

Unlimited

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Summer, 2013. Moscow. Just a young redhead girl. Just an amazing and unusual meeting. The meeting which thwarted plans and dreams of the young redhead girl, Victoria. And totally untypical love that got under the girl's skin. What if she mustn't love? Horrifying! What if she mustn't want? Dangerous! And what if Victoria really wanted to love? How to live when suddenly as if touched with a wand everything became unusual including the redhead girl? In a Moscow beautiful summer, one beautiful day Victoria made a mess of things that led her into apocalyptic troubles. Содержит нецензурную брань.

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Picture on the cover is made by the author.

8th June 2013 (Saturday)

“The next station is Kievskaya...” Victoria closed her eyes, put the earphones back on her head and looked into the darkness. She had been using metro circle line for two hours already, trying to prepare for philosophy exam.

It was the beginning of summer, the middle of June. Graduation exam. Like most of the students Victoria didn't want to learn anything. She wanted to hang out, drink, eat and sleep. Sleep a lot.

Why youths constantly want to sleep? Always and everywhere. Just sleep. It's impossible to think about anything but soft pillow and warm blanket... okay, just pillow, not necessarily a soft one... Who cares about exams?

The lecture notebook was lying cosy on her knees, being untouched for a long time. Maybe knowledge would get into her brain solely because the notebook was lying on her knees. Later it dawned on her that none of it would crawl into her head willingly.

She went out at Komsomolskaya station and wandered. The weather was too perfect to pore over books. Victoria reached a café and bought a cup of cappuccino. Probably it would help her to cheer up and clean up her act.

It was Saturday. Mid-afternoon. What idiocy it was to drag around Moscow, hug a thick exam book, trying to prepare for philosophy... Fine.

‘Vic?’ friend's voice on the phone slightly stirred up her sleepy head. ‘Hey, what are you doing?’

‘Me? Hanging around the centre. At the moment I'm drinking coffee. I wanted to learn Hegel's basic concepts... and other ideas geniuses of the past. And you?’

‘I've just got up. Just got the hell up! Vic, I've slept through everything. Yesterday my boyfriend and I were going nuts and today I have no strength. And I have no idea how he's out there!’

‘Then I'm not gonna wait for you, aren't I?’ Vic smiled.

Vasilisa was a very active lady. She was not active in sports but in life. Her life was humming and in full swing: everyday parties, endless holidays, guys, friends. She had no clue what adulthood was, and she was supposed to grow up.

Every three months she got a new boyfriend just because the previous one annoyed her with his existence. He could annoy her with anything that other people would pay no attention to. For example, it could be a curl out of place, a mole on the back under the shoulder blade, how he smoked, the way he looked, the colour of his eyelashes... she was irritated by everything. Then Vasilisa would find a person who wouldn't irritate her.

Every time when another “Bill” was at hand Vasilisa chirped and was insanely happy. She was sure she fell in love and that love would be till the last breath, that he was her Romeo, she'd been waiting for all her life and finally got him.

The most amazing thing was that the majority of her dates suffered terribly after she dumped them. She didn't care but they did. They ran after her, begged to start over, forgave all her shenanigans, and Vasilisa said that she “heard some noise”.

It was impossible to wake Vasilisa up after party and make her go. More precisely it could be done, but around 6-7 pm.

‘Well, I'll probably come over tonight, okay’ the girl mumbled in a sleepy voice.

‘Yeah, I got you.’

Her answer usually meant that most likely she would not come. But some part of her character did not allow to say, “I'll not come”, Vasilisa tried to disguise her true intentions.

Victoria finished her coffee and went down the street to Okhotny Ryad. She didn't actually care where to go and after a while she reached a massive bookshop at Lubyanka.

It was a multi-storey building full of books. All the books were carefully sorted by themes and sub-themes. That place was a real catch for bibliophiles. Victoria never thought that she was one of them. She could read some fiction or psychological thrillers. She didn't like pulp fiction but sometimes she wanted to read heart-rending book about love or watch a beautiful modern fairy tale about a handsome guy about thirty who fell in love with a usual poor girl who wanted nothing from him but holy love and they both would savour it. She was fed up with it, but it was possible to enliven the environmental severity.

Victoria decided to enter the shop, having intention to find an absorbing book, which would touch her very rough soul by the very annotation and just make her want to read it in one breath.

Dear Lord, how many books were in that shop! Despite that some books seemed to be the same fiction type there were so many sub-styles that Victoria just lost herself in search of a suitable one.

A few hours later, streaming with perspiration Victoria finally came out having bought two books about some wenches and pucks.

The girl almost forgot about the thick middle age philosophy doorstopper. Oh, dear God, it was so hard to read what you had to. When Victoria was at school, she had a global problem: the reluctance to read what was assigned. She wanted to read what she wanted! Disagreements with her literature teachers often led to scandals of all sorts.

It couldn't be helped. Studying at university Victoria got that reading was an important thing... too important. Surely after school graduating literature course was done and all the classical books were read. Yeah, nobody argued that some of the reading seemed to her to be nonsense, she disagreed with some, but there were interesting books too and the majority of them. Victoria realized that many books which were offered by the Department of Education, mustn't be read by teenagers!

Vic remembered herself when she was 14. She was uncontrollable, hated to talk about love in any ways, knew nothing about respect and cared about nothing. She didn't know what fear was! How could she understand the love in *The Captain's Daughter* or the most severe sense of Raskolnikov's remorse? No, she couldn't. She didn't care.

So being satisfied with the buying Victoria left the shop and went ahead towards Tverskaya street but she ran into an elderly woman who sold flabby, dilapidated books which were older than the woman herself.

The girl wanted to pass by, but her attention was drawn by a black book with fading yellowed pages, withered edges as if they were burnt with a lighter. There was nothing on the cover: no title, no author. There was just a black void. Nothing more.

As soon as Victoria took the book, she realized immediately that it was a rarity in her hands. It smelled of time. Here you can smell time when you open those old books.

The title was on the second page – *Demonology*. The girl's heart began to rejoice. She loved supernatural stories and she wasn't going to put the book back on any account. Although the price issue concerned her as well.

Her family wasn't very rich. Her mum, Olga Vladimirovna, was a doctor at a city hospital. She got paid well because of her experience, years of employment, so life was liveable.

Her father lived separate from Victoria. He had a family but didn't forget his daughter. He tried to help her on a moral and monetary level. He had a good thing going: he was an analyst of quite well-known company and the general manager's right-hand man. You couldn't say that he was a social animal, but he got paid enough to support Victoria and his new family. Vic never asked him to help. She had a chip on her shoulder because of her mother.

Olga Vladimirovna and Victoria's father were in touch well. Ex-married couple managed to keep amity, but they screwed up the marriage.

Essentially Victoria was glad that there was no family feud. Despite that they lived separated they didn't lose respect.

After having spent enough time turning and smelling the book's pages, Victoria shifted her gaze at the elderly woman.

'How much?'

'One hundred roubles, dear' the woman smiled.

'One hundred roubles?' her amazement was unlimited.

What is one hundred roubles in our time? You can say that this piece of paper is equal to toilet paper. It is two metro tickets or two bus ones, and you can have either metro or bus, not both. These are two loafs of bread and a milk. So, by the evening there would have been neither money nor a full stomach and the girl, surely, didn't look twice at every penny.

Victoria was confused that the book was written in Cyrillic characters looked like modern Russian. Actually, you could get the general idea of the sentences, but some words were foreign gibberish.

Victoria wanted the rarity to be obligatory at her home, not to be sold for a song in the streets. The girl felt sorry for the elderly woman. She was under necessity of selling such rare things for trifling sum to keep on living out her remaining days. Victoria felt sorry that no one cared for old people at those moments when they really needed help financially and emotionally. Nobody cared for them: children were interested in their own lives, government was involved in infighting, assured that the whole country was well-off, and everybody was living their lives to the fullest.

Victoria paid 500 roubles for the book. She would have given more but she didn't have more cash. The elderly woman was protesting, speaking that the sum was too much... Finally, Victoria got her to take money because the book should have cost thousands!

In an hour Victoria got to Krasnopresnensky park which was near her house. She didn't want to go home. No one was there. Her mother was in the country, did gardening.

Victoria never understood a joy of exhausting oneself with work and then going hell knows where to pound away. Was there any rest?

The girl was sitting on a bench. She had hardly found the vacant bench which had been still warm after a couple with the baby carriage. It was good Victoria was passing by. To find a free bench in such a perfect day was likely not to happen.

The girl wanted to look the book through carefully. The book consisted of different articles describing evil creatures. There were pictures, words scratched by a dip pen on pages. There were lots of symbols and seals, some mysterious signs. All of them seemed to be freehand writing. But what was so special about it? When the book had been written there was no photoshop and designer program stuff.

It was a full encyclopaedia of demons, angels, monsters and other supernatural creatures, their complete performance, appearance description, activities. You can imagine how terrifying the book was at the time when *Malleus maleficarum tractate* was one of the most popular reading.

The book was funny: very thick, full of information, a perfect thriller could be made out of it! But despite all the jokes you could feel a kind of greatness.

Suddenly Victoria noticed a two-fold blotter-like paper between 800 pages. There was a drawn circled triangle. Some symbols were depicted at each corner of the triangle. Inside the triangle there were three circles intersecting in the middle. Each of them had a picture of a sign inside. The numerals were placed around the circle framed the triangle in shape of a pentacle. Those weren't just ordinary numerals. It was just a set of numbers which made no sense for Victoria. But she had a funny feeling that for a person who had drawn that geometry, every comma and dot had a vital meaning.

There was an inscription above the circle – Kharon. The girl had no idea what a curse that was and whom to put it on and why. Text in a shape of a verse, written in Latin didn't clarify the situation.

Turning the note in her hands, the girl put it back into the book and decided to keep on preparing for philosophy.

Victoria dedicated that day for philosophy, she left home as it was impossible to be focus there: there was a constant wish to walk.

Then she was outside, trying to get into the basis of philosophy, having left only a week and a half before final examination. That was no big deal! Victoria was just like most students: I wanna do nothing, learn nothing, read nothing, just give me my diploma and leave me alone this beautiful summer.

The girl was sitting in the park for a long time, surfing through logic of luminous intellects. Then she sorrowfully went home: she couldn't remember anything! Should she panic? There was a week and a half left...before the exam. No. It was too early to panic.

Her boyfriend – Daniel came to Victoria in the evening and drew her attention away from thinking of studying.

They'd been dating for two years already. They met when Vic was a third-year student and he was a final-year one. They walked together twice, drank, woke up in the same bed couple of times without destroying friendship with passion. Then they thought that couple of times could be turned into a horizontal eight and allowed passion and love to crawl under their wing.

Daniel came to her more often, trying to woo her and it wasn't easy during the studentship. Victoria was blooming and was like a dog with two tails. As her mother was happy, too, because she liked the young man. Even at that time her mother considered Daniel a promising flower which wasn't going to wither after graduating. So, it happened.

Daniel got a job and in a year he was promoted and waiting for a new promotion. Victoria was very happy for him – at least someone had something nice out of life.

Everyone said to Victoria that Daniel was a gold boy, they were going to have a great future. The girl agreed with them, but she was never sure about her feelings to him.

She liked Daniel doubtlessly, but Victoria still couldn't get if she loved him, wanted that great future with him which was described so perfectly by her mother and friends.

They were drinking tea when the girl remembered her medieval buying. At once she wanted to show it to the young man.

'Why do you buy this stuff?' Daniel looked accusingly at the girl, 'There's no information in these books just fairy tales about demons. Is that what you believe in?'

'No, I don't' Victoria was upset with her young man's attitude, 'I just want to read and comprehend how mysticism and scepticism were accepted at those centuries. You can't reject it at all, just because there's nothing about accounting and Russian Federation codes articles'

'What does it have to do with that, Vic? You're wasting your time. Your exam is about to happen, you'd better prepare for it'

Victoria kept silence and stared at the man. At those moments she didn't even want to think about sharing her present with him let alone speaking about future.

'Jesus, how could you be such a perfect bore?' the girl asked hiding annoyance under the smile.

'That's it! Vic that was you who brought it to show and ask...'

'No, I brought it because I wanted you to be happy for me not to accuse me and tell about my examinations'

Daniel was looking at his girlfriend and tried not to smile. Seeing those attempts Victoria smiled, too. She decided to turn the page.

'I'm happy for you. Really. But I still don't get what this book has so special about it. Well, if you like it then read it, comprehend, go ahead.'

Victoria shook her head in response. She saw mockery in his eyes and, probably, misunderstanding. The girl didn't get him. His tender lips distracted her from the book. No matter what she thought but she liked kissing him. He was second to none...

'I'm going on business trip the day after tomorrow. For a week and a half' Daniel said, embracing the girl.

They were in the bed and it seemed that five minutes ago there'd been nothing but their bodies and souls, entwined with each other. She felt everything stop, letting them enjoy each other, without paying attention to anything. Reality rushed back very fast not letting you lose control completely.

'Business trip? What're you gonna do?' The girl asked sullenly.

She really wanted some peace at that moment and not discussion about business again. But Daniel was not a person who would abandon himself to girlish caresses and osculation. It couldn't be said about Victoria.

'To set things straight in company's business' he smiled in response, got up to put on clothes.

The girl was silently looking at him, at the way he zipped his trousers, put the shirt on, buttoned it up, combed his hair.

He did it in a way as if they'd been living together for many years already. He wasn't interested in anything about her. All of her joys weren't worth of his attention.

Another girl would obviously take offence, throw a tantrum, just do something. Victoria didn't care. She knew Daniel not to be her person and there wouldn't be any future. That was matter of time. They had sexual relationship and attraction and the girl didn't like the prologue to it. She didn't like the young man who stopped being interested in her, she hated to ask him because his own initiative was done at work. She didn't like the young man who took her for granted.

But Victoria said nothing.

Saying nothing she saw him out, wished a great journey and felt free with joy for next week and a half. As the doors closed, she felt relieved!

It was about 1 am, she was sleepy, but she was going to study philosophy, nevertheless.

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June 2013 (Sunday)

It was Sunday. The morning.

The sun was shining through the closed curtains. The girl wanted to smile. It was so cool to wake up and understand her mood was skyrocketing. Everything around was so light, airy and you were just being torn into pieces because of happiness.

Olga Vladimirovna had to come back in the evening. It meant the girl had the whole day to do nothing. She never did anything on Sundays and the final exam wasn't obviously going to break that practice.

After staying in bed for some time, Victoria got up and went to the bathroom. She noticed the book in the hall which had been left there the day before yesterday. The girl drew a deep breath: if her mum had noticed the book there would have been a straight talk to evaluate her daughter's competency to stand trial. Without thinking, Vic took the book.

The bath was full, and Victoria was looking through the piece of paper dropped out of the book. What did that mean? What was Kharon? There was nothing written. There were no similar names in the book. Vic was looking for it by means of symbols depicted on the paper, but there was nothing still. The damned piece of paper haunted her mind.

Victoria put the book aside, turned the towel around and ran to the laptop to find online-dictionaries. Suddenly she realized she could understand the meaning of the text. If she had took the meaning, probably it would explain what Kharon meant.

Wet, semi-turned in the towel, the girl tapped at the keyboard, looking for Latin words meaning.

After two hours of attempts Victoria got upset: there was a text before her, addressed to a Kharon. She got something surely, Kharon wasn't it but him. But there was not a word about who he was and what he did.

The magic text was too much even for Victoria! She was a non-believer by nature. It was one thing to read myths and legends just for the fun of it and the other was to believe in it and try to raise the queen of Spades.

She believed that all the curses, diseases, spells, the evil eyes, attraction spells worked just because a person believed in them. The girl believed in autosuggestion power and thought materiality. She couldn't be cursed or spelled because she didn't believe in it. A person who believed to be cursed, really got ill just because he attracted rubbish. He was walking, then tumbled, then fell down and if he was a superstitious person, he would be sure that he fell because of a strange-looking old witch who had cursed him. Victoria would think that she was an awkward log and she needed to be more careful.

Who knew what happened to the girl but at that moment she was interested in depths of her mind? What if Kharon would come to her and she would be able to know who he was? One part of her was waiting for an adventure, the other was laughing aloud. If Vasilisa had come to Vic and said that she was going to raise a ghost, Victoria would never miss the opportunity to laugh at her friend.

Finally, the girl tore herself off the laptop and got dressed. Suddenly she stopped in tracks like a statue. The girl was preoccupied with a heap of questions, prowling her mind. The first question was how to call a thing if you didn't know anything about it? What was he? A deuce? A vampire? A demon? An angel? What was he? The second one was what you needed to use to summon him? Maybe to do that obeh you would need a glass frog leg or an oarfish fish-maw... Vic didn't know anything. She didn't even know how to read in Latin that text written on the medieval parchment. Fortunately, the Latin reading issue could be resolved with the help of a dictionary and unfortunately things were worse with gills and legs.

Vic was gazing at drawn circles and symbols for a long time and then her subconsciousness gave a hint – that picture had to be re-drawn on the floor! Yeah, sure! That's what it had to be. But what to use? Highlighter? If Olga Vladimirovna saw it, she would send her daughter into an asylum with no delay, and, perhaps thanks to good connections, she would be placed into a good ward. Maybe chalk? But there was no chalk. That was okay, where would the chalk come from?

Why did the circle have to be on the floor exactly? It could be minimized...

The girl took an ordinary pencil, sat to the table and re-drew the even circle onto the table, in size of 30-40 centimetres. She put into it all the symbols, drew more circles inside of it, placed signs, numerals and, being satisfied, started to wait.

She had to read the spell! It could take a lot of time to sit and wait, for life even, for something to happen. Vic took the paper and started reading written words with underlined stress.

She read the text several times, but nothing changed: not the weather, nor voices, neither lightning... Having sighed Vic declaimed the text slowly and started waiting again. Nothing happened. What did she expect? She should forget it, she just wanted to have fun.

The girl rose from her chair, covered the shamanistic circles and she would have gone to the kitchen to have breakfast, doing magic she quite forgot that she had eaten nothing, but she failed to leave her room as she bumped into a man, stumbling against his chest of steel with her forehead.

You might have said that the man scared the crap out of Vic – but it would have been nothing. She sweated, felt sick, her legs were shaking... She was backing slowly, keeping her eyes locked on the man. She had never been so scared before! There was a reason for the fear. There was a man in her flat, in her room, near her bed... The girl could hardly breathe, she seemed to be almost choked. She wanted to ask what the hell he was doing in her room, but her tongue was stuck. She wasn't able to get it if the tongue was in her mouth. The fear went right through her. The horror reached her legs, Victoria almost didn't feel her heart beating. It didn't just leave her cold feet, but it seemed to leave her body at all...

But the great horror began next. Shitted blue lights, her mind was about to guess what the man was in the room!

'...It can't be' her whisper held an edge of fear, while she was backing with no understanding that there was a wall and radiator behind and no way to escape.

That was impossible! Even in that exact moment she could not believe her eyes: the man could not appear from nowhere just because a text was read. Someone was kidding her. Someone who knew about the book and the note in it, and someone was putting her on. That was Daniel!

Suddenly an idea dawned on her that the young man probably hadn't gone any business trip but sent a man to put the fear of God into his girl. But no. That was too much and unreal. It was more unreal than a real man appearing in her flat. No, she couldn't believe! Could she be out of her mind?

The girl was blinking, trying to drive away that intrusive image, but it proved very difficult. He was standing without moving, gazing into her eyes and his look was so terrifying and cold that Vic was more afraid that it could be possible.

The man was silent, and his eyes burned into her. He was sullen, maybe even angry. Being in a stupor of dismay she perceived his face to be very handsome. His amber-brown eyes burned into the girl's face and eyes. His mouth was screwed up and there was no hint at a hidden smile. He had black hair and his fringe was long, hung down about his eyes but didn't stop him from destroying the girl with his heavy stare... He was too attractive and at the same time her forehead broke out in a cold sweat.

The terrible agony of fear consumed her, as Victoria realized: it was something before her. Was it alive? What kind of substance was it? How to accept the creature? An animal? A human?

'What are you?' she whispered not wanting to ask anything.

The man was like a stone sculpture. Was he capable of speaking? What if he had a special alien language? The girl kept on sitting under the table and built the guesses.

'Whom have you conjured up?' he asked in a low but secure tone.

'Me?' her voice trembled. 'No one. I've conjured no one.'

'Kharon!' he said loudly.

'Kharon?' the girl re-asked, got surprised as if she had heard the name for the first time.

The man smiled, with impressive walk he came up to the girl, sitting on the floor, took her hand and clasped in his arms, held her close.

'You don't know whom you've conjured up, do you, Victoria?' he whispered in her ear.

The girl was captured by a strange feeling. She had never felt before. Something was embracing her, touching her, speaking with her but the primal instinct to be feared was gone. She suddenly became so light and easy. She just wanted him to go on holding her closer to him... Idiot!

'No' Vic said softly.

She didn't know what was going on with her, why she became flabby like a washed handkerchief, in some demonic creature's arms.

'Oh, Victoria' he said, pulling her closer to him, 'An incubus is in your flat and you seem to have no idea what you've done, girl, have you?'

She shook her head, but the fear wasn't coming back for some reason. In the embrace of the man she felt so peacefully. The creature smelled of sex...

'You've called a demon to you, Victoria... With your blood. Why?'

'With my blood?' like being high Vic re-asked without understanding anything.

She didn't cut her veins and let the blood run. Could the demon miss the flat?

He let her go and followed her leg with his eyes. There was a cold single track of blood on her ankle. Where was it from? Victoria exactly remembered not to cut there... Suddenly she got why the blood was there. While she was taking a shower, she could cut with the razor by accident and didn't even notice it.

'You don't remember why the blood is there?' he asked slyly.

Then Kharon appeared near her. All it took was one soft, but rapid hand movement and the girl turned out to be in bed. The demon stroked her leg, rained kisses upon her inner side of thigh. Vic was hardly capable of managing invading emotions.

'...Victoria... That was the steel... the sharp one... Cut your little leg when you were in the bath'

The man touched the cut with his lips. She could read a craving in his eyes, but the girl didn't understand the craving for what? She wanted to wave him away, but her hands didn't listen to her. On the contrary they embraced the man, wanted to be touched. The warmth of his lips touching went through her body like electricity with a minimum voltage.

But Kharon stopped. Having gazed the girl with cloudy eyes he got up and stared at her again. He was serious.

'I can take your life for one millisecond' he grabbed the girl and she slung in his hands like a kitten. 'Do you need your life?'

Fear came back imminently. Her body was numb, horror paralyzed her mind. The girl stopped getting what was going on: firstly, she was starving with an idiotic desire to bed with the mystic man, secondly, she was in cold sweat because of fear.

'Yes, I do' she answered under breath.

'Do you?' he whispered being surprised.

His face expression was changing and frightened her, Victoria couldn't follow up any exact emotion. She got the feeling that Kharon didn't know how to rule his face as if he put on masks and observe his body and mimic abilities.

'If your life is so precious then why did you read the text on the paper?'

'I didn't believe...I didn't know you...You exist. That you would come'

'You? Me?' Kharon laughed.

He let the girl go and walked around the room, casting treacherous glances at Victoria.

'Have I frightened you, human child?' Kharon came up and took the girl's hand. 'You should not be afraid of me. I've been created to bring great pleasure... at a price. Are you ready to pay me?'

Kharon gently kissed the girl, investigating every inch of her neck with his lips. Vic closed her eyes and left the reality again. The demon didn't stop driving her crazy, burning her skin, charming with his words. She was almost choke because of unexpected pleasure and enjoyment which the creature was bringing to her, when Kharon stopped.

'Are you ready to pay me?' he asked the question again. 'I shall keep on... I shall show you these things none of men will be ready to show you. I shall open the arras into light-hearted enjoyment, that you will never be able to come up from. I shall present you a light and shining which will never leave your mind. There will be no pain, fear and melancholy... Only the desire... Unrestrained, full of madness, destructive, drying and reckless one... The desire which you will be spluttered in and accept it with all the gratefulness in life. You will get a hidden part of your consciousness, look at yourself in a different way... Are you ready to pay?'

Kharon stopped, took his hand out of her shorts. Victoria opened her eyes and amazingly stared at the man. She couldn't understand why she allowed him to do what he was doing.

'Pay you?' she re-asked without getting what was going on in her crazy head.

