

A Samurai and Oedipus: a Family Story

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It was a long e-mail. He wrote me about his thoughts, about painful reflections, about his worries and fears, and about a miracle that happened in his life, and about his relief. His e-mail was longer than this article. However, having read it, I had a good feeling – there was hope in it. At the end of his e-mail, he wrote that he came to terms with his past. He did not think much of his father. He was in the middle of end-of-semester exams, and he would be on his first holidays soon. He visited his parents only once, and everything went peacefully. The most important thing he wanted to tell me was that he had a girlfriend. She was from Ukraine and also studied in Poland. everything was fine between them. I read that e-mail a few times. I have to admit that I had tears in my eyes at some parts. However, I had an overpowering feeling of joy and relief.

The beginning of this story was drearily commonplace. A colleague called, ritually inquired about my things, and at the end of our conversation asked me to “have a look at the boy”. At first I refused, because I never work with children. However, the colleague reassured me that “the boy” was twenty and seemingly all right. In fact, he wanted to see a psychologist, but his father was rather concerned about one delicate issue. The colleague hesitated, and then said that the father was worried if his son was not a gay.

I was surprised. I reminded my colleague about professional ethics, and about the fact that “the boy” was already twenty, and about the fact that even if I learned anything from “the boy”, it would remain between the two of us. My colleague apologised immediately and said he understood everything. The important thing was that I agreed to an interview, probably a two-hour one. My partner had known “the boy” for many years, it was his close friend’s son, and it was important that he could speak about his problems with someone he did not know.

I have to admit I did not give an instant reply. I was travelling a lot during the following two months and did not have a chance to see a new client. However, my colleague was insistent, so I finally found a gap in my schedule and agreed to see “the boy”. He called, introduced himself as Anthon, and we agreed to meet up.

So, finally we were meeting, after all, the preliminary negotiations. He rang the doorbell; I opened and was stupefied.

A person from a different reality stood at the door. It was -20°C outside, but the young man was wearing a black leather jacket with elbow-length sleeves, a pair of full dark trousers and massive black boots. Two bag handles crossed over his chest and looked like bullet ribbons. “Can I come in?” he asked smiling openly, and I struggled not to utter “O-oh” when I was letting him in. He took his shoes off, and when I saw his back there was another surprise: he had a waist-length ponytail that he was wearing in a samurai-like manner. He straightened up, and I looked at him once again. Over 190 cm tall, handsome, with apparently coloured black hair and shaved forehead, wearing strange clothes, he was making an impression of a quiet and stable person. So his voice – low, masculine, deep – did not match with the word “boy” at all.

We went to my office and sat. I waited a little. Anthon was looking at me quietly. I introduced myself again and asked him if he had ever visited a psychologist or psychotherapist. “No”, he said. I explained shortly about our prospective work and suggested that Anthon told me what had brought him to me.

“I cannot find myself”, a young man said only.

I asked him to give me some details.

It was a usual story. Good grades in primary school, loss of interest in high school, different attempts to find his way in the last five years. He applied for two universities and failed twice, and now he was studying in a low-ranked college at the Humanities Department but was not sure if it was his thing. After presenting the facts, he looked at me interrogatively.

“Why have you decided to meet a psychologist now? Has anything happened?”

“Everything has already been happening for the last couple of years”, Anthon answered. “I do not understand what I want or whether I move in the right direction. Also, another thing – I’ve never had a girlfriend”.

I almost choked at that instant, although I was anticipating some difficulties in this domain from the conversation with my colleague. Handsome, with rippling muscles and powerful energy, Anthon looked attractive even despite his bizarre attire. He did not make an impression of a person who had problems with relationships. Moreover, I started my delicate inquiry.

Anthon willingly spoke about himself: he was twenty, his parents were married, he had a five-year-old sister; his education was fee-based, he does not work; his mother gave him money for therapy.

When I asked questions about social issues and went into details, I was pleasantly surprised at the way he spoke about himself and other people. The way he analysed the world, the structure of his conversation, his description of simple things had an incredible depth. He had wisdom that somehow mismatched his young age. He applied for a University twice: once to study journalism, a second time to be a film director in Moscow, but he failed twice. His current studies seemed boring and a waste of time. Professors did not

generate any interest in him, lectures were boring, and fellow students cared about their lives.

