long time...

And at last...

I forgave.

I forgave myself...

for not being able to forgive.