'A night costs your life' he smiled.

'Are you sure that it's worth it?' Vic spewed out with no thinking.

'Worth it?' Kharon fluently looked at the street and then shifted his gaze on the girl again.

Her hair was in badly messed batch, there was a frustration in her eyes, her clothes were wrinkled, and her naughty hand was smoothing out the shorts. There was fear and misunderstanding on her lips and a wild desire to be kissed by a part of hell. She had a vandalizing love to life, saying "run". The girl was in prostration.

Kharon lowered towards her, snapped his fingers before her nose and Victoria shuddered.

'No, no, no. Don't do. I don't wanna anything'

'Lying to the demon...oh, that's so bad. Well, you know how to find me. I'm not saying farewell. We shall see... Victoria'

The man kissed her cheek and disappeared.

Victoria was sitting like a statue for a long time trying to find out what had happened in her flat. But she couldn't get her own feelings and emotions.

On the one hand she was scared catastrophically. She couldn't still believe that the real mysterious creature had visited her house. Her scepticism became a silent cropper. Vic didn't even try to get a little part of it back.

All that she had believed for twenty years now was gone. Demons? Witches? Vampires? Could it really exist? Living in secret from people, from their minds and perception... Maybe it wasn't a secret. Maybe people were so interested in their own stormy lives that even during breaks between identical hours they didn't see what was happening before their eyes. Perhaps, today all the supernatural creatures didn't have to hide. Because now, living in the modern world you could stand among crowd during rush hour, plaintively crying in voice not your own because of pain, calling for help and in response you would be pushed away and someone would say: 'why the fuck are you standing on the road, freak?' Sliding around people, like a snake in grass, a demon, of course, in a human shape, would be unnoticed. The girl was shocked, having realized how many things were unnoticed and lost in that world.

Victoria was sitting at her table, looking at the symbols, drawn on the desk top. What was it? Was it a dream and she was about to wake up and breathe a sigh of relief? Kharon... The demon. A phone call interrupted her reflections. Her friend was going to come to Victoria.

The girls were in the room. Vasilisa was twittering about what had happened while she'd been dating her boyfriend, describing animal lust and platonic love. Vic still had been thinking of the mysterious guest, his face, which was before her eyes, his hands, smoothly sliding down her waist into the shorts... his lips, almost touching her lap and words that they were whispering... his winy, foggy and deep voice... his amber-brown gaze. Voluptuousness. Was Vasilisa able to distract her friend from those recollections?

'What's wrong with you, Vic?' Vasilisa bumped on the chair, aggrievedly stared at her friend.

'What?' Vic came back to the reality again, having sunk next paranoid part of fantasy.

'Are you listening to me? I've come to you to share my emotions and feelings, I wanted you to be happy for me... but it seems that you don't care.'

'No, Vasilisa, no, I do... I just...' Vic stopped speaking.

'You just what?'

'I've had a bad dream'

'Really? You're worrying about something, but not looking sleepy. Will you tell me this story? Is that because of Daniel?'

'What's up about him?' Vic was surprised.

'You don't know, do you?' Vasilisa asked.

'What I don't know?'

Vasilisa looked away. She blabbed out and it was obviously.

'I was told that he left with a girl...'

Finally, Victoria abstracted herself from recollections and surfed into the present imminently.

She didn't love Daniel. She could speak about love when they had started dating but it was too long ago. The feeling faded away, love fell asleep, then died. Everything was trite and simple like everything else about others. However, she didn't want to be kept in reserve: go on vacation with another but bed with Victoria? Rubbish!

Before making a scene, Victoria wanted to wait for Daniel to come back from his so-called business trip. What if someone made balls of the truth? What if someone overlooked or overviewed? Maybe someone shouldn't poke their nose in someone else's business. She hated all those gossips and people who were savouring them, wanting to find out who did and what that night. If you did nothing, they would always make up something.

Victoria wanted to ask Daniel face to face what was going on in very deed and see if he was brave enough to confess the truth.

‘With a girl? He’s on business trip...’ Vic said, seemed off, understanding in horror that such sensitive matter was displaced by epileptic morning recollections.

At that time the girl got she didn’t actually care whom and where her boyfriend was spending his time with. She just decided that apart from the truth they were going to break up.

Yes, they had two perfect years. There were two years of egoism, self-absorption and self-development. They had a perfect beginning. Victoria often remembered the beginning.

A long time ago they went to common parties. He opened doors for her, gave his jackets to her when she was cold, held her hand when she was walking over kerbstone imagining herself a funambulist, carried her in his arms over the puddles.

A long time ago they laughed looking at each other, holding hands, kissing in the parks... A long time ago and it had already passed.

It seemed to them it was love, that they would be together till the end of life, that no one and nothing would be able to part them. No one and nothing would be, but time did.

Having felt the other man’s touches Victoria realized that she didn’t want to feel Daniel’s anymore. Even in the very beginning she hadn’t felt with Daniel what she felt in ten-minutes communication with Kharon. He was the one who made a decisive end to her thoughts to be or not to be.

Now Vasilisa was re-telling gossips and Vic was trying to exorcise the demon out of her mind.

Olga Vladimirovna came back in the late evening and focused on her own business. Victoria was having a burr under saddle.

I gotta speak to him. No matter what will happen, but I have to...

The girl told her mum that she was going to take a spin on a bike, took it and rushed towards Serebryany Bor.

Vic was cycling through the evening park looking for a quiet corner. She didn’t need any witnesses. What would people think if they saw a girl in twilight with candles, drawing something on the ground and whispering Latin words? They would laugh at best... What would people think? What would people say? Those synonymously bloody questions made others impossible to live. Why did you need to think what people would think of you? Why couldn’t you just live without thinking of public opinion? Those people didn’t even know you personally so what’s the difference what they would think of you? Why did you need to be an object that sweetened someone’s glimpse? Was that all for five-seconds glimpse of a stranger?

Vic didn’t want to make a fool of herself. Before the incubus visited her, she would have laughed with pleasure at a person calling for rain in a forest.

A little connecting thread was nicely floating between oneself and others: we didn’t want to be treated in the same way as we treat the others. I didn’t want to be mocked in any situation but if I were to be behind these situation frames then I could afford myself to mock others.

After re-drawing signs on the ground that was getting cold after the hot day, Vic took a razor tip. The demon said there should be blood... It meant if she wanted to see him again, she needed to spill her blood. But here everything stopped. The girl couldn’t pull herself together to cut and hurt herself. She was frightened. But the desire to see Kharon overcame the fear for cutting herself.

Having closed her eyes Vic slit her finger and cried in pain at once. Dark-red blood was dropping on the ground, the faltering voice was reading the spell.

After having read the girl looked over her shoulder: nobody was there. Convulsively remembering everything that she had done before, she was looking for mistakes. She started reading the spell again. In response nobody appeared.

Something went wrong... Why didn't he come? What was wrong? The signs, the numerals, the circles, the triangle, the blood, the spell were the same as in that morning. Why? The girl was tortured by questions which she had no answers for.

She had been in the park for an hour and a half, waiting but nobody appeared, and Victoria went home. She was slowly riding the bike, sorrowfully looking at the road, trying to get through her emotions.

Firstly, she was scared as she understood the words "*I can take your life in one millisecond*". The creature that appeared in her flat was capable of everything. He was unpredictable and whatever he would do nobody would be to blame but herself... if life stayed near.

Then she was suffering from curiosity. She wanted to know everything that was left naked after lifting the curtains for a half of an inch. Victoria craved to open it fully, go backstage and find out ins and outs. But Kharon didn't come.

'Where've you been?' her mum was standing in the hall, hands akimbo. 'I've been up half of the night, waiting for you to come back! What's the matter, Vic?'

'Mum... ' Victoria unlaced her gumshoes. 'I've been cycling, thinking that you're sleeping already'

'Vic!' her mum said in a severe voice.

'Mum, I've got it. I'm sorry that I made you worry; I didn't mean to.'

'What time do you get up?'

'At 7 am... I've got a preparatory meeting before the exam. You?'

'At 6 am. I'll be out at 7 am. Shall I call you or you'll get up?' the woman softened.

'I'll get up. Don't worry, mum. Go back to bed'

"Why? What did I do wrong? I did the same process exactly to a T, but the place was changed... I don't believe that he can appear only inside houses! I'm sure that a place doesn't matter... Then what?"

Almost about an hour Vic was thinking of her actions, trying to find a mistake until she fell asleep. She dreamt about nothing but blackness and silence.

In the morning, Victoria felt low as she didn't get enough sleep. Of course, night races through the park had taken much strength and time.

She took off the house like a shot from a gun and headed towards Ulitsa 1905 metro station. The weather was good. The sun was behind the clouds and the warm wind was blowing.

Vic was going with half-closed eyes, trying to catch a little sleep. Her subconsciousness convinced her that she was mentally deficient. Being in a depressed state the girl was thinking only of the previous night. She was afraid for her mental state – whether she was healthy? Maybe there was no demon there? Maybe everything that she saw, felt and heard was just a mind game? A dream? Maybe she made up everything and didn't know how to forget it?

Vic got into the underground, crowded into the third train. It was too crowded, and she couldn't turn out to be in the carriage without making an effort. Vic held on the hand-rail and closed her eyes, setting her mind on three-hours preparatory meeting before the exam.

'How's your finger?' suddenly a quite whisper penetrated her ear.

It gave her a pretty good jump. Of course, she guessed who was behind her. Her guesses were confirmed when his hands embraced her, giving no chance to turn to him.

'Hash, don't be nervous' Kharon swarmed in her hair with his nose.

Victoria didn't breathe. Fear conquered her completely. She glimpsed angry faces: nobody paid attention neither to the strong hands, firmly holding the girl nor to her sudden fright, solemnly walking in her eyes.

'You were summoning me yesterday evening' the man whispered, holding her tightly. 'I heard you saying the spell... Blood was on the ground... Fear of cutting your little finger was within you. Schizophrenia diagnoses... Melancholy'

Victoria didn't blink. Dream, slumber, wish to close her eyes and all other physical desires disappeared. She got awoken but her mind was glazed. Vic got who was near her and that was all. She couldn't say a single word, a lump of nerves was in her throat, passion started getting into mind slowly. Through the fear and consternation Vic felt enjoyment. Jesus, she waited for his embrace so much and she feared to confess it.

'I was busy. Too busy. Victoria, it is Kuznetsky Most station. Shall we go? Here's a change of line...'

Kharon took her by the hand and led her to the crossing passage.

'Wait' Vic finally said something.

'I am listening to you' Kharon had a firm hold over her hand and looked into her eyes. 'Your eyes are of very beautiful olive green. Intense. There is so much life in your eyes'

'That's not what I mean!' Vic interrupted him without expecting such severity from herself, 'What's going on?'

The demon withed his head down but kept his eyes on the girl, still holding her hand. They were standing in the middle of Kuznetsky Most metro station. It was rush hour. People hated them. They were pushed and called bad names. They were an obstacle for everyone, but she didn't care neither did he.

'Fine,' Vic insisted, 'Let's go'

They left the metro and went to a café. Victoria decided to speak to the man... the demon.

'Two coffees, please' Kharon said to the first waiter he came upon and went to the table, leading the girl.

'But...' the waiter tried to explain something, and nothing came out of that.

Kharon stood up, looked at the man and repeated his order again, added compulsion into his voice.

Vic was at the table, staring at the man in front of her. His amber-brown eyes opalesced and it didn't matter, that surrounding colour was dull; dark-brown, almost black, hair covered his forehead, he had thick black eyelashes...

Five minutes passed before Vic started speaking.

'Okay. That's okay, isn't it? Is it okay that we're here just like nothing has happened? Is that okay that some creature from hell is gonna drink a cup of coffee? Would you like a cigarette, maybe?'

'With pleasure', Kharon smiled, 'but no smoking is allowed in the café'

'How do you know? Oh, what a nonsense I'm talking... you know everything!'

'You know, Victoria, I'm glad that today I'm in Russia, in Moscow. I'm glad that no smoking is allowed in the café'

'What does that mean?'

'You have to understand you aren't the first woman in my arms for all these centuries that I have been living'

'And I do'

'I heard your voice yesterday, but I couldn't have dropped everything and run to you... I was adorning a dream of a very sweet madam'

'You couldn't have dropped everything?' Vic grabbed the cup of coffee, hoping that caffeine would wake her wisdom up. 'I suppose demons must show up as they've been summoned.'

'Oh, no, Dear. We show up to whom we want to. If I'm in a bad mood or busy, or have no desire, I won't come even if you cut a head of a black rooster'

'Why did you come to me?' Vic smiled.

It was her first smile for the last two days. The first smile was in the seducer's presence from tartar.

Kharon grinned, took the chair and sat closer to the girl. He embraced her a little bit, kissed her lips unceremoniously and smiled again. The demon behaved as if they had been married for a long time already.

Victoria was sitting without moving. The man's effrontery astounded her as well as her behaviour: why didn't she put off his hands? Why did she allow him to kiss her? What was going on with her mind?

'You're a great interest for me. Your diffident voice, disgusting Latin, cut leg... It has been a while since I saw such an awkward magician'

'I'm not a magician!'

'I know. You are a nice, red-haired girl, last-year student. You have got a boy whom you don't love. You live with your mother and that was the reason why you went to the park yesterday...'

'So does a demon control his presence? If he wants, he comes, if he doesn't then he won't come?'

'Absolutely'

'Why did you come to me again? I told you I don't agree to the deal'

'That remains to be seen. Hm, I am glad that you have stopped being afraid of me, finally'

'Damn it all!' Vic couldn't take it anymore, 'How's it possible?!'

'By the way, every time when you say damn it all, a deuce takes three days out of your life. Be careful with what you're saying, Babe'

She had a lump in the throat again. Deuces? Were they real?

'You see, Victoria, deuces don't take the highest hierarchy step of Hell and do thankless job. They have to please themselves at least'

'Kharon... Honestly I'm out of sorts. It seemed to me just an illusion, a hallucination. It can't be. There are no demons and deuces! You're just kidding me'

'Oh, really? Then I shall show you what an illusion is'

Kharon took her hand and whispered: 'Close your eyes'. Vic did and silently was sitting with her eyes closed.

There was a noise of wind. The air was warm. Waves were crushing against the rocks. Victoria opened her eyes. A scared scream came out of her because there was a beautiful sheer drop under her feet, the sea was beneath, maybe it was an ocean, crashing against the highest rock bottom on the top of which the girl was staying.

'Oh my God!' Vic screamed, staggering and grabbing Kharon, 'What the hell, Kharon! I'd have fallen down!'

'Yes, you would, but you didn't. Do not forget, it is an illusion. Everything you are looking at, doesn't exist! All of these is my imagination's projection. These lovely, ominous waves, churlly blasts, messing up your hair, seagulls, a heart-rending screaming and floating in the sky do not exist! Give me your hand'

Kharon smiled and jumped down, dragging the shrieking girl. Vic was considerably scared with her fellow-traveller's actions. She was afraid of falling, tried to realize that everything was an illusion, but her mind refused to believe in it. Everything looked so real and could be felt. What kind of illusion could it be if there was a salty air in her nose and sounds of nature in her ears and bared feet felt exactly sharp stones of the rock...?

Suddenly Victoria felt her feet buried in burning sand like if she had been put on a spit. Having looked around Vic saw a desert flooded with the sunlight.

'Ah!' she cried, shifting her feet.

It was hot. Too hot. Victoria burst herself into Kharon's arms, stepped on his feet.

'Hm', he grinned, embracing and supporting the girl. 'An illusive desert full of mirages, doubled illusion... Let's go further!'

Milliards of needles pierced her skin, pain locked her body, fading away, fog was before her eyes. She didn't feel any life. It was cold. An unbearable cold. There was snow, snowdrifts and ices everywhere and no living soul. It was frozen emptiness...

'I can't bear it!' Vic said chattering, 'Kharon, please...'

Suddenly they turned out to be in the café again. There were no unpleasant physical feelings left but only discrete reminiscence.

'Now, Dear, you understand what an illusion is, don't you?' Kharon hugged the girl and smiled.

Victoria looked at him seriously, studying his extra-terrestrial beauty. He smelled of passion, she wanted to embrace him, she wanted him to embrace her. She was drunk with his charming gaze, gentle lips, velvet voice. Victoria was melting near him.

'I suggest a deal' she whispered to him, staring into his amber eyes.

'A deal? I like it'

'Yes, you, diabolic dregs, are able to do anything according to a deal...'

'Diabolic dregs?' Kharon frowned.

Victoria looked at him being seriously afraid of his next actions. She didn't know what could happen next, what Antarctica he would throw her in. But Vic was insanely interested in how he would react and what he would do.

Kharon kept on frowning, incinerated the girl with the sly look. Finally, he just smiled.

'What kind of deal?' he asked.

'I want to know what women give their lives for. What do you give them in return?' the girl's eyes were burning. 'I can suggest you live a human life'

'What does that mean?' Kharon was looking at the girl imperturbably.

'That means you will understand what to be a human means'

'Should I be interested in it? What can be interesting about a human life? Instincts and a couple of clever phrases said for the whole life? A couple of love adventures? Crocodile tears?'

'Well, you will have a chance to find out.'

'No, Dear. You cannot have a deal in such a way. I named the price and gave you a right to choose. For the thing that you suggest I can give only platonic love. You will be able to feel body physics only after deal is concluded'

'You're so stubborn' Vic smiled.

'No, that's not the point. This is a law and I must follow it. I do my job'

'Even now?'

'No, we are drinking coffee now not lying in bed'

'I saw a spell which could tether you to me...' Vic gave a hint and scarcely smiled.

The demon smiled, too and a burning flame appeared in his eyes. Kharon squeezed her hand and couldn't take his eyes off her.

'A spell which can tether me, right?'

'Yeah' the girl answered shyly.

'There are no such spells, dear. Everything that you find in books, internet, in manuscripts is just a described collaboration between the human world and ours. If a demon is in love with an earthborn woman then he certainly can be tethered to her. If he is bored and suddenly hears a tethered spell, he can pretend to be tethered just for fun. But when a demon is tired of the game, human dies. Mostly such kind of spells are executed for boredom. Believe me: it is not always possible to get a demon interested in you'

'Does it mean that I have no chance to get you to experiment?'

'There is always a chance. Get me. By the way, your preparatory meeting is over in 15 minutes. The professor has been asked the last question'

'How do you know all of that?'

Kharon smiled in response. He was so amused by people. He was probably one of the few demonic creatures who had genuine satisfaction in dealing with people. Against their background he looked like an all-powerful giant and people turned into small ants.

Most of all Kharon liked communicating with women. That was understandable, he was an incubus. He was created for female sex. Women deified him and gave their lives with no regret until their minds joined the game.

‘I don’t know everything. For example, I don’t know what you will do in your future. I am perfectly aware of your past, great on the present, but future is beyond even our control’

‘So, there’s a chance to surprise you, isn’t there?’

‘You can do whatever you want. There are no limits except you and your consciousness. Every unlawful limit is your consciousness’

Victoria sighed and looked out of the window. People were going somewhere, speaking about something, they looked interested in life. But in fact, they went with the time slowly without even managing their auxiliary parts. They just floated.

The demon looked at the girl and he became more interested in her. Of course, she wasn’t the only one whom he was interested in. He had many women and many of them he loved.... The love of the demon ... it was strange, stupid in some ways, but love had a lot of subspecies. Demons could love too.

Many people asked the question how was it possible? Did such creatures as demons need women for love? Why? That was a logical question, which, unfortunately, nobody knew answer to. But everyone knew to withstand women temptation, including such a powerful creature as an incubus, was too difficult.

‘You’re not gonna hurt me, are you?’ Vic asked suddenly.

‘Hurt you?’ Kharon re-asked, ‘I am not a deleterious demon, actually. But for your information – never trust demons. Never’

‘Do you confess that you’re lying?’

‘No, dear, I confess that we cannot be trusted, that I can lie at any time because we like lying. This is one of my favourite sins. Your preparatory meeting is over. Your exam is on 13th of June. How are you going to pass?’

For a minute Victoria abstracted herself from thoughts about the sexual man. The exam... Damn it! It was a serious issue. She completely forgot about it, but she shouldn’t have.

Women’s heads have resemblance to a sieve... They are so foolish. They have plans, the future is seen, the life is raising from its knees, showing up its ingenious horizons. Then he comes. That’s all. She doesn’t look ahead anymore, doesn’t look up, but she looks only at him, only into his eyes, hiding her languishing concupiscence, secretly whispering to herself “you’re so stupid”, but keeps on haunting him... The horizons are falling so silly, unworthy and banally. And then she sits on her broken bones again, with no trying to rise up because she’s scared. She is afraid of being hurt again, that she will break down and fall. But she doesn’t even think what will happen if another one comes...

Victoria destroyed herself morally. She pined for to try what Kharon had suggested. But the girl was afraid of the deal, she loved her life.

‘Damn it’ she whispered looking away from his amber eyes. ‘Damn it!’

Kharon was observing the girl, fishing for her every emotion and the way she felt it.

Did he like her, or he didn’t care and just did his job? It was an absolute lie! He liked her very much, he wanted to lift the curtains to see a fragrant performance in a progress. He craved for her to see it. But Victoria still didn’t want to buy a performance ticket, impudently breaking through the security.

‘Dear...Leave deuces alone... What’s up your exam? Your head has been preoccupied with my personality since recently. I see clearly in all its beauty every thought jumping through your head. I know every scene you think of and dream about. I saw everything you imagined’

He touched her lips, softly whispering his vision. Vic closed her eyes, trying to focus on something worth and distractive.

‘You want my hands to touch you, my lips to burn yours in a voluptuous kiss... Endearment. Brutality. Everything has got all mixed up in your head, dear... Please, stop thinking of us so loudly... I can’t see anything about medieval philosophy in all that sexual chaos of thoughts in your head...’

Victoria opened her eyes. Suddenly she felt ashamed. She couldn’t have even thought that Kharon saw through all her desires and spoke them up. Self-consciousness, diffidence and passion that were what the girl was full of at that moment.

‘Please...’ Vic whispered, squeezing his hand, ‘Please, don’t do...’

‘Do not do what?’ Kharon smiled and kissed the girl again, ‘Do not do this? Or that?’

His hand, so hot and fond, slithered under her shirt up to her back.

‘No!’ Vic jumped up; her hand met his face in a resounding slap. ‘It’s a mistake. All of this is a mistake! Damn it!’

The girl grasped her bag and ran out of the café. Unexpected appearance of her mind brought her to life.

“Oh, dear God, what I’m doing... I’m absolutely craze. It can’t be. I’m dreaming. Could I be critically ill? Have I had an accident and fallen into an eternal coma? Some guy lets himself do things which he’s not supposed to think of. And me? I’m acting like a slutty little bitch! What’s happening to me?”

Vic was running to the university, hoping to catch someone of her mates, to find out what had been discussed at the preparatory meeting and how the exam was going to be, if the students had to be frightened.

Kharon was in a natural shock. Needless to say, that he had never been slapped by any woman over the entire history of his existence. He never knew his cheek to be burning.

The man was in the café among people and tried to fathom what he was supposed to feel. Anger? Perplexity? Offence? Wrath? But none of those emotions could describe the state which the hell representative was in. The only thing he knew for sure was that he didn’t understand what he was slapped for.

Practically it was for the first time he faced the most terrible male nightmare: like nobody else, Kharon looked the girl’s thoughts through as if her head had been made of glass. He looked through her desires, dreams, her thoughts visualization. She slept with him not once in her head, and he knew it and she knew it. But in reality, she slapped him in the face and ran away.

To run away from oneself? What a childish stupidity. To run away from her own thoughts, desires, dreams. Why? Was it so scary to materialize things which are in one’s head? No, that’s not the point. It’s yet another concern of society and collaboration. Was it so shameful to say I was unfaithful to my beloved or my husband? Then their cheeks were red, and they would kill themselves for obscene deed, destroying and rebuking for stupidity made. But it was so good. Why did nobody remember it being very good? It’s a shame... Being ashamed in whose presence? In people’s presence whom you don’t know? In your own? It’s a lie. You’re not ashamed. You were so scared to admit it, scared of being an outcast in society. To be someone who people perk their fingers in and laugh at, despise and make fun of.