“And what’s your life about?” I asked.

“My life?” he took a moment to think over and replied, “My life is about dreams and hopes.”

He told me that he read a lot. “The Way of the Warrior”, bushido (that was where his unusual appearance came from), Nietzsche, Beigbeder and Marx, Freud and Jung, Kierkegaard and Pratchett... “He reads an awful lot”, I thought with some jealousy. He did two hours of sports daily. He wrote small stories. He played keyboard and composed music.

I had an impression that I looked at the very “extensively developed and harmonious person”. So this person was lonely: according to him, he did not have his Way and a Girlfriend.

To be honest, I was intrigued and enchanted. Forty-five minutes ran out, and I asked him if he wanted to continue our work.

“Yes, of course”, Anthon answered.

I announced the primary conditions of the contract and arranged five meetings to understand better if I could be helpful. This was the end of our interview.

He came to our second meeting wearing the same clothes. “Thanks, God it is just minus seven outside”, I thought. Same as at our first meeting, he did not take his outfit (leather outside, the fur inside) off and followed to my office. Anthon was very sociable, lively, and willingly answered any of my questions. The main subject was his lack of interest in studying. He told me that he went to the college only two times in the past fortnight, and he was profoundly bored there.

“Why do you study in a place that you dislike so much?” I asked. So here “He” appeared.

“Because the Parent decided so”, Anthon answered. His face froze into stone.

He was silent for some time and added,

“The parent decides everything in our family.”

I have to admit I found it quite curious that he called his father “the Parent”. I asked Anthon why he called him so.

“It is an allusion to a famous Taras Bulba, a character from Gogol’s novel that said to his son: ‘I gave you life, I will take it’...”

Moreover, then it all moved to the war theme. Anthon used a lot of aggressive military metaphors.

The rest of the session, he spoke about his desires, which his father nipped in the bud. Having a military background, his father moved to a business, but he turned his family into the soldiers’ barracks. Anthon lived by his father’s rules from the early childhood.

He went to bed and woke up at the time set up by his father. He went to youth's camps (which he hated) because his father decided so. He studied in the maths high school, although he was inclined to humanities because his father wanted so.

Anthon reported in a calm voice, with no emotions and frozen face.

"Are you angry with your father?" I asked cautiously.

"No", Anthon said. Also, then, after a pause, he added: "I hate him."

I was confused. For me, hatred is a muted yet strong emotion, which is usually not socially approved, and people tend to present it in a "lessened" modality like anger or annoyance. I guess he felt that I got hesitant, and Anthon continued,

"He always did what he thought was right. However, now I do not know if I need what I want because almost everything that I do, I do under his pressure or with his assistance.

"But why don't you try to do something you want?" I asked.

"Because I have limited resources. I am dependent on his money", Anthon said in a calm voice.

"Have you ever tried?" I was not giving up.

"Oh yes, many times", he answered.

Moreover, then he told me that when he was a teenager, he rebelled against his father. However, any attempts of free thinking (not to mention free action) were brutally punished. Things went like this until Anthon turned sixteen. When he was thirteen, he started Thai boxing, and by the age of sixteen he was taller than his parent. So after that – suddenly Anthon hesitated and blushed – father did not make attempts to beat him.

"What is happening to you?" I asked. "You blushed and you seem to be extinguished."

"Nothing... Just unpleasant memories", Anthon replied.

I had a feeling that something was wrong there... Anthon's further story shed the light on some details, and I thought he felt shame when he was sharing it with me.

His father used to punish him physically until he was sixteen. Anthon's minute non-obedience led him to his father's office, where the men ordered Anthon to take his trousers and underwear off and hit three strokes with a belt buckle. Usually, it took some days after the procedure for Anthon to sit regularly. However, when Anthon started doing Thai boxing, he could confront his father's aggression.

"I only told him once that I was not going to his office. He got furious instantly and started dragging me, and I responded automatically... A fight started. Probably he would have killed me, had my mother not gotten involved. Then father told her to "educate" me as she wished and slammed the door behind his back.

"Did your mother know that he was beating you?"

“No. Father always said: Be a man. If you are responsible, suffer a penalty with dignity.”

