

Wanted: Geopathogenic

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Oleg the dowser got straight to the point. "If your flat is less than 50 square meters then it costs a 100 rubles a meter; if it is more then it is 90 rubles a meter." And then a ley line went astray and our conversation was cut.

He was on a Ukrainian mobile but advertising on a Russian site. But if you believe that the world is circled by magnetic waves that control whether we get sick, get jobs or crash our cars, then working across two Slavic countries is unlikely to be much of a chore.

What he does when he comes to your flat is fairly simple: He finds the areas best to avoid if you don't want to get cancer.

This is called geopathogenics, which, funnily enough, you won't find in the OED.

This process entails him waving a stick about until it goes the opposite way to where he is looking. Much like an unruly puppy on a lead.

And as with the puppy, this often leads to water. For when he is not finding the cancer spots,

he is also good at finding water, both ancient and new.

Finding water in a Moscow flat is about as difficult as finding a billionaire United Russia party member — and sometimes almost as unpleasant. Apart from the obvious sources, water likes to creep into walls or behind cupboards as neighbors' profligate ways, five months of snow and the Hartmann and Curry lines play havoc with your plumbing.

The what lines? You may have never heard of German physician Ernst Hartmann and the Swiss Manfred Curry, who mapped the electric lines that course beneath our feet, even if we are wearing rubber soles.

These lines are mapped out in such precise detail by the two scientists that the geometric precision and harsh angles that these forces go along seems supernaturally anal.

With Oleg not answering, there was no one to turn to but Nikolai, 70, a dowser from Samara who told a local newspaper about how he also searches for cancerous zones in flats and what to do when you find one.

He advised sticking a box of garlic or onions to neutralize the cancer rays once the corner has been found. If your cancerous zone is in a warm place out of bright sunlight then you have a win-win situation of no cancer and well-stored vegetables.

"A couple of red bricks also helps," he added. "Only they have to be old ones. New ones for such tasks won't work."

Nikolai also described how Hitler was influenced by the lines. Just look at the old videos of Hitler on a drive around, he said, and watch when they stop.

The driver never just stops but moves back and forth as if to find the right place. Then he stops. On the lines.

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