But why? Why did everyone care so much about what was going on with others? Why did they care so much about others’ lives? Was an adultery really the worst crime? In fact, it was easier than people think. If a person never loved, he would never know love to have limits, to be very seldom long-lived, to leave quietly, gently closing the door behind. People continue thinking that love was here, near... but it’s empty for some reason.

Were they truly afraid of becoming outcasts in society but they weren’t afraid of being alone in unhuman emptiness, soothing themselves with ghost mirage of dead love? Bridle necrophilia. Love couldn’t resuscitate if it was dead. It could not. Love couldn’t come back if it’s gone. No. It was all a

mirage. An illusion. Was that not a shame? Was that not a shame to deceive yourselves? But it was a shame to be unfaithful to...

Why did you need to be loyal to something dead? It's better to keep it in memory. Bright, full of emotions and life. You just needed to remember.

Kharon certainly didn't get what was going on. Even he, a powerful and imperious demon, at the first opportunity got lost in a female subconsciousness... And he became more interested.

A woman of undescribed beauty, dressed in white, let her light long hair down, came into the café. At once she saw Kharon alone, whose face showed frustration and a little bit of desperation and she sat down near him. The woman smiled, Kharon was staring at her azure eyes.

'Lucifer...' he whispered, having let himself a tiny sliver of a smile.

'Hello to you, Kharon' the girl was gazing the man in front of her. 'Where did you get such a perfect body?'

'I've created it! I am tired of constant thinking in what appearance I shall be before this or that woman. This version has never screwed over me, until today happens'

'Yes, I've been observing your passions. It was quite the performance...what is it about, by the way?'

Lucifer leaned back in his chair and fixed his gaze upon Kharon. The demon sighed, looked away, allowing easy almost airily sadness to run over his face.

'Lucifer. Just imagine what an awkward situation I am in now. The Lord of Hell is here and waiting for me to answer about my deeds and I don't know what to say. Can you imagine it?'

'Indeed, I can. I've imagined stranger things. Let me correct you. In the first place here is your friend if you forgot, then the Lord of Hell. You can trust me, Kharon. I think I deserve to be trusted.

'Absolutely. I've never thought of hiding anything...'

'I'm not sure you actually could hide something' Lucifer smiled.

Kharon nodded and withed his head low.

'When did people summon you last time?' the demon asked, looked up at his Lord.

'Oh, these idiots do it every day and not once per day'

'And how often do you come to them?'

'Very seldom. Pretty much never. There are several criteria when I can come to a human. If it is a man who's summoning me, it is 70 percent that I won't come. If it is about a woman, then it is 10 percent more that she will see me. I'd like to begin with men. When I hear a man voice, I always try to get what that idiot wants from me. If he wants different nonsense like money, authority, revenge, I don't come, as a rule. But if I'm in no mood I can visit him, have a benefit only for me deal with him, then to annihilate the magician and be happy about free evening. If a magician has an interesting desire or he wants to suggest a strong deal, I will bargain for a while, surely, but he hardly stays alive. If a magician is a woman then in fact, it becomes more interesting. In spite of that I am not an incubus, I prefer women. Besides, they can offer something else. You perfectly understand what I'm speaking about, Kharon, don't you?'

The demon smiled in response, remembering little fire on his cheek left and again started banishing up-coming misunderstanding.

'How are you feeling, Kharon? To my personal memory that was the first time when incubus was rejected with a resounding slap. How did it come to that?'

'I don't know. The only explanation which I have is that I speed things up, speaking Human Language'

'No, the point is that now you're working in the reality. It's very difficult to carry through things you usually do in dreams. Reality is an associate hole full of maggots that swarm in the bottom, crawling on each other, trying to elevate themselves, without even realizing that each of them is the same withe, thick worm with a black head, very dull, by the way.'

'Do you think that I am nothing beyond dreams?'

‘No, of course, I don’t, it’s just very difficult to do things which you used to do in dreams. If you come up to any woman, more than less, she will reject you but simultaneously she will plan a night with you, exaggerating everything.’

‘I shall get what I want anyway. She will agree.’

Lucifer looked at the demon and slightly smiled. He was catastrophically bored walking over the earth. People didn’t make him laugh anymore. Everything turned into every day simplicity: senseless wars, where no one understands what they fight for; murders for depreciated pieces of paper or for insults from childhood; robberies – thieves stole from other thieves, the circulation was locked; adultery were just like a pray during the dinner; children betrayed their parents, their parents betrayed their children; love was for sale: the richer was loved stronger... Everything had happened already, and then it was predictable and trivial for hell inhabitants.

‘I’d like to watch it. Would you mind, my friend?’

‘Sure’ Kharon shook the stretched hand.

‘Well shall I go then?’ Lucifer grinned, made a move. ‘The game is on.’

Kharon followed the leaving woman with his eyes and making sure that no one was watching, just disappeared. He appeared in a narrow-deserted lane. A girl with cans was walking before him. Kharon was hard at her heels.

The demon didn’t believe the reality to be so different from the dream empire. So many times, he saw wandering people there and they didn’t even realize that they were in non-reality. They felt true emotions, wept, laughed, frightened, took to flight, lost their relatives, found new beloveds, and looked for familiar faces through faceless mask of crowd. They didn’t understand them be in oblivion.

Kharon firmly decided to check his King’s words: the demon was fully sure that people would never be able to tell the reality from non-reality. But he was also sure that his King couldn’t mistake.

Kharon grasped the girl by the hand. She jumped in her fright and got the cans out of her ears. The man was strongly holding her hand and whispering about fabulous love, getting the girl closer to his arms like a spider dragged a fly into its cobweb.

‘No!’ she screamed as loudly as she could, fighting against the numb incubus with her hands and legs.

‘Hush, hush!’ he pressed her to himself, closed her mouth with his hand, ‘Just let me touch you, let me show that thing that you won’t be able to see without me. Let me know you. I shall give you the whole world, the world you knew nothing about until today. I promise you when you experience it, there will not be regret about your right choose.’

The girl was gazing into Kharon’s eyes, looking for any little hint that he wasn’t a crazy maniac taking a foil to pierce her through.

‘I’ll take my hand away and you promise that you won’t be screaming’, Kharon asked, touching her temple with his lips.

The scared girl nodded her head, accepting the terms. Kharon slowly took his hand away, showering her velvet cheek with little, soft kisses. His hand shamelessly unbuttoned her jeans, smoothing meanly and alluringly under the cloth.

‘Please...’ the girl whispered, and tears were dropping down from her eyes.

A round, warm tear fell on the demon’s hand. He stopped and severely looked at the girl. Her chin shook, the huge tears were running down her cheeks, she squeezed man hands strongly with her cold fingers, prevented him from touching the dearest part of her body. There was neither passion nor desire in her eyes and thoughts, there were only tears, where panic terror splashed like a fish in water.

‘Why?’ he asked in a low voice, buttoning up her jeans.

‘Please... let me go’ the girl persuaded him, setting her jeans, brushed away the tears.

Kharon took a sigh and took a step back, letting the girl go. She quickly minced towards crowded street, praying all the known and unknown gods, still couldn’t believe in her second birthday.

The demon was in the lane looking at the asphalt in rage.

‘It should not be like this!’ he grumbled and hit the wall with his fist.

In several hours Kharon came into that girl’s dream, who had been crying and begging not to touch her. The dream was beautiful: there was magical nature, iridescent with all colours and shadows. There was summer forest noise, smell of rare acerose leaves, tender, soft chattering of cheerful birds, clouds hurrying up nowhere and the warm wind.

There she is, let her hair down the back, with a smile on her face, barefooted, wearing a sundress, running through the grass. It is soft, silken like pillows. The girl is running and a male figure in white appears on her way. She recognizes him, it is the same man who attacked her in the lane... But now she’s not afraid of him. She honestly enjoys his beauty. She’s sure that her subconsciousness is projecting recent event. She’s not afraid of him.

Kharon takes her by the hand, and she smiles at him. His touches are so gentle that she wants him to touch her again and again.

‘Let me know you...’ Kharon whispered again, taking off the sundress strap from her shoulder.

‘Yes...’ the girl agrees, closes her eyes and immerses into something unreal...

She didn’t open her eyes in the morning.

The demon, having confirmed his abilities, finally could relax.

Vic managed to catch two of her university mates who told her in short everything that the professor had been trying to explain. She was impressed with what she was told even more than she’d been before Kharon appeared in her room. With every new word said by the students Vic got that not the best time would come forth and she was almost weak to do anything as well as she was unable to learn philosophical nonsense.

Having left the university, the girl turned out to be in the nearest park, holding strongly the philosophy notebook under her armpit. Being devastated Victoria was sitting on the bench, got and believed nothing. She had to make herself read more examination cards. What a disgusted touch of nature! Keeping in mind these passions coming forth one still waited until for the last moment and then, having waited, got into nirvana: head was in lather, deadlines were violated, leadership checked guillotine and whittles the stick for their asses, colleagues and students competed who was going to be the first to be impaled. There was no plan but chaotic movement. On the one hand, that acting was understandable. Could you imagine how bored student would be, if they prepared for everything in advance? They would never know what meant when stomach twisted as if it were full of death angels; when tongue talked nonsense with no communication with brain; and when turmoil was finally over and in the contrary to all expectations, lathered head got its ‘good on you’.

On the other side if people prepared for their performance in advance, others would make a good pile of money, thanks to calmativе herbs well sold and then thanks to ruptured ulcer treatment, happened because of owing to a nervous condition.

Victoria was tried to memorize anything for the exam, but her head rejected that stupid and uninteresting idea. It wanted to think of bad guys... of Kharon. It wanted to make itself believe that everything had been just a dream, that she had made up another faked fairy tale to believe in. Her thinking was interrupted with a phone call. That was Daniel.

‘Yeah?’ the girl said tiredly having thrown back her head to the sky.

‘Hi, Vic, I’ve come back already, the business is over, it’s okay now. Wanna see you. Shall I call on you?’

‘Daniel, I...’ Vic started her exculpatory speech, ‘I’m in the park now, studying philosophy. If you want, come here, we’ll be drinking coffee and speaking.’

‘What park?’ the young man asked being inspire.

‘What park?’ the girl re-asked surprisingly looking around. ‘The one near my university.’

‘Hm, give me 20 minutes, I’ll be there. Wait for me, ok?’ he asked flirting.

‘Ok.’ Vic got off the cell and looked ahead.

Emptiness. There was nothing in her head. Only fantan noise. The wind was playing with red hair, rustling fresh leaves. Everything that Victoria could understand at that moment was that each nerve and cell of her body wanted to see Kharon.

At such moments many people suffered from unbearable and unanswered love. They wanted to cut their veins to calm insurgent pain down. Picture of beloved haunted them day and night, not letting mind alone for a second. Bottom of stomach was twisted because of unexpected and unreasonable thoughts. There were only wild schemes where beloved finally condescended and kissed them. While an imagined picture was touching with its lips, wrapping its arms around, mind was walking away to be lost. They couldn't say *no* yet to themselves or imagination, they could only yield to it, absolutely refusing common sense. They couldn't eat, drink, there was a beloved in dreams, there's a dream about the beloved in the reality... Oh dear God, could it be love? Did people really think and call it love? What an uncommon bullshit! Love, for sure, was a brutal and unbridled bitch, knowing nothing about pity and mercy. It was like a plague and there's no treatment for it. No true love could be treated with medicine... only death could help and oppressive silence after it.

In fact, there was more dangerous thing than love and it is severer. It doesn't have time to wait and make mad. It has obligation to deprive of sleeping and sense for very short terms. No, it's not an infatuation or sexuality. It's passion. Like a match passion burns a human and he or she, burning inside, runs and looks for a place to plunge to calm the fire down that ruthlessly licks off skin pieces and gets closer to head. If a person felt passion once he perfectly gets what it is about, how much it hurts and how weak a person comes. Of course, he or she's weak not only in moral way but in physical, getting exhausted also. Passion is like a gigantic tapeworm, stuck in and sucked it dry to the very last drop. But a human keeps on crying "*I love you*". He or she still has no idea that faced with no love. He or she is alone on passion ship in a tremendous storm, in the middle of eternal ocean. And the ship is about to sink down. The man is afraid of saying "*I want you*" ... He doesn't believe these words. He believes "*I love you*" but love isn't aware about it. He calls it love to justify his animal lust. People have the greatest faith in that the difference is very big: to say to a woman "*I love you*" and "*I wanna fuck you*". There is difference only for linguists actually, but in life there is no difference. Love between sexes means "*I wanna fuck you*".

But in the context of just passion then "I love you" means nothing. This is not necessary yet. Passion has already put its fingers into Victoria, having troubled her minds. At that moment she wanted just to see him...

'Here you are!' Daniel appeared on the path. 'I've run around the whole park already, finally I've found you. I called you... you didn't answer.'

The young man followed her hands with his eyes: the cell was strongly clutched in her fingers.

'I suppose it's no use to say that you didn't hear it... ' Daniel sat near her. 'Why, Vic? What's wrong?'

Vic shifted her gaze. She knew the end was close but had no idea what to say.

Breaking up is always difficult, especially, if everything seems to be fine. Just feelings happen to be gone... And a wild passion intrudes a habit to live with someone. And you can't pretend anymore that you love.

'I know all.' She said in a low voice aside.

'You know what?' a note of alarm sounded in his voice.

'I know where and whom you were with.' Victoria looked in Daniel's eyes. The young man looked concerned definitely.

'Who told you?' he asked.

'What difference will that make?'

'It's a lie...'

'The thing that you are telling? Yes, it's a lie. Why're you unable to admit your lying? Why do you prefer to tie yourself into knots but not to stop lying? Enough is enough, Daniel!'

The young man put his hand to his face. He fetched a sigh and looked ahead. Victoria was looking at him and waiting for his answer.

Suddenly minute speck of dust and dried spurs rolled over the road. An unexpected wind blew them up. It was strong and warm. Her loose hair was swung in the wind, hiding her face. She frowned and looked at where the unnatural wind was blowing from. In some new leaves which flying head over heels Kharon was walking through them.

The horror possessed Victoria, her hands shook, fear little by little paralyzed her body.

Kharon wasn't alone, there was a girl walking with him on his arm. She was mumbling something but Kharon wasn't listening to her. He was devouring Victoria with his squinty eyes. There was a vague disembodied smile on his lips.

The wind twitched his hair and shirt tail. Everything seemed to be changing infinitely fast except the demon's look.

"What a lovely picture. You are plotting against how to break up, aren't you? I shall help you. Her name is Julia. A blond. She is 22. She has got a car and a rich father. Her eyes are blue. They made love three times in the Indian Ocean, four times in a hotel room and once on the plane when they had a flight there. She has got a very beautiful undergarment and she loves sex. She does not need any obligations. Think more. Any ideas?"

Kharon passed by, put his story into the girl's head mentally. When he had passed by the bench where Vic and Daniel were sitting, the wind failed, June, awash in sunset lights and green, came back to the park.

'Who told you?' the young man asked.

Victoria had already heard that question for five minutes ago.

'Have you seen?' she suddenly asked.

'What?' Daniel asked again in surprise.

'Gloominess, the wind, bedfellows who have just passed by...'

'Nobody's passed ... Vic. What wind? Gloominess?' he gave her a puzzled look then touched her forehead. 'How are you feeling?'

Vic winced and avoided him like leper, understanding nothing about what was going on. She could have sworn it had happened in waking life, what Kharon said to her... the wind, the sun fading away. All of those were too real to be untruth.

'Who told me?' she asked again. 'What difference will that make?'

'It's a lie.'

That conversation had already happened. Vic had heard it already. The cold enveloped her legs and hands, her consciousness and common sense were fogged. The girl accused herself of insanity. But then she remembered what Kharon said passing by.

'You went to the Indian Ocean. When we were having a flight there you had sex on the plane, in WC room. Her name's Julia. She's 22. She has a rich father. She's blond and has blue eyes. You had sex three times in the ocean...'

Victoria saw the young man's eyes getting wider half-frightening, half-realizing that his girl knew the truth, half-surprising where she got the truth from if he hadn't said to anyone.

'...Four times in a hotel room.' She was on the verge of tears because of grief and the truth. 'She has a beautiful undergarment...'

Daniel was himself on the verge of tears listening to his girl's voice.

'...She loves sex and doesn't need obligations...'

Victoria couldn't stand that anymore and burst into tears, putting her hands on her face. The young man was indescribable shock. He stared fixedly in front of himself, seeing nothing. He was frustrated. Victoria wasn't supposed to have had all the information. Where did she get it? How could she know about sex? About a hotel room?

'How did you get it?' curiosity overcame him, 'Did Julia blab?'

‘I hope you understand that we are done?’ Victoria got up, dried her eyes. ‘You betrayed me, Daniel. Betrayed. I could have forgiven many things, but this, I can’t forgive this. I can’t get and accept it. It’s a very disgusting lie.’

She took her bag and went to underground. She’d been never so upset. She fretted about breaking up and it hurt her. A disturb confidence is more painful than just to break up.

What can happen when you suddenly realized that you turned out to trust nobody. Nobody. Even yourself. Someone doesn’t care about, and others are hurt. They, who don’t care, just got over it. Maybe it’s not so scared when you give up on surrounding persons. All the eternal life nature and merciless society make everyone be ready for that we shall come on disappointment sooner or later; we shall come on the thing after that we shall be able to give a definition of betrayal with no definition dictionary usage.

But giving up on trust yourself is terrible. You started being afraid of yourself, of your own thought, of everything that is happening in your head.

Victoria could trust herself: the wind, the clouds, a man and a woman walking through the park. All of those couldn’t be an illusion. The girl fully expected it to take place in the reality. If it wasn’t, then how to explain the information which Kharon had given to her? Vic couldn’t read minds but not on that one. She clearly remembered his voice, softly whispering about the past in her head. But the demon’s lips were closed. He was just walking and smiling. But he kept silence!

Victoria couldn’t say she was crazy: she was capable of hearing Kharon’s voice. Could it be a trick? Was anyone kidding her?

The girl broke into the flat, grasped the spell paper, the razor blade and ran to the bathroom. With no thinking she cut her finger and started reading the text. She could read fluently the spell by heart already.

Water made noise, steaming the mirror surface, Vic was reading the spell. Her mother was watching TV without even knowing what a bacchanalia took place in the bathroom. The girl was still reading the text, the blood was dropping into the sink, and steam was getting thicker. A man silhouette appeared behind the girl. It was hardly to see through the steam. Kharon. He came.

‘I can feel you,’ the girl whispered, dragged her gaze away from the overused piece of paper. ‘I can feel your warmth...’

Kharon touched her shoulder and took a step closer, taking the girl in his arms. Not one battalion of little cramps ran down her body immediately which at once switched off logic and common sense.

‘Will you try to slap me in the face again? To lie to yourself again that you do not want me to touch you?’

Victoria kept silence letting his gentle hands move over shoulders, waist...

‘I don’t want you to come again when I call you.’

‘It’s a lie, Victoria, again.’ Kharon took his hands away from her. ‘So, tell me about your insanity which filled you in the park. Tell me, what you felt. How do you call it? Betrayal?’

The girl turned to him. Kharon was completely in his birthday suit.

‘Why are you naked?’ she asked in surprise.

‘Well, I have been busy with things where you do not need clothes. I heard your voice and the same ghastly Latin.’ The demon moved his hand over his hips, not touching the body and there were white trousers appeared. ‘...Not to confuse you, Victoria.’ He smiled.

Having turned away from him, the girl closed her eyes and whispered about the same insanity. She couldn’t still believe her eyes. She was sure that they lied to her.

‘So, you were in the park?’ she asked in an affirmative voice.

‘When you were with your boy and lost yourself in thoughts, with no knowing how to get rid of his awkward and untalented caress and absurd obtrusiveness? When you knew him to have betrayed your relationship, but you didn’t have any facts? Yes, I was there. I helped you put the things right.’

‘Who was that woman near you?’

‘You noticed her, didn’t you? It’s a good sign.’ Kharon smiled. ‘A woman from my dream. To alias time and space is not a hard deal for a demon of such level as I am.’

Victoria was examining the smiling hell envoy and didn’t know what to say. How often is there a moment when a person doesn’t know what to say? You don’t pretend not to know while you have many things on your mind, but you don’t really know what to say. Silence. Chaotic, empty thoughts run inside of burnt by ideas brain semi sphere. You don’t know what out of bemuse stream is going to be the truth. There is a fear not to be clear. There is an apprehension to hear unexpected answer.

The demon leaned forward and muttered sweetly in her ear.

‘Jealousy, dear. Are you really going to be jealous of the incubus?’

There were irony and mockery heard in his voice. The girl didn’t need to answer or tell him something. He saw clearly her feeling true emotions.

‘No...’ Vic answered confused and surprised simultaneously.

‘No?’ Kharon asked again, grinning, ‘You are so liar. Victoria, tell me the truth, just for once.’

The girl shook her head, covered her face with her hands. The demon gently took her hands, holding them behind her back. His amber eyes were burning her face. He ogled her slightly smiling.

‘Victoria... Tell me, do you know that a lie is one of the deadly sins which you are going to have responsibility for one day? Do you believe in it?’

The girl said nothing. She was afraid of speaking anything. She didn’t move a muscle, enjoying gentle touches of the vehement man.

‘I’ve committed many sins already. So, what’s difference to hold responsibility for a sin or sins? And no, I didn’t. Before you appeared, I was always an atheist. Now... Now I’m not still sure what you are and from, and what I should believe in. I think you’re a professional actor or... I don’t know. I’ve never believed in demons. There’s never been any mystical things in my entire life. I always laughed at those who were dreaming about to be bitten by vampires. But now... Now in thought I’m looking for an in-patient bed in a mental health facility.’

Kharon was looking at the girl silently without touching her. How many times did he hear women speaking about insanity? How many times did they murmur him about soundless, vacuum common sense falling into a black material where there was no way back? Kharon frowned, lowered his eyes and asked himself only one question.

‘Why’

‘What why?’ Victoria asked again in surprise.

‘Why do people call themselves insane at every turn?’

‘I don’t understand you.’

‘Do you know how many times I heard the word *insanity*? More than thousands! People always want to be insane! I am in love means I am insane. I killed – I am insane. I do not want to go to the sea – I am insane. I want that man – I am insane. A demon came to me – I am insane. Each human move, a little bit unusual, is described by metaphorical, epic poems and decadences about insanity. Why?’

Vitoria owlshly looked at Kharon. It’s true. Why? Why do people reject themselves, their true feelings and desires? Why are they easier to say that they are mentally deficient than to accept themselves?

Fear is a reason. I’m in love – I’m insane. Where have you ever heard things like love let the common sense be at its place? People who felt love, can’t come around for a long time.

I killed – I’m insane. The society standards. Could a mentally fit person be able to kill? The answer is damn easy – no! What if a murder with some exclusiveness then insanity gets periods?

A woman craving for a man is that insane, too? Of course! The modern world order conception says that it is unpleasant and uncultured for women to want someone. They aren’t taught to take the first step to a man. It’s a disgraceful shame. If she dares to want a man and blabs her immoral desire it is deadly.

‘I don’t know, Kharon...’ she gave a shrug of the shoulders.

‘Listen to me, the human child, cultivated by urban system of artificial values and priorities’ the demon touched her face, ‘you are not insane. Do you know, why? Because the reality is multifaceted. I am tired of that you, people, thump your chests, declaiming you believe in nothing and nobody but in the evening, when no one can see you, you read psalms, calling for God. I am tired of that you do not believe in curses, but you curse everyone and beg for forgiveness for your words. You do not believe but spit over the shoulder and knock on wood. Why? Why do you lie yourselves?’

‘Because we’re afraid of the truth. We’re afraid of future which is hidden behind the truth. We’re afraid of those we don’t understand. Maybe, that’s why.’ Victoria was looking into his eyes like she was hypnotized.

Kharon sighed and lowered his head. He sometimes was too tired of people.

‘I have to come back. I must finish what I have started before she wakes up. I would like to give you a piece of advice for the future. Never try to slap a demon in the face again. I don’t like it. Most of all that I don’t like you doing this because you just couldn’t resist having pleasure, could you? Puzzle your desires out, Victoria.’

Kharon gave her an unpleasant smile and disappeared, having left the girl to think of her behaviour and desires.

‘Vic!’ the mother called behind the door, ‘You’re sleeping there, aren’t you?’

‘No!’ the girl answered immediately, turned off the tap.

‘Sure?’