The more I heard, the less I understood.

“So, your mother did not notice anything? She did not guess?”

Anthon thought for a while.

“I think she guessed... When I was a kid, he hit me in front of her sometimes. When I was seven or eight, he hit my face so strong that my nose started bleeding. They had a big fight after that. You know, no-one yells in the house, we are a respectful family”, Anthon screwed his face into a smile. “But I heard mom told him that she was taking me away and going back to her parents. After this incident, my father kept his temper in line for some time, but then he developed this habit of taking me to his office for a ‘man talk’.”

“Why didn’t you tell your mother?”

“Because I love her very much”, Anthon said quietly. His face changed at that moment and became a little softer.

Our time was up; Anthon left, but I went back to his story a few times. My countertransference reactions were strong: I felt anger towards the father, and I was puzzled how Anthon’s mother had not been noticing anything.

Our third meeting was one week later. Anthon began by telling me that he got some ideas about an important direction in his life.

Apparently, when he failed to enter the first university he applied to, he wanted to go to Europe as a “Bremen Town Musician”. His friend had arranged a band; they rented a bus and hoppedscotched to different holiday resorts with performances. Anthon needed a visa, but his father forbade everyone in the family to give him money: “you have to earn this money yourself”. Himself... It looked like a punishment for the failure to enter the university.

So, the parent arranged that Anthon worked as a barrister at his friend’s place. Anthon worked for a month and got fifty dollars. He did not take any tips – he thought there was no need – and he bought a guitar. When he went to his father, the man just said: “It is the business. You have to discuss your salary beforehand”, and refused to give Anthon sixty Euros for a visa.

When Anthon recalled it, I saw tears in his eyes for the first time.

I asked, “Why did this situation touch you more than the fact that your father used physical force regularly?”

“Because when he hit me, he just could not contain himself. However, here I needed his support. He manipulated me, and I could not travel with my friends. My life could have been different, but the Parent gave me a lesson: I was no-one, I could not do anything, not even make an arrangement”.

Suddenly Anthon buried his face in hands... His shoulders were shuddering, and I had an aching desire to sit next to him and give him a hug. I was aware that my feelings were those of a mother as

well – my son was the same age. I waited until Anthon opened his face and told him about my sympathy. I said that it seemed the situation hurt him deeply.

“Yes. I had depression after that incident”.

“Did you go to the doctor?”

“No. I can read”, Anthon was trying to make a joke and lowered his eyes. “I do not think pills would have helped. However, I was down. It was so bad that I even thought about...”

He stopped speaking, and it was that very silence that one could cut with a knife. I was waiting.

“I was thinking about suicide.”

He uttered those words and raised his eyes.

“Didn’t your family notice it?”

“The Parent did not. I had a feeling I did not exist for him. By my mom saw and felt everything. It was her who dragged me out of it. After putting my sister to bed, she came to me every night. She spoke until midnight, stroke my head, told me funny stories. It was a hard time for her – my sister was three then. It took me three or four months to recover.”

“What do you think was most painful for you?”

Anthon was quiet. A shadow ran through his face.

“I guess it was a thought that my father did not need me. That I did not come up to his expectations. That he did not think of me as a man – I was just a boy.”

At that moment I felt that even the cruellest, the most disturbed, the craziest parents evoke a single wish in their children: just to be loved.

Suddenly the energy supporting our dialogue disappeared. I did not understand what had happened. I asked Anthon if he felt that something changed in the conversation. He realised that, he said. However, he was dead silent each time when I asked what had happened at that moment.

The session was over; it left me pensive.

Our fourth meeting began from Anthon’s being late by ten minutes. Out of breath, he entered and started outright by telling me that he went for a job interview. Some guys set up a boy-band, and it looked like he could get a place. He was shining; it was a pleasure to see him – a happy twenty-year-old guy, not a person over seventy as he sometimes gave the impression.

Moreover, then I finally decided to ask a question that interested me from the start. What message did Anthon want to convey by his outfit? It was relevant because my previous question was about the impression he made at the interview.

Anthon thought for a while and smiled again.

“I heard a question about my clothes a hundred times, but never from this perspective.”

"I merely realised that you always wear this jacket? Waistcoat? I am not quite sure what to call it."

"It is a sort of Haori Jacket; the samurai is outwear... In fact, it is just leather with a fur lining. A friend who studies fashion design made it for me."

"Is it warm enough when it is minus twenty outside?" I could not help but wonder.

"Of course it is. It is the fur. Mink."

I was surprised. I remembered that his father controlled the family finances and sometimes refused to give money to his son out of principle. How could he provide for such an expensive yet odd-looking thing?

As if he had read my thoughts, Anthon replied,

"Mom gave me the fur. After my sister was born, my mother gained some weight, and the Parent gave her a new fur coat as a present. So she passed on her old one to me because she knew I was dreaming of a Haori Jacket. My mother is just a miracle!" he added, and his eyes shone.

Moreover, then I got it. "Mother is the image of the world; father is the mode of action," Anthon's questions of choice, his search for the Way – those were problems related to the father, a person who always decided for everyone, who never gave his son an opportunity to grow, and who now did not have the power to change anything. All he had was the ability to control the family finances.

Moreover, the Girlfriend. Well, Anthon did not have one because he had a fantastic mother.

She was his darling, an idealised, sensitive woman. During all those years, she was not aware that her husband brutalised her son.

I had a moment of joy because I finally conceptualised the problem and looked at Anthon thoughtfully. I decided to put my interpretations on hold and let Anthon take a direction.

He continued speaking about clothes for a few minutes: he understood how people perceived him; a lot of them skewed at him, especially in metro – that was why he tried to walk mostly; he'd be wearing those clothes for two years, after he got out of depression.

"Do you think that maybe the fact that you wear the fur your mother gave you so close to your body has a special meaning to you?"

Anthon laughed.

"Now you'll tell me a story of the Oedipus complex, right?" he said with a smile. My face might have looked a little perplexed because he was having fun.

"Right?"

I did not deny it.

"Yes, I have a supposition that your difficulties in finding a girlfriend might be related to the fact that you do not want to betray your mother. She has done so much to you, and you love her so dearly."

Anthon stared into my eyes as if he was weighing something.

“Yes. I love my mom. However, it does not explain why I do not have a girlfriend.”

He said it in an icy and severe manner.

“all right, then what does? How do you explain it to yourself?”

My alarm rang, which meant that our session was over. Anthon jumped up as if he was happy we did not have any time left, said goodbye and stormed off.

Our next meeting was the last out of those five we had arranged.

Anthon arrived in time; he looked somewhat sad. I reminded him that it was our last meeting, and at the end of the session we could decide either to continue or not.

Anthon said they took him on to the band; that he slept less because he wanted to do everything he loved – sports, Thai boxing training, books; that he was changing the pace because now he had three rehearsals weekly; that the band’s leader liked his lyrics...

He was talking, and talking, and talking. Words were a veil. I did not feel the connection between us, but my attempts to stop him and talk about things we discussed earlier, or about his main enquiry, or about his story, failed. He was politely saying: “Yes, but now I want to talk about...”

Finally, having realised we had only ten minutes left, I said,

“Anthon, what you are talking about is interesting, but I have a feeling you are running away from something. The topics we’ve been discussing earlier – your relations with your father, mother, girls – are not present today at all. Let me ask you one thing. What is it that you do not want to talk about most?”

Anthon got quiet. A struggle was reflecting on his face. I could see he was making an effort. I felt I had to wait a little longer, and he would open the door and would let me in.

Alas. As a scraping noise of the lift bridge, I heard “everything is fine” and a few standard phrases which meant nothing – and our meeting was over. So as if pre-empting my question, Anthon said hastily,

“Thanks, Natalia, you were very helpful. I’ll call you later if you permit.”

Also, he disappeared. I was thinking of him for a while. I had a feeling I missed something important, overlooked something, and did not pay attention. I felt sorry that we did not move anywhere. Moreover, I started writing a story of our short-term and seemingly unimpressive therapy – it seemed it was my way to complete our relationship.

Having finished the largest part of the piece you are reading now, I suddenly thought that Anthon got to see me despite all the obstacles but left so abruptly, that it looked like a symptom. Whom did he want to leave? What did he run away from? I did not know the answers, and I hardly had a chance to learn it.