‘Yes, yes, I am! I’m coming. Give me two minutes!’

‘Don’t hurry. I just wanted to know if you’re ok.’

“Puzzled out your desires, Victoria...” The last sentence that Kharon said was circling around her head unrestrained. Vic had puzzled her desires out long ago, but she couldn’t puzzle her consciousness, society values, surrounding persons’ meanings out.

For her the most terrible phobia was how society would see her. Certainly, you would hardly surprise with casual sex five minutes after having made acquaintance. Nobody said that it was ok, but nobody stopped it. And Victoria, certainly, wasn’t afraid of that, neither dishonourable nor that casual stupid sex.

Victoria found more terrible thing than society – it was God.

After the last demon’s visit when Vic was in bed, quiet music was playing on the background, muffling the darkness, the girl suddenly realized that if there were demons and deuces then there was God and angels. On the one hand that absolute crazy equality almost drove her mad at all. The demon was too attractive. She didn’t have enough strength to fight her own feelings. To her horror she got that she didn’t want just to have sex with a man of extra-terrestrial beauty, but she wanted him to love her. She wanted to love.

God appearance in her atheistic thoughts wasn’t planned. Would he forgive her for the lascivious thoughts? For one of deadly sins of humanity? Would he let her look at the fabulous paradise gate with half an eye? Would he vouchsafe her his look even contemptible one? Victoria was going to make a fatal mistake and there would be no one to blame but her, the mistake which she was going to be responsible for before Lord in the highest, disgracefully dropping her eyes.

It was so strange and crazy simultaneously feeling to realize the price of her own actions and all the same, contrary to all rules, she kept on planning to perform deeds qualitative. She had a feeling of inevitability and doom. That was all, she had no strength to correct something, to prepare for murderous feast, where she was going to devour the only one dish – retribution. It was going to be forever.

Victoria’s consciousness was full of desperation. She was scared, her heart was paralyzed with terror while her imagination was drawing pictures of justice, but her soul... Was it honest if contrary to all rules, it rushed to her one-side love that she had made up?

‘Hi, Vasilisa.’ Vic dialled her friend. ‘Aren’t sleeping? What’re you doing?’

‘No, I am not. I’m gonna hang out with my friends from university. You?’

‘Me...I’m at home. Stupid me, I thought that you’re at home and we’d speak... I’ve broken up with Daniel...’

‘Oh, shit!’ Vasilisa took a sad sigh. ‘You couldn’t imagine how I hated myself for blabbing out. First, I thought that it wasn’t my business, then I thought you had to know. If I’d calumniated, I’d have apologized, haven’t I, Vic? You aren’t mad at me, are you? Did he confess?’

‘Oh, come on! No mad!’ Vic smiled. ‘On the contrary, thank you for opening my eyes.’

‘Honestly, Vic, I wish I hadn’t been that person who opened your eyes... Let God be with it.’

‘God with it?’ Vic gave a shiver when she heard God’s name. ‘He did betray me, what God would be with him? He sinned!’

There was a quite silence on the phone.

‘Vic.’ The friend said in a low voice. ‘I’ll come on you, ok?’

‘Come on me?’ the girl was surprised.

‘Even distantly I feel you getting through your breaking up. What God, Vic? This statement makes me be suspicious. I’d not have said anything then... I wish I’d not stopped my tongue...’

‘Calm down. It’s ok. Go hanging out. Don’t think about me. I’m preparing to my philosophy exam and I seem to have over read about theocentricism... Don’t pay attention. When are you free?’

‘Ah, I forgot completely about your exams. When’s it gonna be? On 13th? So, you’ll pass it and we’ll meet then right after it if you really don’t need me now.’

‘Deal. I’ll call you before it.’

‘Okay. So, I’m leaving. Don’t be upset, please. If anything happens, call me at once, I’ll come no matter what could happen.’

Vic smiled and hanged off the cell. Her eyes pierced into silent night ceiling. Whatever she imagined to herself, whatever she dreamt about, passion didn’t want to leave her alone. Fear of God absorbed her more and more. She was sure she had nothing to lose yet. Any Lord of the Highest would inflict her only for her chaotic thoughts of evil deeds.

Having turned half of the night, Victoria finally got asleep in the morning. She dreamt about nothing. There was only darkness. But her mind had a rest with no seeing merciless Kharon’s picture. Her mind planned nothing and wanted to delegate it to her subconsciousness. The subconsciousness used to exist on the level of a static chaos, that was one of its favourite deeds.

10

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June 2013 (Monday)

It was about 11 am when Victoria woke up and immediately got the mystic figure into her consciousness.

Having no thoughts of taking a shower, combing, having breakfast, the girl rushed to the laptop. She was carefully looking for the information about incubi and succubi, God and angels. She didn’t understand what exactly she was looking for, but all her inward nature was yearning.

‘Doesn’t fit, no...’ Vic whispered, crazily jumping from page to page. ‘No. Nonsense. Rubbish. It can’t be. Never believe...’

After an hour and a half of searching Victoria could calm herself down: she wasn’t crazy, and insanity didn’t threaten her. There were a lot of stories on internet whose authors hardly could be called of sound mind. Despite of that the girl had face the demon and his abilities personally she couldn’t believe in what was written on web-sites.

Suddenly among the piles of advice, stories and spells, Vic saw a black angel icon, often appeared, whose owner commented each site, mocking at those or other comments.

‘That’s interesting now’ the girl clicked the link and turned out to be in the personal profile of a man, called himself as a “magician”.

Vic sent him a message and was about to run to the bathroom when the laptop sounded in an intriguing way.

Unknown Person: *“What’re you looking for?”*

Victoria: *“For something that will help me to keep near a demon or...to make him run my commands.”*

Vic texted and looked at the screen. Ten minutes passed but there was no answer and being upset the girl went to freshen up.

Olga Vladimirovna was at work, the flat was empty. At such moments Vic felt free. Nobody watched what she did, what she ate, how she washed herself, why she did that. There was no needless advice.

Having backed to the room with breakfast and tea Vic sat down with a flop before the laptop. There was a little envelope on the semi-dark screen, exhorting to open it. She wasn’t long in coming.

Unknown Person: *“A demon? What demon? There is a special spell for each level demon. Indeed, tiding up a demon is a dangerous idea.”*

The girl shrugged her shoulders and texted an answer.

Victoria: *“Why?”*

Unknown Person: *“Because there is no spell which can untie a demon. You tie him to yourself for all your life.”*

Having read the message Victoria got happy. She was ready to spend her life with Kharon, she believed that her life began only when he was with her.

Victoria: *“I don’t see any danger.”*

Unknown Person: *“Then you’re another idiot from sites who believes in magic and fairy tales. Put your thinking-cap on, what a demon would like to be tied to?”*

Victoria: *“What can he do?”*

The girl was silently looking at screen and waiting for the intriguing strange to answer.

Unknown Person: *“Eat away at nerves. Kill. Do in. Anything rather than to get rid of. And he can get rid of if you’re dead.”*

Vic frowned. Not a good perspective cropped up. She didn’t really want to be killed by the demon. She dreamt to be loved by him and not only at nights. But she couldn’t make up how to hold featherbrained Kharon near herself.

Victoria: *“Can you send me the spell?”*

Ignoring all the warnings Vic hoped in her heart to get the spell. Having seen the person texting her heart started madly beating, having some pleasure in fabulous future.

Unknown Person: *“I didn’t get what demon you need?”*

The girl sighed. She didn’t want to tell a stranger that her heart craved for tiding an incubus to herself. Feeling of shame pinched her throat from time to time.

Vic turned to the window and pursed her mouth thinking how to get the necessary spell.

Victoria: *“There’s no special demon. I just wanted to read spells and find out what and how to do. Study information as it were. For example, how to tie an incubus to...”*

Victoria sent the message and, full of hope, stared at the screen. Fifteen minutes later the stranger sent no answer.

‘Shit!’ the girl used a vulgarity and was about to switch off the laptop as another envelope appeared on the screen.

Unknown Person: *“Incubus? This is the most foolish idea that I’ve ever heard. If you wanna study demons, first of all you’d buy the book “Demonology”. There are all the demon descriptions. Read Crowley, LaVey, Lemegeton. Secondly, there’s a very rare book written in Old English with no date nor title. There are spells about succubi and incubi. I’ve got it. I can scan it...not for free.”*

Victoria read the message couple of times. Old English. How was it possible to read such book? What book was that? No date, no title.

Victoria: *“Not for free – how much then?”*

Unknown Person: *“Ten thousand.”*

The girl opened her eyes wide. Was the stranger in his right mind to fix the price?

Victoria: *“It’s too much. I don’t have so much money.”*

Unknown Person: *“The information inside of this book costs much more. I fixed too loyal price. I’m sorry, but I can’t sell it cheaper.”*

Victoria closed the laptop with anger and crossed her arms on breast. *“I can’t sell it cheaper.”* It irritated so much. Why did it cost so much? Why did she have no money at just the right time? Damn piece of injustice.

There was cold for some time breakfast and tea. Vic was sitting in the same pose and thought hot to get the cursed spell. Then she jumped up, dressed and rushed to The Russian State Library. There should be some data there, at least? Anything.

Vic was walking along The Garden Ring Road, turned to The Arbat Street and in twenty minutes later she should come up to the library.

The crowd met her halfway. Smiling tourists were examining the architecture and took photos of it. Expensive foreign cars flew by, filling the street with deafening growl. Funny pigeons ran over the road and picked up glums, trying to swallow with gluttony and with no epicurism understanding. There was dust in the air, shone in the sun rays. The breeze moved it in and out. Whitish planes glowed the sky, leaving the ghost traces. The world kept on living. It didn’t care about a soul, that lost its way, as well as university didn’t think of it. Nobody wants to take part in giving instructions except parents, but they do it in so uninteresting and dull way that children don’t want to listen to them. Life goes on. No matter what happens, no matter to whom it happens, life is here! It takes its course.

People speak different languages everywhere. People laugh, people cry. People sit on the asphalt road, hats are near them where defaulted throw-money is. People sing, draw, pretend to be robots, sell and gad about. They are at The Arbat.

Victoria was moving along the well-known narrow street, having decided to get any information about demons.

‘Hey, girl!’ a young Gypsy took her hand. ‘I read your hand and you give me what you don’t need.’

‘No!’ Vic said roughly, getting her hand out of strong grasp. ‘I’m not interested. Thanks.’

The Gypsy frowned.

‘A cross is on you.’ The Gypsy said and let her hand.

Victoria stopped and turned to the Gypsy.

‘Cross?’ she asked scarcely. ‘I’ve got one thousand roubles. Tell me.’

The Gypsy came up to the girl, took her hand and stared at the palm.

‘Here is money.’ Victoria took the piece of paper folded in half.

The Gypsy was gazing at the cover with lines palm. More than ten minutes passed before she started speaking.

‘The hell is following you, love.’ She whispered. ‘Take away your money. I can’t see your future.’

‘What do you mean you can’t see my future?’ Victoria pricked up her ears.

‘The cross on you is a crossway where you are now. You must take one of suggested ways then I’ll be able to see your future. But now you’re standing at gaze as another one. Your future isn’t definite.’

‘What do you mean the hell is following me?’

‘A crossway is always bad and strong omen, symbolizing sinister forces. It means you’ve been suggested a choice and your task is to make a right one. The hell usually gives a chance to choose. If you’re on the crossway and standing at gaze it means only one thing – you’ve been stirred into action.’

Victory almost stopped breathing. It is terrible when a stranger says that hell is interested in you. Of course, it’s terrible. Head is whispering with no stop that it can’t be. Empirical materialism denies every remarkability, idea, molecule and atom that can’t be caught. Common sense. How often

do you call for it? There is only one steadfast faith – the faith in own common sense. If it starts frustrating, surrender people see it and label you an insane.

Victoria wanted to dream that someone was sophisticatedly kidding her, but circumstances didn't allow.

'Where should I step?' Vic muttered, giving the money to the Gypsy.

'No, love, you can't buy this. I'm not ready to travel this path for you. It must be your choice. I don't need the money of the person whom the cross is on.'

The Gypsy shook her head and kept on calling people, promising to read their hands.

Being devastated and lost, Victoria was following with her eyes the Gypsy. Her feeling ran high. For a while she lost the thought of Kharon, of his indescribable beauty, of his mind-blowing embracing, of lips, kisses which she would be hardly capable of forgetting.

"This is not me who it happens to. No. I don't believe..." Victoria persuaded herself being the centre middle of Moscow... Life went on around.

Suddenly Vic realized herself to be at The Arbat. There is one of the biggest book stalls there in Moscow. Alcoholics sold rare books for a song. Without a moment hesitation the girl went ahead, looking for books.

Sellers of different knowledge were not so far. There was an aisle full of huge pile of books. They were coloured, gray, doomy, thick and thin, flabby and new, unpresentable and those you could hardly force your eyes away from.

Vitoria swarmed the books, looking for something... and she found. It was a flabby book titled "Demonology". Vic bought it for some cash and ran to the nearest bench.

Preoccupied with clear impatience the girl was turning the leaves of the book to look for the only name and everything about it. But there was nothing. Nothing! No word about Kharon and his activities was there. There were a lot of names, demons and their descriptions, unending number of symbols and figures, dead language, Arabian, demon hierarchy, spells and treatment... But fortunately, there was something about incubus.

Firstly, they are really demon. They can take shape of anything. They can turn into any animated object: a human, an animal, it can be a materialization of the most daring demon fantasies.

Incubi prefer to share bed with women, that means they are male. Demons, who prefer men, are succubi. Both, succubi and incubi are on pretty high level of demonic hierarchy.

Incubus must get the permission to do what he's going to. He will be sure to ask if he is wanted, if he can do that or this, if he is allowed. If a victim agrees then her number goes up.

Their professional service charge isn't cheap. As a rule, it's a deal, terms of which are given a passing mention to, and a victim is ill-informed as she is under the sway of Morpheus.

Both incubi and succubi choose their victims while they are sleeping. They come to people at nights, when their minds are not active to lull vigilance easier.

The real succubi and incubi existence isn't described. Probably these demons can walk among people, but they send all their power to a sleeper.

A short warning – whoever would appear before a human, incubus or succubus, don't forget that it's a demon and even being beyond dream borders he is very dangerous and easy to make a human suffer.

You can try to get rid of a demon with the help of a pray. It's not very useful method but you could try. A tie with a lustful demon is considered a serious sin, there'll be no forgiveness for it.

A pray can help in that case if a victim doesn't have time to agree the deal. If he or she said sacramental "yes", that's all. The deal is concluded and there's no turning back. It doesn't matter what feelings a human had when agreeing the deal, if he was raving or being in oblivion. You can't negotiate with hell and cancel the deal. In this case there is no Supreme Court nor Arbitration Court.

Everything that you have put on a cast when agreeing the deal, you will never get back under no circumstances. If you face a hell representative, you should always keep in mind the first axiom – no turning back. No law works against demons. They crap on everything.

The second thing you always keep in mind while working with hell that there's a barely noticeable chance that the victim will be a beneficiary after the deal. This is predictable. The point is that demonic hierarchy representatives charge too high for their services. It's impossible to come to The Prince of The Dark and give him two thousand roubles. Hell doesn't work for money! Victims will have to pay with something more interesting than pathetic parallelogram pieces of paper. Some deals can cost a life.

Communication with demons is also nice to have – they are open to set the cost and promises; they'll never take more than they asked.

The third thing you should follow up is that any creature, agreeing the deal, absolutely craps on his so-called partner! Demons don't have a team, they work for themselves. Even more they will care less about the person who agrees the deal.

To lie to a hell creature is a bad idea. If a creature is not of lower level, one hundred percent it knows what happens within next fifteen minutes, it could read any thought, which dare creep into head, finds out any plan before it's going to be executed.

The fourth, hell doesn't have remorse and it's no use to appeal to it. Don't ask anything and don't stare in surprise. You should just accept this fact. They don't have remorse. No matter how hard people will try to make them pay attention to remorse, it will be useless. Demons don't care. A human suffering will never have effect on demons but only in a good way.

Victoria was bound up in reading. She was so much interested in getting known these guys, that she almost forgot earlier she had wanted to find some data of incubus.

The last item in bold fonts with exclamation marks warns: any essence, having come from hell, is dangerous for a human's life.

Vic closed the book and stared straight before herself. She looked calm but preoccupied. But none of passing by people could guess how scared she was! None of them saw her hands be almost washed out by shivering. Palsy was slowly possessing the girl, covering her limbs with numbness. She had only one question: how far I've come already? Was there any turning back?

Having true fear of unidentified Victoria understood that ghost world was very interesting not to give up on it. She'd been living for 20 years rejecting every mysterious being. She had a certain world view where there was no place for a mystical cell. Her conception of modern world development consisted of materialism. Suddenly an opportunity to get something new appeared and she wasn't able to leave it behind. Fear wasn't important but interest was too much!

Vic took the phone kept ringing in her pocket.

'Listening to you, mum' the girl said tiredly.

'What's wrong again, Vic? Why's there no answer?' the strong voice sounded on the cell.

'I've been at the preparatory meeting.' Vic lied before you can say knife. 'There was another one before the exam. What did you want?'

'My God, your meetings... So, I accept daily duties today, my colleague asked to relieve her, don't wait for me. There's food in the fridge, you know where money is if you need something.'

'Mum, stop it, I'm not ten and this is not the first time when I'm alone.'

'Fine, I've warned you.'

Olga Vladimirovna hanged off and left her child alone.

It was the nicest thing to know that she was going to be alone at home. Nobody would give advice and push and she would belong to herself. It was really nice!

The girl went to a café, thanks God there were lots of them in the street where she ordered dinner and immersed again into searching for information in Internet. The dinner was getting cold, Vic was drinking only coffee, with her eyes fixed on the phone screen.

Between endless advice and arguing the girl found name Lucifer.

Everything that she had read about Lucifer, she got that he absolutely knew how to tie a demon. Moreover, he was a Lord. Besides, he was interested in communication with people. Victoria was sure that Morningstar would help her. But there was no spell in Internet at all.

There was only nonsense: blood, the number thirteen which had unclean connection to Lucifer, if it did, unending number of Pentacles, black candles, crosses, texts of a level better than Bordeaux' ones. Even Victoria, who wasn't experienced in practical magic and knew nothing about its theory, understood that described rituals were nothing more but just junk. It was just funny pastime.

The girl remembered her black book which had been bought from the old woman at Lubaynka. Victoria didn't look through it: all her attention was drawn to the dropped-out piece of paper in Latin.

Ah hour and a half later Vic was in her room, having reached no library. She turned the pages of the dilapidated book, studying and reading it.

By the end of the book Vic had run into the chapter titled "Fero Lux". Something told her: here was it, Lucifer in his own person. A well-built man with huge wings behind his back and with no face was depicted on the page

'The Fallen Angel' Victoria muttered looking into the picture.

The girl switched on the laptop and texted to the stranger from site.

Victoria: *'Do you know how to summon Lucifer? I need it...'*

While Victoria was waiting for the answer, she kept on looking through the book and found something else – "Summoning Lucifer". Having read the spell, Vic got upset: she seemed to have set a great issue.

Firstly, Lucifer is an original president of hell. To gain Lucifer's hearing is a chance probably one to thousand, better to say to millions. He just will not come.

Secondly, if for some unexplainable reasons he comes then the caller can get into troubles. A person who sees just a little toe of Lucifer's foot, can see nothing in his own life. He can just stop a human's own existing.

Thirdly, Lucifer is very insidious and has no intention to have fun, that's why the magician must outwatch every little germ of upside-down ideas.

Fourthly, it was the ritual. The spell itself wasn't scared for Victoria yet. And, the spell was the most inoffensive thing in the whole process. A person who's waiting for a meeting with Morningstar, must decide in advance, what exactly he or she is ready to sacrifice for the long hoped-for meeting. Even if one's ready to sacrifice both, life and soul, as well as the body, another important question I asked point-black: does Lucifer need that the human is going to suggest him?

Victoria was thinking for a long time what she could suggest to The Falling Angel if he agreed to come to her. How much could she pay for unknown future?

A little envelope appeared at the dark screen.

Unknown Person: *"I hope you're kidding me? Do you know who Lucifer is? Do you have any ideas what end of the session you can get?"*

Victoria: *"Yes, I do, I do. I'm ready to pay, I just need him to come."*

Unknown Person: *"He won't come to you. He doesn't come to the greatest."*

Victoria: *"Do you have the spell?"*

Victoria was getting angry. She had already read all those precious and warning words in Internet. Why were they so afraid of Lucifer, asking "do you know who he is"? It was just Lucifer. An angel. Angel of God. The former Angel of God. Yeah, he was powerful. Even more than that. Yes, he could kill but a brick could, too! Another thing to look for a meeting with Lucifer was just asking for troubles. But while living one could get into troubles. Or Lucifer's appearance in a flat was too obvious issue that's why mind whispered to give up the idea?

Victoria's mind whispered only one thing: *"I want Kharon to be with me..."*. It was like a nursery school conflict when children got their so-called adult problems known, a teacher came up to help them, like Morningstar should help Victoria.

Unknown Person: *"I do, if you give me a weighty argument."*

Victoria: *"A weighty argument? I've got into an argument with one of his subordinates."*

Unknown Person: *"Funny. Are you going to call for Lucifer in the guise of a judge? Do you think he'll support you and wag his finger at his subordinate? Don't be stupid, babe."*

Victoria: *"I found a ritual in my book. What do you think, it will work?"*

Victoria attached pages scans and sent to the stranger. Then the world immersed into a deadly silence.

The girl read the text again. You must burn three candles, put a bull heart in a silver dish, wait up to three am, write "I pay... for the meeting with you", seal – it has to be an index and little fingers prints with own blood. After having read the spell you have to stab a knife made of a black steel into the bull heart. Lucifer has to appear in shape of anything and confirm the deal. Then you have to blow two candles. One has to be kept on burning. If one of them is blown out for any reason, you stop the ritual – no one comes. If Lucifer comes the first thing that you have to do is to draw in bull blood a cross on your chest. It works as a defence from the devil.

Unknown Person: *"I've never heard and seen anything like this. Where did you get it?"*

Victoria: *"I bought demonology book from an old woman... the book is very ancient."*

Unknown person: *"Hm, that's interesting... Do you wanna have a deal? You scan your book and I scan that one you've asked for. Barter. Deal?"*

Victoria smiled. Of course, she agreed. She needed any information about demons... about their King.

Unknown Person: *"There's a beautiful text in your spell. When and where will we meet?"*

Victoria bit her lip. Right now, whenever else!

Victoria: *"Your ideas?"*

Victoria was scanning the book and waiting for the envelope to appear like manna from heaven. The stranger asked her to meet at 8 pm at Okhotny Ryad metro station. Victoria had less than three hours before meeting to finish scanning the book and get the destination point.

The book was very thick and every minute later the girl was getting more nervous to be late. She tried to do every movement maximum quickly to save time. She needed no necessary moves. She needed speed. She had to have time and get scan of the manuscripts.

Time pressed when Victoria finished scanning the last page. She put on a jacket, grasped her knapsack, USB flash drive and rushed to the underground.

June did its part. The underground wasn't too much crowded: many people were on their vacations, students were at home studying examination cards. Victoria forgot completely about her exams and diploma. So, it happens like that when love and passion appear all the other feelings and deeds have to be got out of head.

The stranger said that he would be waiting for her in the middle of the Okhotny Ryad metro station. He would be wearing a white shirt, jeans, cap and gymshoes.

Without too much struggle she recognized the young man among the crowd. He was staying, leaning back on the rail, pulled his cap over his eyes. There was a closed right-angled box in his hand.

'Hi' she came up to him.

She didn't feel any hesitation as she just needed the information.

'Hi,' he answered and lifted his eyes.

His eyes were of very beautiful colour. They were chestnut-coloured but also seemed to be of some wine-red colour. Yes, his eyes were too beautiful, but one couldn't say the same about his face. He had an eagle nose, curve thin lips and bulged out cheekbones.

'What's your name?' he asked.

His voice was pleasant one could listen to it for a long time.

‘Vic, and yours?’ she gazed into his eyes trying to understand any thoughts.

‘Sergey. Now I know your name. And before I wanted to call you just crazy.’

‘Why?’ Vic smiled.

‘Could a sane person want to call for Lucifer?’

Victoria lowered her eyes, hiding the smile.

‘Have you printed your book?’