Moreover, then came summer; my academic work was over; my clients went on holidays. I was going to a workshop next day and was packing my luggage. Suddenly the phone rang. It was Anthon. He asked if we could meet.

In a flash, I thought that it was not convenient for me. I thought about the rules and the “wrong” end of his therapy. I just said I was leaving the next day, and the only chance to meet was that day.

I packed. I was waiting for our meeting, and I was overwhelmed with anxiety and curiosity.

Finally, he arrived. He looked the same as before but was wearing a black T-shirt, a pair of jeans and sneakers. His shaved hair near the forehead had grown, and he combed it in a ponytail. He took his shoes off and sat down.

I looked at him quietly. Moreover, he looked at me.

Some seconds had felt an eternity to me before he started speaking,

“I came to say goodbye. I was granted a residence permit in Poland, and I am leaving to study there soon.”

I did not know what to answer. I automatically asked,

“What would you like to tell me today?”

Anthon lowered his eyes. When he looked down, his face changed – as if the face of an adult man transformed into a face of a lost boy who did not know what to do. I was waiting.

“I want to tell you... I want to ask you... Actually... Oh, I do not know how to get to it...”

He became silent again. I was not rushing him.

Then, as if having taken heart, he said,

“I have to tell you everything.”

So he started out.

“Remember you asked me about my depression? About the cause?”

“Yes, I remember.”

“It was not because of money. It was much worse.”

“You mentioned you were thinking about suicide...”

“Yes.”

A long and intense pause hung in the air like a veil of fog.

“I am listening. Try to tell me anything you think is necessary.”

“It is hard for me to talk about it. Do you remember I mentioned that my father stopped beating me? It was not because I grew up.”

He got quiet again.

“It happened when he tried to beat me up once. I said I knew his little secret... That he was. That he was often browsing porn websites.”

He remained silent for some time, then looked me in the eyes, and said strictly,

“Gay porn websites.”

I was confused. My colleague who called me was worried about the father’s concerns in regards to his son’s sexual orientation. What an interesting twist!

“Oh, and when I got older, I started to understand that when he beat me, he was getting excited. He breathed heavily, and when he forced me to uncover my back.”

“Your bottom”, I corrected him mechanically.

“Yes, exactly”, he shouted desperately. “Exactly, my bottom. He was aiming for some minutes, rattling. It was terrifying when I was a kid... I was waiting for those three strokes, and I always thought that I was guilty, that I was bad, that I was punished for a reason. However, when I understood everything, it got disgusting. Also, when I said... No, when I told him I knew his secret, he went crazy... He was ready to kill me. Thanks, God my mom was home.”

“How did you deal with it?”

“Not too well... I could not fall asleep, I had nightmares... Moreover, then – then it got even uglier. My neighbour (we went to the same school, he was a year younger than me) told me once that my father was. I cannot say it...”

Also, then he cried. I was baffled at first, but in an instant I ignored all the rules and the shadow of a professional conscience, sat closer to him, and took his hand.

“I am here; I am listening to you”, that was all I could say at that moment.

“My neighbour is gay. Moreover, he said that it happened between him and my father. It was at the same time when my dad sent me to work with his friend’s and did not let me travel abroad.”

My heart turned upside down. The whole picture I constructed looked different now.

Drying his tears, Anthon turned his head to me and said,

“I could not choose the Way. I was afraid for my mom and my sister. I felt so much shame.”

He got silent again and then said quietly,

“I was afraid to date girls. I thought: ‘what if I was the same as my father?’”

I have to admit that I was confused. It was like a cold shower. All my hypotheses were far off the mark – competition with his father for the mother, his choice of Thai boxing as a counterpart of his father’s military choice. Suddenly I felt how deeply Anthon was traumatised... Moreover, he was ready to confide in me. His hand was in my hand.

We had only that one meeting. Also, it had already been lasting for more than one hour.

Anthon spoke out his resentment and pain. He expressed his hatred and his strong desire that his father noticed him. He felt shame for his father, but he also felt sympathy for him.

So then there were girls who interested Anthon, whom he liked, who excited him and who inspired his imagination. It was evident from our conversation that everything was fine with Anthon's real sexual and gender identities, and with his choice of the sexual object. Moreover, finally he said,

"I am not like my father. I am heterosexual."

Also, still there were pain and resentment, and not knowing how to act. If Anthon told his mother the truth about his father, it would kill him in her eyes. If he did not, Anthon would condemn himself to experience the same feelings and loneliness he had been going through for the last few years. It was a hard choice to make, and it was seasoned with hatred, grief and guilt.

I asked him what stories came to mind when he tried to find the way out. Anthon smiled sadly and suddenly responded,

"Oedipus story. When I was looking for a psychologist, I read Freud and his ideas about Oedipal stage of development. Moreover, I thought, maybe it is because of the competition for my mother?"

"What exactly in Oedipus story reminds you of your life?"

Anthon thought for a while.

"Everyone considered Oedipus's father to be a king, but in reality he was a bad-mannered and brash old man who had to learn a lesson."

"And?"

"And Oedipus gave him a lesson."

"Do you remember what happened next?"

"Yes, nothing but a sad string of events. Oedipus took care of his mother; he married her."

"And then?"

"And then when the truth was revealed, his mother committed suicide and Oedipus blinded himself."

"What kind of emotions do you feel when you think about this story?"

"Anger... Disgust."

"And then what do you think of 'teaching your father a lesson'?"

"I do not know. I do not know what to do."

I did not know either. Some things from Anthon's story were true. Some other things he might perceive through a distorted vision. Yes, his father was bisexual. Moreover, he knew about it. It

seemed his father was a psychopath. However, it was hard to judge whether his father got aroused or angry when he beat Anthon. It was hard to understand how Anthon's mother did not notice anything. Anthon would hardly find peace if he continued to idealise his mom and to devalue his father.

I was at a loss, and I asked again,

"Are you ready to become Oedipus? Are you prepared to destroy your life and the lives of your parents?"

"I do not know. I am not Oedipus."

"Then who are you?"

"I? I..." Anthon mused and said after a long pause, "I am a samurai."

It was the oddest answer and the most unusual identity that I had ever encountered.

"And what would a samurai do, had he learned everything you know?"

It seemed my question took Anthon by surprise. He remained silent for a while, and then replied tunelessly,

"A samurai respects his father whatever he does. Moreover, a samurai would follow his code of honour."

Suddenly he grasped his head and moaned,

"I cannot stand it anymore..."

I was still sitting next to him, although not holding his hand. I was aware that Anthon was traumatised, that he consisted of pieces that needed to be sewed together. Also, I did not even know where to start from, nor had I any time or a magic needle. Is his father gay? A paedophile? A psychopath? A sociopath? Is his mother a victim? An accomplice? If I started describing a picture of his life, or analyzing his relations with his parents, it would not help much. It is a long and tedious work. I was aware that the time we had ran short.

"Anthon", I said inquiringly.

"Yes?"

"Are you ready to participate in one activity?"

"Yes..."

"Well then, close your eyes... I will ask you to become a director and photographer of a film. This movie is about you. We will try to fast forward it and then we'll see what to do next."

"Imagine your young parents... Imagine the day they met each other started a relationship. They fell in love. Moreover, you were born as a result of their love. Imagine your parents looking at you, a baby boy, with love and honour."

Moreover, now imagine they stand opposite you. Each minute of your film equals some years of your life. You've grown; now you are three. Your parents continue looking at you. Now you are six. They notice how quickly you grow, and they look at you with love. Now you are nine, twelve, fifteen, eighteen... Also, now you stand in front of them being your current age. So they still look at you with love. Take a step towards your father, look at him and tell him you are angry and hurt."

At that moment, Anthon's face changed, as he had a pain attack. He gritted his teeth and breathing heavily. I waited a little and then said softly,

"And now tell him that he will be your father no matter what. Moreover, thank him for it."

It was obvious that Anthon struggled. I waited again and said,

"Now come closer to your mother... Tell her everything you want... Moreover, now tell her that she will be your mother no matter what... Also, thank her for it."

When Anthon's face softened, I asked,

"Now make one step back from your parents. Another one. Another one... Look at them, they gave you life... They raised you... They did a lot – both good and bad... However, they made a choice to be together. Moreover, you are their son. Tell them that you are a grown-up and look at them. Tell them 'thank you' and look at them. Tell them: Be sympathetic when I leave you. Look at me with love. I am your son..."