‘My printer has run out of colour. I’ve got a USB flash and my laptop to prove that it’s not empty.’

‘Foreseeing that’ the guy mystically smiled, ‘I’ve got my laptop, too. Let’s go to a café to work if you agree?’

‘Sure, let’s go.’

They got to Manezhnaya Square, found a cosy bar and took coffee. There were two laptops on the table. The young man was looking through the files on the flash. With a happy smile Victoria was swarming in the copies.

Even on the scanned pages she could see that the book didn’t belong to the XXI century. With no problem she found the necessary spell how to tie a demon to. The girl got into the ritual.

‘Where did you get this book, you say?’ Sergey asked, clicking the scans.

‘An old woman sold it.’ Victoria was busy with her own business.

‘It’s a good book. I’m sure there’s only one version of it... Keep it in safe.’

‘Where did you get yours?’

‘My great-great grandmother left it.’

‘Are you a witch?’ Vic asked amazed.

‘A witcher. In the 6th generation. I’m studying to be a witcher. You, on the contrary, seem to know nothing how the magical world is organized.’

‘I don’t conceal it. I’ve discovered this world since recently. Honestly I’m not still sure that it really exists. It’s too much unusual...’

‘You have lots of time to make sure that another world exists. You’ll understand that we are always observed. We have guardians, they guard us. Surely, you had such moments when you wanted to take a step on the road and in the nick of time you stepped back. There were good reasons why. A car rushed out of the corner at the last second and if you had taken that step, then there’d have been coronach at your home. We have those who misdirect us. Bogies, witches, pucks and water spirits, all of them are real. Why do you need Lucifer, by the way? What a dispute does he have to settle?’

‘Nothing. I just wanted to ask him for help.’

‘To ask Lucifer himself? I’m not sure he’ll want to interfere in the petty crime of the lowest level demons.’

‘What is he so busy with? Formalizing vacations and recalculating?’

Sergey looked at the girl and smiled.

‘If he were, people wouldn’t be so afraid of him. You can find an active ritual in the scans which I gave you. I don’t know if that ritual which you sent works...but you can try. But I advise to start from mine. If Lucifer doesn’t come, you’re doing something wrong.’

‘What if he doesn’t want to come, is it considered to be?’ the girl cautiously asked

‘Maybe it is...But there is no *“he doesn’t want”* in demonology. If you call, then a spirit must come. If you call in a wrong way, a spirit, probably, won’t come but it gets you’re calling him, anyway.’

‘Have you ever summoned Lucifer?’

‘No, I’m not so cocky and bold to come into a contact with Lucifer himself. It’s too dangerous. There’s also information how to tie a demon to. Be careful with that.’

‘Yeah, I’ve got it. May I get your phone number to connect with you if something goes wrong?’

‘Are you getting to be friends?’ Sergey smiled again.

‘Well...’ Vic was confused. ‘Yes, I think, I am.’

Of course, she would be against a friend-witcher when she almost got directly across to The Dark World.

They exchanged phone numbers and went out to on their own errands. Victoria was burning up the road home at rapid-fire pace. She wanted to tie Kharon to her. Then he was going to be near her, supporting and protecting. His face didn’t come out of her head. She was buried under devilish beauty press and weight. Vic didn’t know his personality and his soul if he had the one, she just saw his face and felt his touches. It was enough to bog down in marshy quagmire of love.

There was a cup of hot coffee. The midnight. Victoria was seeking for the needed spell and she found it on one of thousand pages. She needed next components: to draw a pentacle in a circle, five candles. She had to picture the demon’s seal, which was going to be tied to, in the pentacle centre. Then she had to depicted planetary symbols in the corner, begin with Uranus in the upper corner and against the clock there should be: Mars, Saturnus, Neptune and Pluto. That was all. And the last was to read the spell at every pentacle corner.

Victoria couldn’t believe her eyes. Could that be really all? There was no need of nasikabatrachus sahyadrensis’s legs, boiled with psychrolutes marcidus’s gills, no need of flowers which died out last century...there was need of a couple of pictures and easy spell. The girl was glad not to call Lucifer and communicate with him indeed as collaborate in any way. She was glad to manage on her own. She couldn’t even believe in it.

Despite that it was midnight, Vic didn’t think of sleeping. What a sleep when her mad dream was about to float into reality?

The girl was tracing the even circle with a piece of chalk on the floor, then a pentacle in it. All the planetary symbols were found in Internet. Kharon’s seal was on the paper in the book. There were lots of candles at home.

As soon as all was done Vic started reading the spell in each corner. When she finished reading the last lines in the northwest corner, a man appeared on her bed. He was looking at the floor. There was solid disappointment on his face.

Vic gave a start of surprise, having seen the man on her bed. The man kept silence. Victoria looked intently at him. She didn’t like his countenance, but she liked the feeling she had in the first seconds when the demon appeared.

‘Kharon...’ she whispered.

Suddenly the window opened because of unexpected mad wind. The candles were blown out one by one. The light twinkled and was gone. The scans flew up, curling into an amazing whirlwind. Pens, pencils, brushes, small objects began to turn under the unusual wind pressure, fluttering the red hair, endlessly throwing it on the eyes.

Victoria was nervous. She was scared. The boisterous weather in the flat pretty enough frightened the girl.

‘Kharon!’ she said louder, trying to get fluttering spikes away from her face.

The wind didn’t stop. The man, keeping the deadly disappointment on his face, was sitting and looking at the drawn pentacle. He didn’t see the scared girl.

‘Kharon. Please...’ panic tears ran down her cheeks.

Fear almost provoked hysteria. The girl was shacking. There was no light, but the feeble moon threw off its rays at the sad demon’s face.

Having heard “please” Kharon finally lifted his eyes and stood up sharply. The rough weather wasn’t going to calm. The wind was getting stronger, pieces of paper were flying, light twinkled sometimes.

‘What are you doing?’ he asked in a sepulchral voice and looked down into her eyes.

At that moment Victoria understood what to be feared meant. There was a real fire in the demon’s eyes, and the tongues of fire seemed to be about to break away and burn it all down the tubes.

His hands, holding the girl, were deathlike cold. His lips were pale-blue-violet colour, compressed so strong to turn into a thin thread that was going to tear.

‘What are you doing?’ he asked his question again, pressing her shoulder stronger.

Victoria was staring at the flaming fire in the demon’s eyes, being afraid of looking away.

‘I...’ she stuttered.

‘You.’ The demon’s voice thundered in her ears.

‘I wanted to see you’ at least Vic lied and closed her eyes.

Kharon grinned but didn’t let the girl.

‘See me?’ he asked. ‘Do I have to trust you? A human child... full of ancient malice... You’re lying!’

Slowly the rough weather in the house was coming to rest. The mad album pages, wrinkled and torn in places, began to get down in a gentle leaf fall; the wind calmed; but there was no light still.

‘I...’

‘You’re shaking...’ the demon tucked her fluttered hair behind her ear.

‘You’ve scared me,’ Vic answered, gave a sob, trying to relax in the divine beauty arms.

‘You want to tie me to, don’t you?’

Having noticed no her complain, Kharon stared into her eyes, waiting for the answer. Vic turned away and took a sigh to calm down her animal fear swarming in the depths of her soul and consciousness.

‘No... That means, actually, yes... Kharon, I don’t know what to say...’

‘Tell me the truth. Do you know what the truth is? It is what you have here.’ The demon touched her chest. ‘And here,’ he put his finger at her temple, ‘here’s a lie...’

Victoria said nothing, was scared to look into the man’s eyes. He’d been still holding her shoulders, silently demanding her responsibility for her actions. But there was nothing of that.

‘Fine. You wanted to tie me up.’ Kharon confirmed. ‘Did I not tell you that it’s impossible? Did I not tell you that it is a very bad idea?’

He pulled the girl closer to himself, fixed her eyes on her. The ferocity in his eyes came down but the fire had been burning still. The demon was angry.

‘I beg you... stop it. I wanted to tie you up because I can’t get your face out of my head! I can’t get your hands, pressing my waist out of my mind... I can’t forget these feelings. Your voice... Oh my God, your voice! I’m getting crazy when I hear it! That’s why I wanted to tie you up to! A night isn’t enough for me... Isn’t enough.’

Vic was sobbing, showing her true face, baring her desires, letting the demon sink into her ocean of first-born feeling.

‘Did you want to be my girl?’ the demon asked coolly.

Vic nodded her head, trying to calm down.

‘It is impossible. All the people are equal for me and the price is the same for everyone. You cannot bargain with me. The terms were established, and I think only Lucifer is within his right to change anything.’

‘A night is nothing.’ Vic repeated insistently. ‘I wanna get all not only sex.’

‘Sorry.’ Kharon smiled and dropped to the bed.

He unbuttoned his shirt and gave the girl a mysterious look. Being numb she gazed at his body. The man touched the bed sheet, gesturing her to lie near him. As if she were high, Vic was gazing his bare torso, at the moves of his eyes, hands, mouth, quirked at the corners. Her breathing was becoming heavy, the heart was beating stronger.

‘What’s it with me?’ she asked quietly, making herself turn away from Kharon.

Next second he jumped up, pulled off the shirt and the girl appeared in his mind-numbing embraces. She was losing her mind slowly and silly.

‘It’s called Lust, dear. My favourite sin,’ Kharon was whispering, ‘A night is in return of your life. Admit it...’

There were the gentle hands, velvet lips, words, soft embraces, kisses...

‘Listen,’ Vic said with no opening her eyes. ‘No. it’s a wrong deal.’

Kharon started back from her and the severity, appeared on his face, made the girl be nervous again.

‘A wrong deal?’ he asked in surprise.

Getting angry, the demon couldn’t believe his ears. He seemed to be growing before her eyes, some smoke was supposed to be behind his back while his face was getting coloured in red wine. The girl was enveloped by desperation.

‘I can kill you. Just for nothing. Just right now. Then you’ll get nothing at all! Can you feel your legs getting full of cement? Can you feel it getting frozen, depriving you of moving? Two minutes and it’ll cover your lungs, filling them with hardened concrete... Just two minutes left.’

Her heart was beating as if it was mad because of fear. It was so terrible to recognize your own body with each second to stop reacting to nerve impulses, feel your own legs getting hardened and then they stopped feeling, and you were going to fall somewhere down. At that time a sinister look of a creature, came from inferno, was devouring your face with suffering on it.

‘A minute left... Now it’s a stomach.’ The demon was staring at the girl. ‘I am so tired of your games. Come to me, go away, a good deal, a bad deal. Whom have you found in me, a Seraphim? You, a human child! How dare you, offspring, disturb me from my deeds? Bargain with me?’

A simple fear couldn’t describe the girl’s feelings. There was fear agony and despair. The demon didn’t touch her, and a real hell started its existence inside her. A lump in her throat prevented her from making any sound and thoughts about mercy was eternally turning in her head.

Suddenly everything stopped. The heaviness, tonnes of cements left her body, agony died down. But anger didn’t leave Kharon. He silently watched the girl, grasping the air. She was crying because of offence and weakness, impossibility to get what her heart had been yearning.

‘God forgive me...’ Victoria got on her knees, put her hands over her face and burst into hysteria. ‘What am I doing? God, I beg you... Our Father, which art in heaven! Hallowed be thy name...’

She was praying, clinging onto her tears, burrowed her forehead into the floor. Kharon was looking at the crazy picture, then hunkered down and took the girl by the hand.

‘Our Father? Seriously?’ he asked severely, ‘do you really think it works?’

‘I’m agonized!’ the girl wept. ‘My feelings for you... I’m betraying God! If you exist, then He exists! I want Him to get you out of my head! I don’t wanna think of you anymore, I don’t wanna see you anymore. I don’t wanna you touch me anymore... But I can’t master unruly my feelings... God will help me!’

‘God?’ Kharon kindly looked at Victoria and with implausible grin. ‘Victoria,’ he kissed her, pressing her to himself. ‘You will not call me again. You will not do, even try to do any magic on me. You will not even think of me until you are ready to give me what I’m asking... or I shall have to kill you.’

Kharon didn’t stop kissing the girl, her tears, her lips and cheeks. She was listening to his forbidding and by every second, by his every word she understood her be getting worse and worse.

‘I shall not see you anymore, good-bye’ the demon whispered.

Victoria opened her red eyes: she was alone. Suddenly she was broken through with electricity. It was a dawn, mess was in the room like tornado and earthquake had been there, the pentacle was in the floor, candle wax was everywhere, pages were thrown about... Vic was sitting on the floor and weeping.

Was Kharon right? Was it a lust or a love seed for something forbidden? Was it love for a creature which didn’t deserve to be loved actually? That man... He was so charming, so handsome and attractive to be the truth. The heart fell in love with an ideal skin at that time her mind endlessly

whispered about true essence. He just mocked her. You and a thousand-year-old demon? Love? Who do you think you are, dear?

Reality. Welcome back. How many people begged God make them face the reality? To show them what was really going on in the world? Victoria begged God take her out of harm's way where her heart was bogged down. But He didn't hear her. Probably because she was so quietly asking Him, and she didn't really want the reality. Uncertainty confused the minds without bringing stability.

Crying, wiping her tears away, hating herself, Victoria was washing the floor, destroying the trace of the Sabbath. She put the candle ends into the cases, placed the scan pages. Broken-hearted, with sunrays caressed the earth, Victoria went to bed. There was emptiness again. No dreams. No visions. Inanimation...

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June 2013 (Thursday)

Pale-face students were running everywhere, whispering, shaking the cheat sheets, praying. It was a philosophy final examination.

Victoria was sitting near the auditorium with a book, answers for test questions, carefully reading everything that she had had to read within 5 years. She needed just a few theses, just a little about philosophers, two more pages.

'How're you getting on?' Igor, course mate, came up to her.

'Don't ask me.' Vic waved. 'I remember nothing. If I pass by some miracle, then it'll be a real miracle. You? Have you learnt?'

'Partially. I think I'll say something. That's a philosophy!' he smiled. 'After a party is coming up in case of successful examination...'

'Successful examination?' Vic smirked. 'We're not even in the auditorium.'

'Don't be such a pessimist. We all pass! As you will do!'

'I hope you can foresee... What about the party?'

'So, there's a café at Sokolniki. We'll pass the exam and then go there.'

'Are we chipping in?'

'No. Pay-your-own-way, or you can discuss with guys. Someone doesn't drink and, I'm sure, they won't chip in.'

'Right you are!' Vic smiled. 'Fine, if I get through the exam, then I'm in.'

The guy gently tapped on the girl's shoulder and left her alone.

'What are you doing here, Drache?' the prefect appeared from nowhere, 'Philippych is calling you. Hurry!'

Victoria took her notebooks and student books and ran to the auditorium.

There were five students let inside. Vic came up to the table where she registered her examination card and with no looking at the questions, sat to the table.

The first question was Scholastics. The basic theses. Representatives. And the second question was Marxism philosophy.

Vic closed her eyes. The first question wasn't so scared as she thought. There was a couple of opening sentences and then she would be ready to say something next.

The second question caused some problems: Vic didn't have time to read up to the philosophy of XIX century.

Having sat to the moderators, Vic answered the first question with ease. But then fantastic stuff began.

'Marxism...' Vic drawled, understanding more that she was going to celebrate nothing at the party.

'Yes, Vic, Marxism. Let's start from the definition of Marxism you are going to give.'

'Marxism is...' the girl frowned.

The only thought and words that were in her head was what should I do? You couldn't be silent in such kind of situation. Never. Only words, beautiful words, perfect settled and chosen ones could get universal appeal. Silence was a bad omen that both parts, taking a share in the conversation, didn't understand.

'Marxism...' Victoria was drawling, obviously being despaired, lowered her eyes, which were going to cry out of frustration.

'Are you ready to provide an answer, Victoria?' the moderator asked two minutes later.

The girl looked at the man, sitting near the moderator. It was Philipp Philippych. The professor of Philosophy, who could teach his subject in a very interesting and dexterously way, was sitting in shock. He was ashamed for his students. He lost so much time and efforts to give all the history of philosophy to see during the exam faces, dipped into frustration!

Remorse started torching Victoria step by step. She had really time to prepare her examination and had tried to do until she met him.

What would she say to her mother? What would her mother say? What a shame and take-down! She didn't have any cheat sheets!

Suddenly Vic heard a clear muttered voice: "philosophical, economic and political study. Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx founded it."

Vic turned. All the students were busy with their own examination cards and preparation to them, they had no interest in faery failure of Victoria Drache. Then who muttered the answer to her?

The girl looked again at the moderator and, as if she were bewitched, she repeated what someone had told it.

'Good. Marxism conception?'

Vic lowered her eyes and noticed Philippych's lips silently moving and then a clear whisper went on: "...political capitalism economy, historical materialism, scientific communism. The philosophy centre is a conception of a human subtraction from own labour products..."

Vic was watching the professor's lips and understood nothing. The whisper, he was speaking, was a whisper but loud. It was so loud so the person sitting next to Philippych, would have absolutely heard what was going on near.

'Have you told anything, Professor?' Victoria asked unexpectedly.

'I've asked you to give Marxism conception. Philipp Philippych is silently waiting for the answer.'

The moderator was speaking, and Victoria saw Marxism conception coming out of his mouth. It was just in tune with his announcements! Simultaneously!

'What's the hell?' Vic asked herself under her breath, touching her hair.

'I beg your pardon? Are you ok, Drache? You don't look like yourself.' Philippych asked quiet. 'You're pale, sweated... Shall I let you go to the nurse?'

'No,' she whispered in replay kept on looking at the moderator's lips muttering about Marxism conception. 'I'll go on.'

In a trembling voice, Victoria re-told everything that the moderator said and got good mark, and looking round, she left the auditorium.

'So? How was it?' group-mates came up to her.

Vic came along the hall, speaking and listening to nobody. She washed her face with cold water, trying to wash off madness that had attacked her. She couldn't still believe what she had seen was true. How was it possible to believe in such things? And on the other hand, how was it possible not to believe? Knowing nothing Vic passed the final philosophy exam because the moderator himself had told her the examination card! What a nonsense!

Cold water streamed. Refreshing. Victoria refused to believe in what had happened. It was too much. There was no such a thing.

In fifteen minutes, she left the WC room, forced herself to smile. She had to speak a lot about how the exam was, how she was lucky, that she remembered the correct answer, that professors weren't mean. Vic tried to calm her course mates down, infused hope into them, saying that everything would be okay, and everyone would pass.

'Vic, have you passed?' Olga Vladimirovna spoke in a voice touched with emotions on the cell.

'I have, I got a good mark. Don't worry.'

'Oh, thanks god. When are you going home?'

'In the evening. Maybe at night. We're gonna to a café with mates.'

'Okay, try to be at home earlier, will you?'

'Mum!' a reproachful note appeared in Vic's voice. 'I'm not a baby!'

'Yes, you aren't, of course. You're a child. So be careful. Are you listening to me, Vic?'

Victoria looked angrily at the ceiling, holding the cell away from her ear not to listen to the talk.

'Okay, mum, okay. I got it. See you.'

'Vic, I've not...'

Her mum was speaking something when the girl hanged up the cell. She didn't want to listen to any moralizing. After Vic had seen the professor saying her the examination card and nobody but Vic could hear him, she wanted to relax a little bit. It didn't matter what people it would be around. The main point was not to be alone, especially at home.

After the exam all students went to a café at Sokolniki. They chattered bragging of their achievements and call luck bad names, telling how they had passed.

The moderators turned to be very severe. The Ministry Chairman was almost physio. He failed every student, having fun. If Philippych hadn't been there, not everyone would have passed. Philippych got it hot and strong – the Chairman made fun of him and of his badly educated students. And if Victoria thought that Philippych answered the question himself, then the moderator wouldn't have done the same.

She remembered those terrible whispering lips, the blank, whitish look, getting pale skin. She couldn't get the face disfigured by indifference out of her memory.

Everyone was celebrating the successful examination while Victoria was meditating, making herself sure that her subconsciousness projected recollections in the shape of the whispering professor.

After she drunk two or three glasses the girl started relaxing and losing herself in dreams. If it was madness then damn with it, she could do nothing anyway. If mind got ill, then it was the end. When you were drunk, you better recognized and got over your own hopelessness than when you were sober. It was easier for the girl when her course mate embraced her, laughing in unison with her. It was easier to see his face imagining no Kharon's face. And, of course, it was easier to kiss him back because there was nothing similar in comparison with the demon's kisses.

As soon as Victoria felt the miserable embracing with a perishable human body of male sex, being very annoying, pleasureless, she left the café when no one saw her.

There was metro ahead and having gone a little distance towards the underground kingdom of marble and granite, Vic stopped. The big park behind her offensively looked at her. There were fresh young leaves, embracing students and loving couples on benches, drunkards, were going to sleep hat in hand to the strains of tree crown murmurs on the warmed ground. The lanterns were fabulously lightning, along the carefully done paths, giving the atmosphere of Peter Pan fairy tale.

Without a second thought Victoria went back to the park, understanding nothing, why she was doing it. The only thing she understood the unreal smell of adventure. She walked on the smell... until she stumbled and fell into the bushes.

Then there was darkness. There was nothing before her eyes. She didn't understand if her eyes were open or not. There was just coldness gently touched her body. The dream wasn't a dream and reality wasn't a reality. Nothing was understandable. She had a cramped consciousness, dancing in alcoholic delirium. It was busy. It had no time to look after reality. It was still rushing having forgotten

the mind. Time was happy: nobody watched it! A rustle... Another one. The mind was tired. It wanted to back to reality, but all the attempts were in vain. An abrupt movement. A blaze was before her eyes... Pain. Violent pain. She wanted to cry. Her mind had been still apprehending existence out of the bounds of subconsciousness, remembering the sly consciousness.

Someone's hands. Warm. Strong. Zero gravity. That was what meant to hover over the ground. The breeze... The beginning of the way.

Vitoria opened her eyes. The darkness. She couldn't understand who she was. The girl tried to move her hands and legs: they worked. Pain! Here was it! On the upper eyelid of the left eye. Vic blinked and the pain was gone nowhere but got stronger.

'You landed on a sharp knot...in the bushes.' A sudden quiet voice brought Vic to life a bit.

In her fright she jumped up and fell on the floor... that wasn't her one. The darkness still covered the truth and with vigour, Victoria was still feeling for little pile on the floor.

'Where am I?' she asked under her breath, sat on her knees, with no result looking into the night dark.

The silence was in response. Vic was turned her head like an eagle-owl, peering into forward. She carefully got up and faltered ahead like a year-old baby.

'Hey!' she shouted, going like a zombie, stretched out her hand. 'Who's here?'

Consciousness was coming back slowly into reality, then dragging fear, which always said no. It was exhausted already to come every day to that girl.

'Have you forgotten yet?'

The hands were the same, strong and warm, gently touched her palms, holding the girl not to let darkness make her fall.

'Kharon.'

Victoria didn't know what to feel: fear? Blissfulness? A scare? Enjoyment? She was losing in her feelings.

'Is that really you?' she asked with fear, stepping back from his hands. 'Where am I?'

'Well what if I say that you are at my place? Would you be glad?'

'At your place? Your home? What time is it? Jesus...mum's gonna kill me!' Victoria stared round.

Despite her eyes were used to the darkness, all the same she saw nothing but the dark silhouette. No furniture was seen there, nor street lamps light through the curtains. The windows seemed not to exist at all.

'I called her and said that you would come in the morning or afternoon...'

'You...What did you do? Perfect!' Victoria came up to Kharon, trying to give a sever look at his face. 'How should I explain a man who called her? How to introduce you? The demon?! Kharon the Demon? Just Kharon? Incubus? Or just to say that Victoria is a crackpot?'

'Are you blowing up me?' Kharon was surprised.

He had a velvet and silky voice, but his intonation scared the girl.

He snapped his fingers and wall luminaries, awkwardly spread over the wall, lit with a languishing pale light, filling the room with a weak glowing. Vic stepped back. Kharon wasn't supposed to appear like that: an unbuttoned white shirt, let out of his trousers, blinding the eyes, the shoes, combed hair, barely visible bristle and the black eyes full of outrage and true wonder.

'No.' The girl said quickly and folded the jacket about herself. 'No. I just wonder what I'm supposed to do next... And what did you say my mum?'

Vic stopped speaking, starring at the unbuttoned shirt. A slight smiled played across his lips and he started buttoning the shirt. The girl's burning in red cheeks made him cheer up.