"And now turn away. You have your life in front of you. You have your Way, your Girlfriend. Also, you can follow this path – or you can always look back and miss something important... Listen to yourself... Are you ready to follow your path? When you get the answer, open your eyes..."

A minute passed, which felt like an eternity to me. Anthon opened his eyes and asked anxiously,

"Have you hypnotised me?"

"Oh no, don't worry. I have no idea how to do it", I assured him.

I sat back in my chair and looked at Anthon attentively.

"How are you feeling?"

Anthon smiled.

"Amazingly calm", he said. "When I imagined my childhood, I suddenly remembered that my dad always took me with him..."

I realised that for the first time he said 'DAD', not 'the Parent'.

"He sledded to the kindergarten with me. Moreover, he was buying me sweets, which my mom never approved of... Also, we went to the seaside each summer. So he taught me to swim..."

Anthon silenced.

"It is like I forgot it all, and now I remembered."

“Yes, it is true. There were different things in your relationship with your father, and it would be great if you remember it.”

“I want to share something with you. I never saw my parents together. I mean, I saw them, but it is the first time when I think of them... Well, like of the husband and wife... I’ve completely forgot about it lately.”

“It seems you’ve learned too many things you do not have to know recently. It is good when your parent’s bedroom door is safely closed and covers secrets.”

“But I already know it”, he said and his face got stiff again.

“Yes, you know it. Moreover, you either can wave a flag of this knowledge or put it somewhere deep in your memory box. Alternatively, you can remember both good and bad things...”

Our session had been already over for a long while, but we kept talking. Also, then we had been talking some more.

Then I finally said,

“It is time for us to stop.”

Anthon smiled.

“Yes, sure. I have already been keeping you for a while.”

“When are you leaving?”

“Beginning of August. I have to rent an apartment and deal with much stuff... Can I call you via Skype sometimes?”

“If you will. Although I do not like working in this format. Let me ask you a counter-question then. Can I use your story?”

“How?”

“In my lectures, as an example. Moreover, also as a case study. I’ve already written a part of it...”

Anthon thought a little.

“I am comfortable to recognise. However, I do not mind. Can you just e-mail it to me, I want to read it – I’ll send you my e-mail address...”

“Send me your e-mail address where?”

“In a Facebook message. Alternatively, via Skype. I know you have accounts in social networks. I found you on the Internet, but then I asked my parents to find someone who knows you...”

“Why did you not contact me personally?”

“Well, I called you, but you refused to see me.”

I thought, “Oh God, this whole story is nothing but secrets and intrigues.” However, it already had been irrelevant.

Moreover, then he put his shoes on and made a step. Also, then he turned back and asked,

“Can I hug you?”

I nodded. So he hugged me – a little boy, a man, a son. Moreover, he whispered quietly,

“Thank you...”

One month later I finished this piece. Also, he sent me his e-mail address in the autumn. I sent him an e-mail; he read it but did not answer. So then I received his reply some time later. It was a long e-mail.

He wrote me about his thoughts, about painful reflections, about his worries and fears, and about a miracle that happened in his life, and about his relief. His e-mail was longer than this article. However, having read it, I had a good feeling – there was hope in it.

At the end of his e-mail, he wrote that he came to terms with his past. He did not think much of his father. He was in the middle of end-of-semester exams, and he would be on his first holidays soon. He visited his parents only once, and everything went peacefully. The most important thing he wanted to tell me was that he had a girlfriend. She was from Ukraine and also studied in Poland. everything was fine between them.

I read that e-mail a few times. I have to admit that I had tears in my eyes at some parts. However, I had an overpowering feeling of joy and relief.

I closed that story. Anthon does not call me. In my memory, he will always remain a courageous samurai with a little boy inside. I wish him happiness and acceptance of anything that life may have in its sleeves for him.

Our parents will remain our parents. Sometimes it is hard to accept them. However, if we do not have that acceptance, we will never have a chance to become free or to move further along our Way, or to know that our parents – imperfect yet our only parents – are left somewhere far behind. We do not have any other parents and we never will..