'That's all?' he asked as he did the button over his stomach.

'What?'

'That's all what you want to know?'

‘No.’ Victoria became severe unexpectedly. ‘I want to know what you’re doing here? Or what am I doing here if you forbid me to summon you?’

‘You answered your question: I forbid you! But no one forbid me to appear according to my will and of my own free choice. By chance, I saw your body in the night wilds and as I am sure that sooner or later, I will get from you what I want, I decided to save your body. I did it. As for your mother,’ Kharon started speaking in as the same voice as Victoria did, ‘mum, don’t worry, I’m staying at Vasilisa, I’ll come tomorrow.’

Vitoria hanged on his words, looked at him and she didn’t understand how he was capable of doing what he was doing. His voice sounded identically like hers.

‘Did she believe you? My mum, I mean.’ Vic amazingly blinked.

‘She doubtlessly did... Besides why do you report when you are going to come home? What time and with whom.’ Kharon asked, finally finished buttoning his shirt. ‘What an uneasy thing...’

‘What do you mean why? She’s my mum, she worries what if something bad happens to me...’ Vic tried to explain.

‘So what?’ Kharon gave her a predatory look behind his shoulder. ‘Ah? What? What will she do? What can you, people, do for those you love? If you were pressed with a large-tonnage slab, could she pull it off in a second to give you a possibility to breathe? Could she get you out of a sinking ship in the Indian Ocean if she were on the other end of the spectrum? What could she do if the Death came into the game?’

‘Kharon... Mother love. It is... It’s difficult to explain, I have no children, but I love my mum and if a large-tonnage slab pressed her I would turn inside-out to try to get her out of that... And I can imagine how much a mother loves her child and for what she is ready to do for him or her...’

‘I am sometimes glad that I communicate with living people. You are so funny! Especially your philosophy! None of you could do anything, but the grief is a good start to shed tears over. You have a bad headache, Victoria! What can you do with this?’

‘How do you know...? Jesus, I’m asking this again. I can’t get over the thought that you know everything. To live like this seems to be dull.’

‘No, it isn’t. I told you, people amuse me. So, what are you capable of doing to your headache?’

‘Take a medicine.’

‘Then take it.’

‘I don’t have any.’ Vic got what he was driving at. ‘But you can help me, can’t you?’

The demon smiled. The girl was staring at him, remembering each line, trait and dimple of his. His face was beyond compare, she couldn’t help but look at him.

‘Help me,’ Vic whispered tenaciously, feeling her temples become clenched more and more.

‘Take away your pain?’ he was near the girl, stroked her hair. ‘Make you free from this feeling?’

‘Yes,’ Vic closed her eyes and like a kitten, almost began to purr because of his gently touches.

In a second pain drew off, the warmth spread over the head vessels, enriching the brain with new power.

‘What else, my little mistress?’ the demon cynically asked, holding the girl in his arms.

There were his lips again. His lips were on her neck. The small lightning jumped through her body in reply to his kisses, hotness of his hands, his palms. Passion burnt an insane fire and Vic didn’t have even a drop of water to put out it. Just to agree the deal and her body would get what it was yearning for. But neither her heart nor her soul would get the love, which was described in books, discussed by multimillion budget actors on the world TV. Her soul wanted more than just the lust of the flesh. Vic didn’t want to think for a moment that the demon... Did he know what love was? Was there a germ of the truth in that sharp word for him?

‘Shall I go on?’

His whisper cut through the night, made it scream, growing faint from pain. Victoria opened her eyes.

‘No. I gotta go...’

The girl grasped her head and with horror she remembered her doing. Kharon didn’t control her. He was silent, folded his arms and watched the girl. He didn’t understand her. But what? If there was a great desire, then why didn’t she want to satisfy it? Why didn’t she want to pay and then to get what had been driving her crazy every night?

‘Where’s my shoe?’ the girl asked in a big hallway.

Kharon appeared in the doorway and smiled, languidly gazing at Vic.

‘Shoe?’

‘Yes!’

‘The one that you’ve lost in the bushes?’

‘In the bushes?’ Vic looked in the demon’s eyes in surprise. ‘You couldn’t have taken it with you, could you? How am I supposed to go now?’

An unexpected complaint struck down Kharon. He gave the slightest twitch of one eyebrow, astonishingly looked at her olive coloured eyes.

‘What am I supposed to do, Kharon?’

The empathic voice cut into the head. The demon was silent, with no stopping burning the girl with his amber eyes.

‘You aren’t supposed to leave today...’ he said finally.

‘It’s perfect and wonderful but you didn’t answer my question. How am I supposed to go in on shoe? How couldn’t you have guessed that I’d need both of them? People usually use both. Simultaneously! On both feet! Moreover, you saw it in the bushes! I don’t understand was it really so hard to take it with you?’

Kharon was black as sin and there was a reason for. Women had never ever talked to him in such a way. Dream always obfuscated the reality that all of them were ready and said the only word “yes”. That’s all. They didn’t need to talk further. Then the body language and mind-blowing games came into reality at the forefront of catharsis. But to blow up Kharon for the lost shoe... It was a nonsense!

‘Fine.’ Vic took a sigh, being in a shoe. ‘You have to bring me home. I don’t know how you do this, but I have to be at home.’

‘Are you sure about “I have”?’ the demon boiled over when his mind was slowly coming back.

‘Absolutely. I can’t go barefooted. And I’m barefooted by the merit of you.’

‘Okay!’ the demon snapped his fingers before the girl’s nose and between one breath and another they both turned to be at Vic’s small room. ‘You’re at home.’ Kharon confirmed the obvious fact.

Vic looked round, trying to get all that surrounded her was real or it was a made-up world where the demon put her into.

Everything was in its place. It was all still there. There were piles of pencils and paints, album pages and map papers. Her mother was coughing in the bed behind the wall. Not a hint that the reality was made-up.

‘Is these all real?’ Vic asked in a whisper.

‘The price is the same. When you calm down your passion collywobbles and it stops irritating beneath your stomach, call me and I shall remember you how it could have been, if you had paid.’

Kharon disappeared and Victoria, failed to manage her feelings, burst into crying.

What was she supposed to do? She fell in love with a monster, completely forgotten that it didn’t have any definitions of a human life. The creature, in love to whom the girl was bogged down in, suggested to have a deal and to all horror Victoria got that if she saw him once again, if he touched her once again, and if his velvet voice sounded in her ears again, she wouldn’t be able to say that impossibly sick word “no”. Damn it for a night Kharon would belong to her and only to her. The girl was almost ready to cry “yes”, when an idea came across his mind.

‘I’ve come, mum’ Vic said quietly looking into her mum’s room.

‘Vic? Is that you?’ half-awake Olga Vladimirovna didn’t understand what was going on. ‘What time is it?’

‘It’s early. Sleep. I’m going to bed.’

When Victoria opened her eyes, the day was running under the pressure of the evening. The girl jumped from the bed and went to freshen up, have breakfast and tell her mum what was at the exam and what happened after.

‘What’s your next exam?’

‘That’s all. It was the last one. Then I’ll have a critical design review and voila I am a licentiate and you’ll be happy for me.’

‘When’s the review?’ her mum was drinking coffee.

‘In two weeks and a half. I’m ready for it. That’s not a philosophy.’

‘Fine, then I gotta go to work.’

‘Now?’

‘Sveta’s ill, I’m covering her. And our chief of department is leaving, and his position will be opened. I want to try.’

‘Sure, mum, you’ll get there. Look how many different rewards and recognitions you have. I think you the best resuscitator!’

‘It’s very cool when you’re supported!’ Olga Vladimirovna kissed her daughter on cheek and went to gather.

Victoria went to her room under colour of preparation to the project review. As soon as the door was closed and her mum left for work, the girl started to make ritual.

She was going to call for Lucifer and went balls to the wall. If Kharon refused then Lucifer would help.

Everything was ready except an agreement and time. The hands of the clock have to point to three am. It was an important condition described in the book. If there was no problem with time, all she needed just to wait, but agreement problems were indeed.

Firstly, Victoria thought of the agreement content. Could it be any legal one? Maybe just a text? Table format? How should it look like?

Secondly, the price. What could she suggest to Lucifer in charge for his services? Victoria couldn’t give her soul. If she gave him her soul it meant she would die and wouldn’t be able to be with Kharon. Then what?

Two questions which the girl was thinking over the whole evening and a half of the night. Finally, she decided to prepare a formless agreement. She just took two pieces of paper and wrote that she would give her voice for Lucifer’s services.

Victoria decided to give her voice to The Lord of Hell. She couldn’t give her ear because she wanted to listen to tender words which Kharon would be whispering to her. To give her eyes was out of the question. Victoria was going crazy just because of looking at the man. She had nothing else of value.

The girl knocked out a simple agreement, pricked her finger and sealed her fingerprint with her blood. She read the text several times, calculated appropriate time to read the spell and three minutes to three am she switched off the light.

There was a burning candle in the middle of the room. There was a pentacle, symbolizing Lucifer and the agreement, enveloped in a thick cloth in the centre of a drawn equilateral cross.

Vic was very nervous, her body became clenched like the universe before big bang, looking forward to meeting the great person. Fear wasn’t far also. To call Lucifer to home and stay calm with no fear would be an impudent lie. If Vic could pretend that Morningstar were her childhood friend, then she couldn’t hide inner panic.

The girl finished reading the spell at three am sharp. She turned around. There was nobody at home. The last candle died out in a second and the room immersed into impenetrable darkness, lightened with barely visible night light from the window.

It was silence.

Vic seemed that an unfeeling wind and some shadows crawled across her room. Steps, a sigh... The girl was turning like a humming top seeking for the invited Lord...

Nobody appeared in ten minutes, in fifteen minutes and even in a half of an hour. Vitoria was alone in her room.

Within three hours, she tried to make the ritual, read the spells with different times and stresses, lighted and extinguished the candles. But nothing happened, nobody appeared. It was about 6 am. Vic was sitting on the floor and looking nowhere. She couldn't no longer conceal that she was too upset and couldn't hold back her tears. There was only one question: why didn't he come? Then another one: what should she do to make him come?

Being depressed, crying, having a devastated hope, Vic was wiping away the pentacle from the floor, cleaning the wax traces, hiding the spell which didn't work. She didn't want her mother, holder of Habilitation degree in Medicine, to catch any little hint at something supernatural in her daughter's room.

At 11 am Vic was awakened by the cell calling: Vasilisa was going to walk over the city and she wasn't going to walk alone but with Victoria.

However hard the girl tried to refuse to walk, Vasilisa wasn't going to get back off Vic and she had to agree.

The girl felt terribly bad, slept badly and broken. Only Kharon and all that connected to him lived in her head. Like a zombie, Vic, with half closed eyes, went to the bathroom to freshen up in some way. In a half of an hour Victoria appeared at Tverskaya Street, where Vasilisa had been waiting for her.

'It's been a long time and finally we've met!' her friend began to speak loudly. 'Vic, I'm so happy!' she started embracing her friend in shock and with no stop to chatter eternally about her doings.

'How did you pass, Vic? You didn't tell yet!'

'I got a good mark. There's a project review left and I'm ready to work... My life has almost stopped. How're your exams?'

'Mine? I'm on thin ice. C is on C and C drives on them. But to tell the truth I don't care. I want it to finish soon.' Vasilisa closed her eyes. 'I'm hungry, let's go to eat something!'

Victoria shrugged her shoulders. She actually didn't care where and with whom to go. Vasilisa noticed Vic's indifference later.

'Oh, don't worry about it. He's not the last man on the earth!' suddenly Vasilisa said.

Victoria looked at her with blank stare.

'Whom are you speaking about?'

She knew. Where from? The thoughts were running around in her head, awkwardness was coming closer and her consciousness was getting ashamed.

'About Daniel, whom else! You're not yourself after you broke up with him. You're not that Vic that you were! You were energetic, you laughed and lived and now a pale-faced it is sitting before me. Forget him.'

'Uh... Daniel has nothing to do with this. I didn't think of him until you remembered that he actually was.'

'Say it more often to yourself and you'll really forget him.'

Victoria took a sigh. How was it possible to speak with people who didn't hear you? They didn't want to hear you.

'Well, it seems you're right...' Vic thought of Kharon. 'Maybe I better let him go.'

‘That’s right! You don’t need him! You’re ok now but you’ve been still moping. Vic, you can’t do this. I know what to love means and how it’s difficult when you’re not loved...’

‘If you were, this conversation wouldn’t have taken place now...’ Victoria bitterly smiled.

‘Don’t worry, I’ll get it over. But I haven’t tried all...’

‘What do you mean?’ Vasilisa glanced over her friend in surprise.

At that moment Vic understood that she had put her foot on it.

‘Nothing. What about your new boyfriend?’ to change topic that was Vic thought about.

Fortunately, Vasilisa was so ditz even inconsiderate that’s she quickly switched to a new line of topic, completely having forgotten about her friend.

Victoria didn’t listen to Vasilisa, her attention-getting exclamations and yelling. All she could think was why Lucifer hadn’t come? All had been done correct: agreement in any form, blood, seal, text... What had been wrong?

Vic started suspecting her being normal again. Maybe no Lucifer existed at all? Maybe she made up everything that happened to her?

In the evening, having told her mum a beautiful lie, creating a perfect illusion, Victoria went to her room. The door was locked, and all hell broke loose again: pentacles, candles, spells.

Victoria looked up and down all the books, internet and did everything that was written. But nothing happened. Nobody came. Why? Why not? Kharon did appear immediately even when he hadn’t been waited, he stuck into her heart and then he was sitting there and tearing it from inside. Why didn’t Lucifer come?

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September 2013 (Monday)

The days went by as weeks and months did. Victoria got her project review with an excellent mark and felt down completely in seeking for Lucifer. She looked very bad, she ate almost nothing, just drank, mostly strong coffee. Her eye pits were almost seen, coloured in black by weakness. Her red hair, her flecks once having resemblance to the Sun and giving warmth to others died out and grew dim.

For a long time, Victoria hadn’t slept well. She spent most of her nights for seeking for Lucifer. She tried to get him in any way and that was possible only at nights as all spells talked over.

In the mornings Vic had to pretend to be a healthy, sane person. Her mother was prudish and if she noticed that her daughter wasn’t sure in her own mental health, she would treat her.

Of course, at times when her mum was at work, Vic was sound asleep, setting up, but it wasn’t enough anyway.

In addition, she had to look for a job, to pretend that she was looking for it. Moreover, she had to pretend to live and rejoice that fact. To tell the truth when passion and love settled in heart and soul, the desire for living became almost impossible. Everything that had been done, heard and looked, turned into one continuous suffering.

‘Hi, Vic. Being up long?’ mother’s call was sometimes worse than fire.

‘An hour ago. Eating now. What’s the emergency?’ Vic asked, chewing a miserable cucumber.

‘I’ve forgotten papers on the table. See them? Can I ask you to bring it to me at work? I need them.’

‘Mum...’ Vic sighed.

Vic had planned her day different. She was going to some book stalls near the MRHW. She had no time to rush over hospitals.

‘What mum?’ a severe voice asked. ‘You have no interviews for today. I need those papers.’

‘Fine. Fine! I’m there in an hour and a half.’

‘I’m in resuscitation department. Running the operation room.’

‘Ok, I got it. Order the pass for me.’

‘Already done. I’m waiting.’

Hating the whole world and most of all her mother forgetfulness, Victoria went to the hospital.

Vic hated hospitals and never understood how people could work there. The place was full of pain and desperation. People cried and begged there. A believe in supernatural was born and doctors’ help was forgotten instead. Too much suffering and worries. Her heart hurt too much looking at what was going on there.

Vic was going along the resuscitation department and there were ten or fifteen meters left to get the staffroom, when she heard a weak sound, a voice asking for something unintelligibly.

The girl turned to the open ward and from the first bed something strong got her by the hand. That was an old lady who had a healthy man grasp. Victoria was nervous, trying to free her hand, but the woman was holding it fast. Her whitish eyes, having no life in, pierced into the girl’s face.

‘You will take it. I chose you.’ The crone wheezed in a sepulchral whisper and squeezed her hand stronger, no matter stronger seemed impossible.

‘What’re you talking about? Let me go!’ Victoria was almost fighting with a “*weak and ill*” old lady.

The crone answered nothing. She lay back on the pillows, closed her eyes, kept on holding the hand.

‘You will take it...’ she repeated again and finally left the numb hand.

The old woman looked peacefully like if she had been sleeping and dreaming of something beautiful.

“*Crazy bitch*”, Victoria thought and ran out of the ward and made a little distance she turned out in the staffroom.

‘You’re fast’ her mum looked out of the case. ‘Vic, I’m really sorry but I gotta go, I have a planned surgery now. Leave the papers on the table, will you?’

‘No problem.’ The girl sighed in replay.

‘No offence?’ the woman stopped in the doorframe and looked at her daughter. ‘What’s up with you? Are you ill?’

‘No, I’m fine. I’m tired...a little.’

‘Damn it! The most terrible sound for any resuscitator!’

They both heard an argute sound line, affronting the ear. Olga Vladimirovna jumped out of the staffroom, Victoria followed her.

In the same ward the peacefully sleeping old lady’s heart stopped beating and the apparatus rang about it through the whole department, calling for the doctors to resuscitate.

‘Defibrillator, epinephrine...’ the doctors cries, nurses were rushing near, answering all the orders.

Victoria leaned on the wall, looked and worried about the poor old lady.

‘Time of death is 7 past 7...’ she heard the sentence after that you exactly understood the deepest and, perhaps, the most heartless meaning of the phrase “that’s all”.

The old woman was connected from the apparatus, the data was being written and the doctors were upset.

‘Sveta, call her relatives, they have to call to Pathology lab...’ Vic’s mother ordered to the nurse.

‘Olga Vladimirovna, she had no relatives.’

‘No one?’ The doctor surprised.

‘No one. Then shall I do as usual?’

‘Yes.’ Olga Vladimirovna looked at her daughter, ‘you shouldn’t be here. Go home. I’ll be at home after dinner. Thanks for bringing the papers.’

The girl took a deep sigh, turned around and left. She was a little bit sad because her mother had made a doctor way in life and she still kept on doing it. It was clear, that she did it successfully

and by now she gained a reputation of a God-given doctor. The only pity was that when people did their career, they couldn't do their family at the same time.

Victoria came back home dropped off to sleep...

In the middle of the night, she opened her eyes and with no understanding why, she started whispering something in unknown language.

Ebenus, opprobrium, conticinium, lacrimose, venetum, abominamentum, reflabriventi, basiator, zodium, horripilato, perfluus, flammosus, universus, gloria, tabifluus, damnatio, martyrrium, infidelitas, securitas, necrosis.

As she said the last word, the killing silence came. It was too silent so Victoria could hear her blood stream rushing inside. The breeze was blowing, also silent as well as everything was around. The girl was so much scared that her breathing almost stopped. You shouldn't be a wiseman to understand that something was going wrong. When everything that had moved in chronical way, suddenly got frozen in a paralytic horror was strange at least.

Victoria was in her bed and kept her eyes wide open, looking at the ceiling, with no idea what was going on. She was afraid of even moving.

'Within two months and a half...' she heard a heavy man voice, throwing out imperturbable power.

Despite of its heaviness and powerfulness the voice was hypnotically attractive and so pleasant as if it had touched a back with silky flaps. One could listen to that voice for hours, could fall in love with it and lose mind. But Victoria, on top of every sweet feeling, had an animal fear: the voice had nothing to do with Kharon.

'Yes, for two months and a half,' the man confirmed, 'I've been listening to you summoning me.'

Victoria finally pulled herself together and lifted up her head to look at the guest. The man silhouette was sitting at her computer table.

'So, I am here!' the man sharply bounced out of the chair and rushed to the scared to death girl. Victoria gave a start and covered herself with the blanket. A second silence and a laugh could be heard. The girl closed her eyes and whispered the same pray, the only one she knew.

'That's funny... "hallowed be thy name..."'

The voice was under her blanket. Victoria understood that it didn't come under the cloth, but she was sure for 380 percent that whom voice belonged to, was with her under the blanket.

Victoria screamed with all her might, flew out of the bed and tried to run out of the room. Near the door in thick darkness she bumped into a tall man and fell with crash on the floor.

'No, please!' the girl closed her eyes, trying to calm down the starting hysteria.

She'd never been so scared in her entire life. Even that first time when Kharon came to her she hadn't been scared so much.

Suddenly, through her closed eyes, Victoria felt the room getting lightened. It was not like during the day, but it wasn't so dark that you could hardly see your hand before you.

Praying, crossing herself, begging not to touch her, Vic opened her eyes at her own risk. Too close to her face she saw a man face. In surprise she stepped back, asking her heart beating not so fast. The green-brown eyes with barely noticed burgundy were staring at her.

Victoria saw nothing but those terribly beautiful eyes. About two minutes later the girl dared to range her eyes round the guest: light-brown hair was on his eyes, scarcely noticeable squint, his lips were curled in an engaged smirk, straight nose like if it was artificial. His face was too ideal.

The stranger was burning the girl away with his heavy staring.

Victoria was silent, hypnotized by his piercing stare. The drop-in creature was silent, too, carefully examining the girl's freckled face.

The man moved and Victoria shivered, before she could bat an eye his hand was touching her hear.

‘What an unusual ginger colour...’ he whispered seeing the strand of hair in his hand. ‘A setting of a dying sun... He was good to create such beauty... Why have you stopped whispering your funny pray?’

The man shifted his gaze at the girl, at her eyes. She didn’t move, still sitting on the floor with bated breath.

‘You...’ she said under her breath, ‘Are you an incubus?’

The man smiled, shifted his gaze at her quivering lips.

‘No, Sunshine, I am not. Have you been waiting for an incubus, while your lips have been whispering my name? Do you know my name?’ he bended his body closer to her.

Victoria smelled something pleasant and tender like if there had been no threat and nothing of supernatural. It was a smell of blooming nature, a subtle aroma of cedar fir-needles, making heavier the composition: the main one made Vic understand that the man in front of her wasn’t just a man.

The stranger moved to her at maximum distance, looking at her burning cheeks.

Victoria wasn’t breathing. Each move of the guest made her completely forget about her own physiology. She just got frozen and gazed at the man.

‘...Lucifer...’ she whispered gravel-voiced.

The man smirked and raised up. He looked around the room, doubled down on the chair near the table. Having grasped the one he settled in near the bed, where the scared the hell Victoria was sitting near.

‘Why are you so surprised, Sunshine?’ he asked, setting his ring on his left hand.

It was a big signet-ring with some patterns. But they weren’t just patterns. Even Victoria who knew nothing of runes, recognized that there were ancient, maybe unknown signs and symbols on the ring.

‘It’s stuffy here,’ the man looked round again and undid two buttons of his shirt. ‘Like in hell... Kidding. That is you, people, who think it’s an eternal sizzler there.’

‘Is that not so?’ suddenly the girl asked.

‘An eternal sizzler is on the Sun... But I’m not sure about eternal. We have a normal, stable conception of nature and natural science.’

‘You mean that you don’t fry anyone on the frying-pan with pitchforks?’ Vic allowed her to smile.

Lucifer gave her a rapid smile and came down to the girl on the floor, closer to her olive eyes.

‘Deuces have a lot of work,’ he whispered, staring at her neck, ‘there are pitchforks and frying-pans... Putting it in a metaphorical way, of course.’

He was so close to her ear that his lips were almost touching her earlaps. Victoria closed her eyes, for the nth time having forgotten of the oxygen.

‘But I know that deuces are not that thing why you’ve been summoning me for so many days... Tell me, Sunshine, why did you summon me? Why did you make me to push very important business aside to come to you? Why?’

‘You know it better than I do...’ Vic lowered her eyes, reddening in her face.

Lucifer dropped his head and smiled. The situation obviously made him laugh and the only thing he regretted for was why he hadn’t come before to have fun.

‘Correct me, if I’m mistaken,’ he coughed, having sat on the chair again. ‘You, a human child, fell in love with one of my subordinates.’

Victoria cast down her eyes. Lucifer stood up and walked across the room. His moves were so graceful, smoothing, slithering, impossible elastic.

‘Wow! Fell in love with... Do you know whom you are in love with? I mean what his activity is?’

Vic looked at the guest, at his light movements.

‘Kharon... he is...’ hesitantly she started speaking. ‘He’s an incubus.’

‘That’s right, Sunshine! You’re in love with the incubus! But he’s not just an incubus. He is the Sovereign Legionary Demon. He is the King of Incubus in my Kingdom and many legions report to him! It’s very touchable to fall in love with him. And stupid! But it’s not for me to say. What do you want from me?’

Victoria kept silence. She was staring at the floor and kept her tongue between teeth, turning around her thoughts, not knowing how to put it correctly to the guest.

‘Don’t hesitate, my child, you have such a rare possibility to be received in audience by me and I hope you use it sensibly!’

‘I’m sorry...forgive me’ Vic got up from the floor and to be on the safe side, took couple of steps closer to the door. ‘I want to agree a contract.’ She whispered, having mustered up courage.

Having heard “contract” in a blink of an eye, the man became serious and came up to the girl quickly. Being fully afraid of the man, Vic moved back to the door until she bumped into it.

‘A deal?’ Lucifer touched her hair again, set the strand of it behind her ear. ‘The young, blooming Sun, are we speaking about the same deal?’

The girl kept silence, looking at the man’s eyes. Red-burgundy colour in his green-brown eyes became brighter.

‘I’d like to ask your help.’ The girl said in a low voice. ‘What’s the price?’

‘What help do you want?’ he took her by the hands and led her to the bed, seating her on it. The Lord himself sat on the chair near to the bed.

‘I want Kharon... but not only like a lover and obviously not for a night.’

‘You want to make an idiot in love from one of my best friends, do you?’

‘Not really,’ the girl began to jabber, ‘not really. I want him as a man. I want love, I want him to be with me. But I can’t give you my soul because if I give it to you, I wouldn’t be able to enjoy that I would have...’

Lucifer rubbed his chin, sitting on the chair, looking at nowhere. He was perplexed.

‘A hell lover... Tell me, Sunshine, are there really so few men on the earth who would like to give you love that you’ve decided to go down to hell to get it and give something important for you? Maybe you should take a closer look, shouldn’t you?’

‘No,’ she answered firmly, ‘I need only him.’

‘Oh, Kharon... Seducer of female hearts... What should I do?’

The man stopped speaking and went into his thoughts. Five minutes later Lucifer began to speak.

‘Okay,’ he said, ‘What are you ready to give if it’s not your soul?’

Victoria dropped her head silently. She cracked her knuckles nervously, sighed, looked awry at the room interior.

‘I’m ready to give you my voice...’

‘Your voice?’ the guest re-asked in surprise. ‘I’ve heard it somewhere... Well, yes, it was in a perfect childish fairy tale about the Mermaid. It was so romantic!’

The man stood up and looked seriously at the girl. Then he stopped smiling and frowned.

‘Sunshine, you really want to give me your voice in return of I give you my best supreme demon-seducer, plus my friend to live on the earth?’

According to only his tune Victoria guessed that she had said a stupid thing.

‘What can I give except my soul?’ she carefully asked.

‘Bargain?’ the Lord was surprised. ‘That’s interesting. Come on, suggest me something else that you have except you soul.’

All that the girl could give, made Lucifer laugh. He brushed asides her suggestions one by one. Victoria began being nervous when she got that the deal was about to fall through. And who else but Lucifer could help her?

‘Fine. Thank you for making me laugh, but I’ve been here for two hours already. I have to go. Before I leave, I’d like to tell you something: what you suggested is not interesting for me. I’m not a collector and don’t collect people by their parts. I adhere to principles and follow blindly rules that I laid down. I can suggest you next: I’ll take your soul in two years and let your live on, let it be so. Victoria, listen to me very carefully, you will live on, and you will be able to have a company of Kharon within two years. After it I will take your soul.’

‘Why can’t you give me all my life with my soul and take it after my death when I am old? My soul can’t be old, so what’s the difference when to take it? Two years or seventy...’

‘Are you sure that you will face your seventieth? I’m taking a risk now by giving you these two years. If something bad happens to you, I won’t be able to have time to take it. It’ll go there where it should be, not to me. Plus, I can’t allow Kharon to be on the earth for so long period. My last word, Sunshine, it’s two years and after I take your soul and let you live on. So, tell me, yes or no?’

The girl knitted her brows. Two years were so little... 730 days, at the best case 731 if a year was leap...

‘Two years... and there will be no women in his heart, right?’

‘His heart? Incubus’s heart? Sunshine... You’re so funny. I give him a leave for two years. He will be here.’

730 days Kharon will be touching her, looking at her, kissing her... He will belong to her. Damn the soul!

‘I agree.’ Victoria tried to smile.

‘Let’s sum up. I let Kharon go here, make him free from his responsibilities in Hell for two years. In two years, I will take your soul and reserve the right to live on. You will continue living. Right? Is that what you agree with?’

‘Yes.’

Lucifer smiled and came up to the girl so close. Their eyes were staring into each other, the silence stole into the room. The man took off the ring which was getting bigger until it became a size of a standard cup bottom.

Vic was watching the odd attribute, getting nothing what was going on.

‘May I?’ Lucifer, scarcely touching her shoulder, put off the strap of her tank top.

‘What’s going on?’ Vic was nervous, covering her shoulder with her hand.

‘Sunshine, you have concluded the deal. I have to get the confirmation.’ He pulled her to himself, firmly holding her waist.

‘Get lain with me?’ she asked terrifyingly, slightly kicking him off.

‘No, my Me! Does it really look that I’m speaking about sex?’ he pressed her stronger and looked her shoulder blade.

He put his ring to the naked blade and Victoria felt the strongest agony like if red-hot metal was blowing out. It burnt through her skin, making her crazy.

Victoria struggled against him, trying to disarm the pain but Lucifer held her tightly.

‘No, Vic, you must get through it... Stand for it. I know it hurts but the seal has to appear on your body as a mark of guarantee that you owe me and our next meeting not far off...’

‘I can’t take it anymore!’ Vic was screaming, tying herself into knots. ‘It hurts so much! Please, I’m begging you, stop it!’

‘Doesn’t it hurt when you love someone?’ Lucifer asked, let the perished girl out of his severe embraces. ‘It’s done.’

Vic got on her knees, wiping away her painful tears. The man hunkered down near her and put on his ring on his finger.

‘Victoria... Nice to meet you. I hope it was nice for you, too. It’s the 3rd of September 2013. I am going to take you soul on the 3rd of September 2015, then the seal will be gone.’

‘How will you take it?’ the girl asked shyly, touching her shoulder.

‘You will see! Hope to see you soon, Victoria. It’s pleasure of mine to have a deal with you.’

Lucifer smiled and disappeared. Vic took a sigh and felt so tired as if someone wasted her. She barely had strength to come up to the bed to fall and got asleep.

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September 2013 (Tuesday)

Victoria woke up at the afternoon. Despite that several hours ago she seemed never to have strength, she felt she was new. She was fresh.

‘Good morning, Braveheart!’ she heard the voice which she had sold her soul to the Devil for.

‘Kharon...’ she whispered, having sat on the bed.

It was the same man whom she felt unexplainable hankering and desire...Love. He was sitting in her room near her bed.

‘I am surprised. Pleasantly surprised. And, certainly, your trick flattered me. I can’t believe it, you got Lucifer himself and made him pimp. Victoria, I am struck with your recklessness...’ he was blowing up her for some reason like if she was a little girl.

‘I just wanted to be with you...I wanted to extend a night as long as it was possible...’ She said quietly.

‘You did not even have that night how can you know if it’s worth of what you have done?’

‘I’m sure it is... Please, Kharon, let enjoy you within these two years. Besides, what have I done? I just gave my soul, not my life... But if there’d been some more talks with your Lord, I would have agreed to give my life.’

Kharon came up to the mirror on the case. He touched his hair, looking at his face unnoticeably.

‘It was a bad idea to your soul... But I am not the one who should make you change your mind, and it is too late. Right?’ Kharon looked sideway at the girl.

‘What do you mean?’

The man came up to the girl and with a brief movement of the hand he pulled off the strap of her tank top.

‘Yes, it is too late...’ The demon smiled.

‘What’s there?’ Victoria jumped out of the bed and ran to the mirror.

There was a circle on her shoulder blade, some mysterious signs were inside of it. Vic touched the tattoo and shivered with pain instinctively but there was no pain. No discomfort. It was like there had been no any burn, and Lucifer, neither. Besides, tattoo was black that was unusual for tattoos, in general.

‘What’s it?’ Vic asked staying near Kharon.

‘Lucifer’s mark.’ He answered as if he was telling a banal theme at a children’s matinee.

‘Lucifer’s mark?’ Vic asked mysteriously, touching her skin with her fingers.

‘Mark of the Devil, if you want.’ Kharon smiled.

‘Oh my God,’ the girl whispered stepping back from the mirror, closed her mouth with her hands not let herself to cry. ‘Oh my God... It couldn’t be... I can’t... I can’t have any tattoo. Mother will kill me...’

‘It is not a tattoo. It is a mark.’

‘Oh, well, that changes everything in a whole... “Mum, I’ve got a mark of the Devil, it’s not a tattoo”’ Vic looked at Kharon. ‘How does it sound?’

‘It sounds like you are going to accuse me of what has happened. Bad idea, Vic.’

‘How does the mark work?’ The girl stared back at the mirror reflection.

‘Easy enough. Every day it will be getting brighter and closer to the contractual performance, stronger you will feel it... When Lucifer takes your soul, it will be gone.’

‘Why didn’t Lucifer tell me about it? He had to enlighten me all the aspects of the deal.’

Kharon laughed. Victoria surprisingly looked at the man with no understanding what it was funny she said.

‘Lucifer had nothing to anyone. It’s first. Secondly, it’s the covenant and you’re speaking about the truth. I am actually surprised that he didn’t make a fool of you to amuse him and he didn’t stamp you out of existence in the first seconds of his coming to you.’

‘Could he?’

‘He could. This is the least thing that he could have done. However, my Lord is very diplomatic and has a sophisticated sense of justice. Well I think it is enough to speak about him. You have two years. How are you going to spend them? Will we be living together?’

‘No.’ Victoria couldn’t help smiling. ‘You’re gonna live separately. At least, the first time. I could stay at your place...’

Kharon was listening to the girl, unnoticeably touching her hand, followed her lips with his eyes, greedy for kisses...

‘... We will go for a walk...’

The demon imperturbably touched her lips and kissed the girl, clasping her in his gentle arms.

‘... Go to the cinema...’ she whispered while the man was kissing her neck down, making the girl already crazy with love mad.

Kharon carefully laid milting in his hands Victoria on the bed, voluptuously smothering her with kisses.

‘No, Kharon, no,’ the girl said, having stopped the demon. ‘It’s early. Too early.’

‘What does early mean?’ the man didn’t understand, lifted up his eyes at the girl.

He was surprised with her another refusal. What now prevented her from putting herself in the hands of what she was created for generally, especially when she had such a partner.

‘It means,’ having recovered her breath, Vic said, ‘it’s bad to be in bed just like this. I mean, what about romanticism?’

Kharon looked at the girl, trying to get the fewest thing what she wanted from him.

‘Romanticism?’

‘You don’t know what it is, do you, Kharon?’ she said sadly, getting up from the bed.

‘I have never needed any romanticism. Women never refused me and were always thankful.’

‘That was when you lived in their subconsciousness. Now you’re in reality and it seriously differs from what is going on in dreams... I want such relation, which can be only between a woman and a man, like a fairy tale but in reality. I want love, which will make us both crazy. I want passion, which we will splutter in with only one swallow. I want to get your feelings, your true feelings... I have only two years to help you to feel what to be a human means.’

The demon was glancing at the girl and didn’t feel anything but an animal lust. What feelings was she speaking about? Not all people were able to feel, and that naïve twenty-years-old girl was going to get them out of the demon, in face of which she fell head over heels in love with.

‘Then I am going to leave you, my light. I shall get in touch with you later. I have to think over your words and my role in your life. I have to find a flat. Now I am something like a human, aren’t I?’

Kharon smiled, lustfully glanced over the girl once again and disappeared.

Vitoria was alone in the middle of the room, believing in nothing. It seemed for her to be a dream. What Lucifer? What an incubus? What an agreement? You could think that it wasn’t real, but the permanent tattoo on her blade indicated the opposite.

Vitoria was staring at the streaming water over her palms, sitting at the edge of the bath. Was her act right? How terrible was that what she had decided to do? But the crazy love to the demonic creature didn’t allow to think for a long time...

‘How passed several hours which you spent with the awoken human?’ Lucifer asked, having seen a male figure in front of.

The Lord was in simple people café, thinking of a modern existence, drinking his coffee. He wasn't surprised when he saw his friend, Kharon, who sat to his table.

'I did not understand yet. Honestly, I understood nothing. Why did you not tell me that she wanted "*romanticism*" and "*true*" feelings? What am I supposed to do?'

Lucifer smiled, set his tie and make a big swallow of coffee to be awakened.

'You won't believe me, but she didn't tell me that she wanted "*trued*" feelings and "*romanticism*". I was sure that what she asked, you will give her like smoke. You'll have to play to ma'am.'

'How? I can't love!'

'Kharon.' Lucifer became serious for a second. 'We've concluded the deal. We are honest guys. The girl sacrificed her soul for your embraces. Be more affectionate with her, can you?'

Kharon looked at his friend, at his Lord and tried so much to understand what he was wanted.

'I am not informed very well of human relationship and romanticism. I do not understand what she wants... How did she manage to get you? What did she do? Billiards of people try to give you their souls, but you are deaf to their asks.'

Lucifer smirked. He stirred his coffee, looked into the appeared vortex and said quietly:

'I got into the game some time ago... In the café... It was the first time when I saw incubus be slapped in a serious way... I was interested in that girl. I started watching her, how she was falling in love with you. You couldn't imagine but every evening she was sat, holding a razor blade near her veins and text, getting ready to call you. Then she gave the idea, crying for god's penalty. They she tried to tie you to her. It didn't work. She found the hole: to call me. The poor girl couldn't understand that all spells, made-up by people, could not make me come. I was silently observing how the rituals and spells were being changed, books and attributes were bought, which guaranteed my coming. It was useless. Later my heart had mercy on her. I moved a witch up to her who was dying and ready to give her gift to someone. Thank to it, Victoria managed to conclude the deal. Be careful Kharon, she is a real witch. She's not able to do serious harm, I hope, but she can make you be nervous. Victoria doesn't know that she has the strongest power and I'm absolutely sure, she doesn't know what to do with it.'

Kharon lowered his eyes, looked at his friend and didn't know if he had to be glad or to be horrified.

'So, you did really shake up the dull days,' the demon said in a low voice. 'You moved a witch up to me, Lucifer!'

'I did,' he laughed. 'I'm sure you will be having two funny years. Now you're not going to be bored, my friend. As to romanticism and other feelings, I advise you to go for a walk across the city. Watch people. I'm sure that you will find another way to see them. You'll see men be in reality and how it's difficult to charm a girl who is liked.'

'Do you mean you have organized a two-year excursion in people's word and gave a witch as a guide?' Kharon smirked. 'Well, now I got why people sometimes give not a very good feedback about us.'

'My dear friend, I have to go, business isn't going to wait. I'll be waiting for you to drop me a line about your life among people. Rent a flat, work, if you want, go in for Victoria as a woman, have a rest from variety of faces in dreams... And yes, I know that Sunshine refused you again, burning with the desire. Win the ma'am's favour without penetrating her subconsciousness.'

'Sunshine?' Kharon surprised.

'You saw her red hair with gold particles. Freckles. Gold eyelashes. She's like the Sun. See you, my friend. Pay for my coffee, you're now something like... a human.'

Lucifer clasped his shoulder slightly and disappeared. Kharon was left alone, looking at the bill, the waiter had brought to him.

He still didn't understand if Lucifer exiled him or he really wanted him to be destructed from his many-thousand-years routine. One could go mad because of it. Kharon appreciated his Lord worrying about his friend.

As he was ordered, the demon paid for the coffee and went to study Moscow and everything that it could give him, being supported with only one thought – to try to be a human...

'Vic, go to shop, please, coffee is done.' Olga Vladimirovna hardly opened her eyes after hard night work. 'I'm going to work for 24 hours again. I'm at home tomorrow and the whole weekends. Now I can think of coffee only. Will you?'

'Sure' Vic nodded, putting on the gym shoes. 'Shall we go somewhere at the weekends? To have dinner?'

'No problem, I'll try to survive till the weekends.'

Vic smiled and closed the door behind her.

The girl ran into the street and dead air rushed to her nose. The sun and heat were not ashamed of September. Despite that it was 3 pm, there weren't a lot of people. It was the middle of the week.

Victoria came into the shop, greeted the acquaintance seller, glanced over a woman staying near him and asked for a tin of coffee.

'How's your mum?' the seller asked while he was waiting for the bill.

'She's fine. She's come from work in the morning, now she's going to work again. As usual there's much work to do.' She smiled.

'Give my best greets to her. Your bill. Your coffee.' The seller gave the goods to the girl.

'Thank you. Is this a new seller?' Vic nodded at the woman staying near the man. 'Good luck in future.'

The girl left the shop and bumped into Kharon at once. She fell with a plop on the road and blinked in surprise.

'I am sorry,' the demon was confused, giving her his hand.

Victoria stood up, picked the tin and stared at the unexpected guest with eyes full of love.

'What're you doing here?' she asked, feeling her cheeks getting burnt with red fire.

'I have bought a computer...ok, laptop, cell. What else? SIM-cards and I need your help. How shall I use these all?'

'What? You've bought?' she couldn't help smiling. 'Wait a second. I'll give coffee to my mum and come down to you. Will you be waiting for me here?'

'You don't want to acquaint me with your mum, do you?'

'Kharon!' Victoria exclaimed in confusion. 'Before it we have to make up a weepy story about your appearance in my life. That's why I'd like to have a walk across the city...to communicate with you.'

'I am waiting.' The man answered humbly.

He followed the girl with his eyes when she came into the entrance hall, he watched the wind disarranged her hair, the dark entrance side hid her out of his sight.

In an hour they were sitting in a café, Victoria was looking into the demon's cell.

'So, this is your phone number. That's mine. You can find them in your contacts. You can text. Here. You have to open your messages. Then find a necessary phone number, text here and send...'

The demon was listening, examining the device and rarely smirked. What a strange device! Demons communicated with each other by means of thoughts! And if you put it like that then they weren't very talkative guys. They absolutely didn't need cells for connection.

'It's a little bit difficult with your laptop,' Victoria took a sigh, opening the lap, 'Why do you need this one, by the way?'

'I saw the same on your table. I don't need this?' Kharon asked sadly.

'I don't know. Actually, if you work and study, then you do, of course, any laptop... Let me tell you in shorts how to use it. We're gonna create your e-mail account...'

‘Could you sit closer to me?’ Kharon put his arm around the nervous girl.

‘Closer?’

‘I need to feel your warmth, constantly...your human warmth...’

Victoria sat closer and...that’s all. She couldn’t think of any laptop. She was slowly going sexually mad because of his hand on her waist, playful fingers gently touching her. Her breathing was getting faster, the heart was beating like a drum, her thoughts were gone. His hot lips sank down on her cheek. His hands squeezed her stronger.

‘Kharon...’ the girl begged. ‘We’re in a public place... and you’re making me lose my mind.’

‘What’s about public places?’ the demon was surprised, for a minute he stopped kissing the girl burning with passion.

‘Such behaviour is unacceptable in public places. It’s a kind of intimacy.’

‘Oh, really?’ Kharon smiled. ‘I’ve seen lots of kissing couples in streets. They didn’t look antisocial.’

He fixed his lips in hers again, strongly embracing her body.

‘Excuse me!’ an unwanted waiter appeared from nowhere and broke the passion kiss. There was another man near him. ‘Should I bring the bill, or you would like anything else?’

Kharon was staring at Victoria’s lips, in her turn she was staring the waiter, trying to recognize him as a saviour or a cuckoo in the nest.

‘May I have a coffee with a syrup... any one? Cappuccino.’ She said, holding firmly the demon’s hand. ‘Are they auditing?’ Vic asked herself, watching the waiter and the man walking away.

‘What auditing?’ Kharon asked understanding nothing.

‘You know, people sometimes come to check how other people work. Do you see our waiter being followed by a man? He looks like he’s not satisfied with the waiter’s work already.’

‘Why? It’s possible...’ Kharon said aloofly, looking at the lone figure of the waiter. ‘Auditing...’

‘There’re lots of people here...and you wanna kiss!’ Victoria smiled, pressing herself to Kharon who was deep in his thoughts.

In five minutes, the waiter came back with the same man nearby, put the coffee and left.

‘He doesn’t even look how the waiter is working!’ the girl surprised. ‘He was looking into my eyes! Have you seen that? How can he see the people’s work in proper perspective?’

Victoria was indignant at the auditor’s behaviour and Kharon was getting gloomier with her every word that she said.

‘Whom are you speaking about?’ he asked, having deflected his attention away from his thoughts.

‘About that guy!’ Vic showed at the empty space near the waiter.

Kharon shifted his gaze at Victoria, then back at the empty place and suddenly he started getting what was going on and his gloomy thought was being confirmed.

‘Ah, okay...’ he pretended, ‘I see. Let’s go for a walk.’

Vic smiled, having said that first of all she’d like to finish her coffee. All that time Kharon was on pins and needles, being afraid of that Victoria would notice that she was the only one who could see the “auditor”.

Fortunately, everything went smoothly until the girl went outside.

They were walking, holding hands, suddenly a couple appeared before them: a guy and a girl.

The young man was sad, hiding his hands in his pockets, looking at the road under his feet. The girl had glassy eyes and walked right into Victoria.

‘Damn!’ Vic jumped away trying to dodge away and bumped into another man.

‘What?’ Kharon caught the girl into his arms.

‘Have you seen?’ Vic exclaimed offensively. ‘She was gonna bump right into me! If I’d not got away, she’d have been hit me... Nothing new is in this city...’

Kharon frowned, shot a look at guy, who was lonely walking away. The demon didn't know what to do that's why he just kissed the girl and, embracing her, kept on going.

'Are all people so heedless?' he tried to shunt the conversation on another topic.

'Mostly yes, they are.' Victoria calmed down. 'Where are you gonna live? Have you decided?'

'Yes, I've found a flat in the centre of the city. It's not far from Teatralnaya. Is there such station?'

'Right, there is! Teatralnaya?' Vic surprised. 'It'd cost too much...'

The demon looked at her with a blank stare. She explained him that to live in the centre of Moscow was a very costly affair and often beyond means. After that Victoria understood that Kharon had nothing in common with people but only his appearance.

Nevertheless, his appearance was like an angel's face. The girl had never ever seen such beauty...unnatural.

'Forget about it!' she smiled, pressing herself to him.

He was so hot, and his warmth was streaming through the young veins like hot chocolate; his hands were so strong that Victoria wanted those two years to be eternal. She was a naïve stupid girl not a complete idiot. She didn't believe in fairy tales.

'Tell me what you felt for Daniel?' Kharon wandered suddenly. 'Did you love him?'

'Why are you asking?'

'Your relationship lasted not so long... You broke up with him because of that hot blonde, didn't you?'

'I still don't get why you're asking about it. Well if you're so interested... I loved him. I loved him too much when we started dating. He was older than I, a presentable young man with hopeful perspective. What else did I need? Then I got that I needed long and eternal love. My love was killed by him. He was a man of a strong character and his disadvantages were opened one by one. Then you appeared and I... Jesus, I lost my mind. His hot blonde became a perfect reason to break up with no true explanation.'

'Do you think you love me?' the man stopped and stared into her eyes. 'Tell me the truth, Victoria. What do you feel for me?'

'What I feel for you is stronger than that I felt about Daniel. I want to live with you, live your life, I want you to be always near you, feel your hotness, strong hands, I want to be able to look in your eyes, where another universe is shining... I am lost in my own feelings.'

'Do people call it love?'

'No, I call it love. Love can't be the same for different people.'

'Yeah?' Kharon pondered. 'It's strange, at least, women, whom I spent their nights, had the same end.'

'You confuse love and passion.' Victoria smiled.

'Oh, dear, I think it's you who confuse them, that's why you have Lucifer's mark on your shoulder.'

'So that's what you think...' Vic looked in his eyes.

'I've just supposed you to confuse them. What if it was thoughtless action?'

'I have nothing to feel sorry about.'

Kharon went behind her. He watched her back, curvy red hair, T-shirt tight-fitting her waist, scent... That was not the same scent which France gave to the whole world. It was her natural scent which could be smelled by only the incubus, walking behind. There was something about that girl. Lucifer called her Sunshine for some reason. Victoria really radiated light associations. You would want to look at her and smile. That was what Kharon did.

The only one bad thing was that Kharon didn't compassion. Every woman made a declaration of love for him, after having had sex with him. All of them suffered. The demon got used to his admirers. The only thing about Victoria made him be surprised: she didn't make love with him, she

just foolishly fell in love with him.... He was afraid of thinking about what would happen when the first most impetuous sex happened.

It was about midnight. Victoria was in her room, Kharon was in front of her. They both kept silence. The girl was just gazing at him and couldn't take her eyes off him. Kharon didn't know how to act. He was a first-class love maker. None of other incubus could be compared with his skills. But Kharon wasn't able just to communicate.

'Have you ever loved?' Vic asked.

'What?' he asked in surprise.

'Nothing. Nothing.' Victoria smiled. 'You know, thanks to this day I've spent with you, that kind part of day and the evening, I got that you're not so scary. I'm not afraid of you anymore.'

'Victoria... ' Kharon bowed his head. 'I'm a demonic essence. There are no any definitions of some virtues in me. I'm, of course, never notable for cruelty as some of my compatriots, but not to be afraid of a demon is thoughtlessly. On no account I call you to be afraid, but there's a due apprehension. I wonder why I'm telling this to you...'

Kharon smiled and sat near the girl. She got nervous immediately, getting her cheeks red, trifled hair tips.

'I don't understand your confusion, dear.' Kharon took her hand. 'Why is it? What are you feeling now?'

'Desire...' Victoria gave a deep sigh.

'Desire?' Kharon smiled, touching her shoulder with his lips. 'Why are you resisting it? Why are you repulsing my endearment?'

'You can't make human relationship in such way.' Victoria ran her hands over his cheek.

'So, you chose a demon to make a human relationship?' the man was surprised, undoing his upper button.

Victoria seemed to herself to be about to faint because of indescribable pictures.

'No... Love did, not me. I've been still praying for God's mercy, but it seems to be senselessly.'

'I know about your praying, I can hear your consciousness stream. And I hear something else, also. Can't you hear it? Can't you hear your own inner voice that's calling in with your lust? They both want your too much correct consciousness to let them get what you paid for...'

Victoria was saying good-bye to her sense. It was so difficult to stay alone with yourself, when you heard a nice voice of a desirable man, the mind took to flight like a rotten deserter. Only words made the girl be in unspeakable ecstasy. She was about to die of eternal stream of euphoria.

'...Speak to me, speak...' the demon undid his third button of his shirt, kissing her fingertips. 'What are you feeling now? Just a desire?'

Victoria emitted a gently moan and almost waved her hand to reality, when she understood that she wasn't feeling any touches.

'You're a virgin...' Kharon looked at her with a smile on his lips.

Vic jumped up on the bed and started setting her T-short and hair in a hurry.

'What do you mean a virgin? I've had men...' she informed being offended.

'I know. You're a mental virgin. Love is a sacrament which should be being studied not for a year. I'm thousand years old and I've still been studying because it's very seldom when you can find the same women. Nobody told and showed you anything. You had just sex like milliard others, with participation of a woman and a man both. I'm ready to give you one more participant – love. Sex isn't a sex when there is a man, a woman and love. It grows into a high love and you're lucky to get it being awakened.'

Kharon grabbed the shocked girl showered her with voluptuous kisses. Victoria didn't have time to give a squeak. That's all, she gave up. Her strength failed her to say him "no". She didn't want to say it anymore.

Suddenly Kharon got frozen and stopped breathing for a while. That time was enough for Victoria to get back to reality. She opened her eyes and looked at her seducer in surprise.

‘What’s up?’ she worried, glancing at the confused face in front of her.

‘I have something vibrating in my trousers...’ the man frowned and got up from the bed.

With two fingers he pulled his cell out of his pocket. A quiet chuckle was heard. Kharon shifted his gaze at the girl: having closed her mouth with her hands, she was chuckling.

‘It isn’t vibrating any more... What does it want?’ the demon gave the device to Victoria.

‘It’s a message.’

‘From whom?’

‘Spam. People, automatic systems always suggest you buy something, to get a credit, to win a car... Different nonsense.’

The man looked at the cell and the girl with a serious countenance.

‘What am I supposed to do with it?’

‘You can delete message or forget about it. No answer needs. No share participation needs, neither.’

Vic rose up, went up to the frozen man and started buttoning his shirt.

‘I’ve got another interview tomorrow... I have to sleep a bit. If you’re not busy, we can meet in the evening. What do you think?’

‘Are you turning me out?’ he was truly surprised.

‘No. I’m giving you a hint that I’m tired. The last day and a half events exhausted me a little bit and made me be nervous. I have lost lots of strength to meet with Lucifer... Then you appeared and I lost my mind completely. I’m a human and it’s difficult to communicate with your world, feel something for you.’

Kharon knitted his brows and looked at the girl, carefully listened to her, trying to understand. But he couldn’t. Everything what he could get was that the girl wanted him to leave.

He knew nothing about relax, he knew nothing about exhaustion. But with diligence he studied people, trying to create a formula “if..., then...”. In this case he was successful, having remembered that “if a person is tired then he needs some rest”.

‘Ok, I see.’ He agreed without murmur. ‘What do I have to do before leaving? Just to disappear?’

‘No. You have to kiss me. Then to say good night.’

‘Is that what you do before sleeping? People, I mean.’

‘Well, not all. Only those do it who get on with each other at least... or beloved. Strangers won’t do anything like this.’

‘I see.’ Kharon smiled having embraced the girl. ‘I’m gonna just kiss you...’ he informed, having felt her being got nervous because of his touches. ‘And say good night.’

Kharon was walking in the city centre. There were lots of people and the demon didn’t know where to look first. He had to observe people’s behaviour in usual life. He had to find out what they did when they weren’t in bed and how they communicated.

He got into a night café outside the building at Nikolskaya street and started looking over couples.

And marvel happened! People were so different. They had everything different! Kharon was in perturbation. In the beginning when Lucifer indicated his will, the demon was sure that, “uh, people! A flock of lustful small fries! What could he be taught by them? What could they give?”

And there was a cocky demon, seducer of women’s hearts, was sitting and getting how common men won women’s favour. Why did Victoria reject him so many times when they had many possibilities to enjoy each other? What else was he supposed to do?

And certainly, he didn’t understand what the girls had in their minds. She got Lucifer from under the ground in literally way, gave him her soul, had Supreme Incubus in her hands for two years

and then said: “get out, I’m tired”. Being on the earth within 24 hours Kharon was philosophizing of women’s logic and its consequences.

A couple sat to the table near him: a young man helped his girl to sit. Kharon noticed everything: the young man pulled out the chair, waited for the girl to sit, then pulled in the chair. Finally, he sat himself in front of her. His eyes were full of love, gazing at the girl while being frowned she was looking over the menu which a waiter had brought. There was a small bunch consisted of three burgundy roses. Doubtlessly that was the young man who had given the flowers to the girl.

Flowers. Kharon checked the first feature which was often met along Nikolskaya street. If a girl was walking with flowers, there was a big possibility that a man walking near her, was her admirer. Also, she could walk with flowers after having dated if a young man didn’t accompany her.

Eyes. That was the second feature which Kharon paid attention to. Almost all the men were looking at their girls like if there were goddesses before them. They idolized their ladies with only their looks. Their eyes were shining. That was true! They were glaring! They looked so alive for the demon, that he was deeply thoughtful if he could look at any woman in the same way as they did.

Kharon noticed mentored voices and selfish looks of the girls. Due to their countenance, it was understandable that what was going on around, had to be. There was no door number three.

Smiles. One more feature that Kharon checked to himself. Most of beloved were smiling. Their smiles and thoughts didn’t always have connection, of course, but nevertheless, the men had their lips corners up, and the girls glowed with pride, smiling to everyone. Kharon liked smiling and that task shouldn’t have been a problem.

Holding hands in hands was what Kharon checked, too. What important was there in that way of touching? Why did men and women like holding hands in hands?

Kharon spelled out the information, in advance created an action plan in relation to his complicated girl – Victoria.

Could he say “my girl”? What did people put into this definition? My girl meant mine... Was he able to do with her whatever he wanted? Did he need to know her desires? Were “property” and “girl” equal?

He saw couples who frowned were waking separately. A young man wandered with his head low, and a girl walked, crossed her hands on her chest and looked with a vacant stare somewhere ahead. Kharon could read minds and gazes: she looked just because she had eyes. She wasn’t interested in looking over the night street.

What could make them be sad? What was the reason that they were walking like strangers? The demon didn’t know that strangers were ok for human relationship. Time mercilessly took everything that people were happy with. Step by step people were turning back from each other, stopping understanding each other, and one fine day they would wake up, look at each other and coincidentally wonder: “Who are you and why are you lying in my bed?”

The demon didn’t think of real complexity of human relations, of the crazy spectrum of their unexplainable feelings and murderous interventions of consciousness. While Kharon was observing the people possessed with passion, maybe, love, he tried to understand them at once.

Kharon put on every human movement. Could he do the same? What did he feel about the girl with Lucifer’s mark? Did he really feel?

Doubtlessly he understood he wanted to make love with her. She smelled of sex and despite of she was too young and awfully inexperienced, the demon felt a sexual moth-to-the-flame. Was it good? Was it enough for a woman? Sex in dreams was what he needed. He was never rejected, ashamed and always wanted. All his women waited for continuation in next dream, without thinking that they were going to die after the first night. None of them thought that the same thing could happen in reality.

Kharon was observing all people. He was listening to human speech and reading their minds. It was very often when speaking didn’t fit thinking. Sometimes speaking was beautiful and Kharon

listened with delight to it. But there were wild thoughts floating through the head about how they were fed up with all of that. And good thinking and better speaking were more seldom.

Kharon was highly motivated not to disappoint his Lord and the girl whom disrespectful future would be waiting for.

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September 2013 (Wednesday, Afternoon)

Victoria was going by metro, Kharon was holding her from the left side. She was going to be interviewed again, the demon was just accompanying her.

They both kept silence. Victoria got her thoughts out of her head one by one, while the strong hands were embracing her. Kharon was smiling, looking at the useless attempts to stop thinking of love.

It was a strange and inapprehensible case for him: in the beginning people had been looking for love, long and passionately, having tried lots of woes. Then some of them were lucky and found love. Instead of obeying, yield to love, they started driving it out from hearts and heads. So, what was the matter? How was it possible?

Victoria was looking for an excuse for herself: I've got an interview and I don't wanna look stupid.

'Victoria Drache?' a nice-looking girl appeared in big hall.

'It's me.' Vic smiled, rising up from the chair.

'Let me introduce myself – I'm Anne. I'm HR specialist for staff recruiting.'

'Victoria. I'm a designer.'

'Ok, Vic. Nice to meet you. Tell me about you a little.'

'I graduated...'

Suddenly there was darkness before her eyes. That wasn't just pitch-dark but a substation where one could wander eternally. Through the dull foggy curtains gray paths were seen, which were often crossed. It was a labyrinth. A terrible mischievous labyrinth.

The girl was alone between that darkness, enveloped with crossed paths. Breathing was becoming more difficult; her heart didn't obey her. As a result, she was turning around like a humming-top. She tried to find out where to go and if she needed to go anywhere. The girl ran following her nose. She stepped from one path to another, going through the black walls, feeling their slight obstacles, which were got over with no problem.

Fear was closer and closer, ready to strangle with its emaciated hands like huge pincers. Panic was on the top of its madness, wrapping the consciousness...

'Well, Victoria, I'm not gonna be cunning, I like you and... here is the list of documents that you need to hand in HR during next week. As soon as you're done your paper work you can approach. Agree?'

Vic kept her eyes wide open at her interviewer. To say that she understood nothing meant to say nothing.

'You mean, I'm considered for this job?' she asked quietly and unconfident.

'Of course, you are!' Anne exclaimed. 'Is it ok?'

'Yes, absolutely... ' Victoria was confused more.

'So, Vic, here's the list, make it done and you are welcome. Take my cell number, yours is here. If you have any question, call me with no hesitation.'

'Well, thank you. Can I go?'

'Yes, sure. Please, don't delay the document preparation.'

'Ok, see you.' Victoria slipped behind the door and stood in the hall, breathing heavily.

There was not a single soul. When Victoria had come there had been four people... But hall was empty now.

The girl looked at the watch and banged: her interview had been lasting for two hours and a half! How could it be?

Victoria remembered nothing. There was nobody nearby to explain the strangest adventures during the interview.

She had hardly gone outside before Kharon appeared. He was smiley, in a manner of speaking, merry. In contrast Victoria was dejectedly.

‘So?’ Kharon was interested, making one of human gestures: he took her by the hand.

The girl couldn’t help but smile. She was madly happy with that unexpected touch of her beloved man. His warm hand made her nervous system shudder, wake up from the longest dream.

‘I’ve been... considered for the job.’ Victoria came down to earth, fighting intoxicant desire for his hand to keep on its thorny way.

‘There was no doubt in my mind.’ The demon wickedly smiled.

‘Why are you smiling like this?’ Victoria was suspicious of something.

‘You’re so juicy inside...’ Kharon said and closed his eyes with pleasure.

‘I beg your pardon?’ Vic frowned more. ‘What does it mean?’

‘I’ve penetrated you during the interview.’

‘You... What?’ she stared like a stuck pig at the demon’s smirk face.

‘Put myself into you. I sent your soul in districts of the Abyss. To walk there. I took your body to help you with your interview. So how did you like non-existence great spaces? For my liking it’s a little bit twisted.’

The girl was listening to his story, being again unable to believe not a single word. Whatever Kharon told, it sounded like a passage of a book about witches or some mysterious serial. How was it possible to believe it? And of course, Victoria couldn’t. She was at a loss, trying to re-direct her fantasy in a positive way.

‘Don’t worry. Demons often penetrate people.’

‘Why?’

‘What does it mean why?’ Kharon was surprised. ‘Devour energy. If you wake up and remembrance of the black emptiness is before your eyes instead of a beautiful dream, you can be sure, someone has been devouring you inside.’

‘Are you kidding me now, right?’ Victoria still couldn’t believe.

‘No, certainly. It’s normal and frequent fact. People suspect nothing, feel amoebic snottiness and they are sure they’ve been breaking bulks while they’ve been sleeping walk.’

‘You mean you’ve devoured my energy?’

‘No, I’ve been interviewed. From you first words I knew already that you were going to fail the important meeting. Forgive my independent act but I decided that you needed help. How many times have you been interviewed? Two months? Threes? I’ve done it on the first try.’

The shocked girl was staring at the man in front of her. Did everything that he had told have any relation to reality? A score of different questions annihilated her mind.

‘Well, could anyone else penetrate me?’ Vic asked with caution, grabbing his hand.

‘Hypothetically, yes. Even the lowest ranks can do this, with no speaking about the greatest. But you don’t have to worry, my dear human. No one will dare do this within the nearest two years. Foreseeing your question why, I say: you have a great protection in form of me. So, you can sleep peacefully... or not if you, finally, let me touch you. Will you?’

His amber eyes were gazing at the soul depth of the girl. They were smiling, hearing her thoughts, full of self-sacrificing desire.

‘Have you ever raped anyone?’ a question jumped out of her mouth.

The demon smirked, shaking his head, firmly squeezing her hand and walked ahead. Vic was walking behind, calling her bad words for the wacky question. Suddenly the demon stopped and pulled the girl to him.

'I don't see such thoughts in your mind. Do you want that?' he asked being absolutely serious. Vic got nervous and shook her head, hiding her eyes and cursing out herself stronger.

'I'm a ladies' man in bed. If a woman wants what you've said, I'll do it. But I really don't see such desire in your thoughts, that's why I'm concluding that the question was asked just for nothing. Why?'

'I don't know... Generally, people like asking questions just for nothing. In fact, they don't care about answers. I asked it because you always ask, "Can I, May I, do you agree". Do you ask everyone or just me?'

'Oh, dear, you've touched a very complicated theme. Let's go somewhere and I'll tell you how it works.'

Without hesitation they entered the first met place where there were tables and ordered drinks and sat down to resolve range of issues.

'You see, human child, Hell is a very humanitarian thing. We never do against a human's will...'

'Except penetration, right?' she grinned.

'It's an operational need.'

The demon smiled in reply, thinking about that there was a powerful witch spirit sitting before him, that had been penetrated her. Penetration was a dangerous thing and even the demon understood it, but he didn't want to tell anything to the scared girl.

A spirit could penetrate by its own free will and it could do it by a witch's own will... Kharon didn't want to think about it. He perfectly knew what a witch's penetration would end in. It was a kind of curse! Witches often made larvae, cheesy spirits penetrate person whom they didn't like, and it was very difficult to get rid of. It was almost impossible.

Penetrated spirit started annihilating a human from inside step by step. In time the poor person couldn't be recognized. The young cheerful lively person became gloomy, wanted nothing melancholic who dreamt about only one – to die. Then his fate came into the game: the person died. Doctors left their hands in dismay, shifting the blame on psychiatrists, the last ones put the blame on an accident, a little bit on inadvertently and depression. As a result, no one was to blame by the way the person was gone.

Did Victoria need it all? The hell judicious representative thought that of course, she didn't.

'Why don't you do anything against a human's will? Is that because if a person suffers during or after a meeting with someone like you and he suffers just because he wanted to?'

'That's right.' He ran his kind but tired eyes over the girl. 'This is our law book. No one harms a human until he wants to be harmed. I'm not speaking about an ordinary soul and, as you call it, supernatural substance contact. In fact, there are many items and sub-items which no one knows and warns about. It's luck of the draw how stronger your guarding angel is. Actually, dear, it's very complicated. Our honour code is adhered. In your fairy tales God is good and Satan is bad. In reality in the first place God and Lucifer both are very sophisticated characters. They both have everything very complicated and interesting arranged simultaneously. For people they are like a Yin-Yang, but I know they have some features in common, and the strongest and most significant one is competitive spirit.'

'Competitive spirit?' Victoria was listening with genuine interest.

'Yeah!' the demon smiled. 'Excuse me... one more cup of tea and... pizza.'

Kharon shifted his gaze at the girl, frowned at her moving her empty glass around. He was reading her eyes.

'Seafood one,' he said with no breaking his gaze from her olive eyes, 'Add more cheese.'

The waiter nodded and left. Victoria smiled and lowered her eyes.

'How did you do this?' she asked.

'My dear,' he bended closer to her, 'Every day, every minute, every second I can hear scopes of voices and among them I can clearly hear your voice begging and asking me for something. Sometimes it unbearably begs to touch you... But I control myself... More cheese and seafood... Ok. I got you.'

Victoria didn't stop smiling. It was a fairy tale, stupid mystic but the demon had been on earth about two or more days. And the girl considered her to be the happiest person in the world. She had never felt such a big and unusual emotional spectrum. And she, of course, was completely and irreversibly possessed with love to unhuman, insidious and mendacious creature. For the whole time she never thought that she was a fool! She didn't consider that to be in love was stupid. No matter with whom to be in love. That was the society that labelled that being in love with a poor man was ashamed but being in love with a fat rich one was ashamed but good. Love didn't know what shame meant, the society did. Moreover, it decided and imposed its will. The society said who you should be in love with and whom you shouldn't. You needed to listen to it to survive in that case if you were not really in love. The society could impose its will only on those who had no sincere feelings, didn't understand that word could kill, no matter whose word was it.

The girl was bogged down in her fairy tale, in the demon's face beauty. She was going crazy when she saw his lip corner was getting up; being fascinated she saw his eyes devour her, how sweetly they screwed, looking her in a ravishing ecstasy; his hands' moves were smoothly, snaky and so gently despite of its male brutality; his scent... Oh Dear Lord, his scent! It had waved her already mad mind. It was impossible to describe it but having smelled Victoria just wanted the man to embrace her, pressed her to him, kiss; she wanted to feel to be protected; his voice sound was ravishing and waving, you could listen to in for many hours, streaming through the mind, enveloping the consciousness. And even when Kharon was silent, the echo of his voice had been still sounding without leaving for any second.

'Why is there a competition between your worlds?' Victoria tried to distract herself from thoughts about Kharon.

'It's a twisted, heavy... war. God always wanted to be good. He spoke well and beautiful, people believed him. They do still. But he didn't let them choose and spoke about his virtues, showing himself a box of god qualities. We were precipitated due to his will... We disgowned and now we have rights, including speaking. Lucifer is a strict Lord, he can impose someone to do what he wants but he will never make people believe in him. Lucifer always called for materialism. In his turn God always spoke about ideology, about love for someone whom people never saw. God actually doesn't like visiting his subordinates... Lucifer isn't fastidious to spend couple of weeks with you...'

'Does Lucifer live among people?' Victoria was surprised.

'He does, sometimes. When he's depressed, he comes to the earth. God is never depressed or, well, he just doesn't want to come to you. You've fatigued him with your non-god business. I don't want to show you all our "heaven" misunderstanding. It's been for many thousand years and we sometimes don't understand why this or that thing happens.'

'Uh... ' Victoria took a sigh, 'Difficulties are always unpleasant. So, do you often ask a permission?'

'Practically we do.'

'Wait! If you want to kill, will you ask a permission?'

'As I told you some demons lie.... If I wanna kill someone so to chatter and make him agree for his own death is not an unusual thing. If Abaddon is in front of you, he will never ask you. He will just tear off your head and eat it. In fact, Victoria, every spirit, demon and deuce has its own personality. Some will want to play with you, others – to speak, and someone just rips you onto micro particles and atoms...'

For a long time, Victoria was torturing Kharon with her questions about the hell structure. The demon humbly answered all of them and almost told the truth.

Suddenly he thought Victoria wasn't the worst company in the world. Moreover, he liked her. Certainly, he understood his nature inclination to women. He liked them all but only for a night. Kharon never communicated with them not before sex nor after. Victoria was the first woman of human world whom the demon had to spend time with. An idea crossed his mind that he was

interested in a human life puzzles, he wondered what a human went through, what he felt. Kharon had always seen people through dreams... He used to know that a dream was something that didn't exist. In dream those people knew nothing about sincere feelings, about shame and confusion. It was faceless existence in the shade of his own consciousness. Kharon was really interested in how much people could live into reality, forgetting about their own personality.

'I think it's my turn to ask, isn't it, dear?' Kharon opened the door, let the girl get in.

'Looks like this,' she smiled at him and suspiciously took him by the hand.

'Why do you reject my endearment?' he squeezed her fingers but kept the distance between them. If he let himself something more to the girl, she immediately lost self-control and no one could get any answers after.

Victoria looked aside. Here was it! The shame and confusion in one bottle, firmly twisted with each other. Red cheeks, puppy eyes. Kharon listened to her shameful thoughts and smiled.

'I told you... romanticism.'

'Yes, right, I remember... I just don't understand when its terms are over. How much time do people need for romanticism?'

'Kharon, you're asking such questions which unfortunately I can't answer. I'd like to but I really don't know. It's unpredictable... Just let's live and I'll be enjoying your presence... then others. Excuse me.'

The girl pulled the cell out from her bag.

'Hi, Vasilisa!' Vic gave silent Kharon an excuse smile. 'Yes, sure. What's happened? Yet? Meet?'

Victoria looked at Kharon again with blameful eyes. She was confused. Her friend needed to meet to share her feelings and emotions. On the other hand, there was Kharon whose feeling, and emotions Victoria wanted to know not less.

'Fine, when are you gonna be at Mayakovskay? Well I'll be waiting at the square... Kharon,' Victoria said to Kharon. 'You'd come with me, I will introduce you to Vasilisa. She is my... friend.'

'Friend?' he asked. 'A friend sounded very interesting from a person who denies friendship with her all might because she was betrayed by friends not once. Why do you believe people and call them friends again? Didn't it hurt? Did the disappointment strike you to the depth of your heart? I can see your remembrance... Does it here hurt when you're betrayed by these who you love?' He took her by the hand and put it to her chest. 'Too much hurts... I can feel your every neuron. Where do you get strengths to call anyone a friend again?'

There were tears in Victoria's eyes. He was still holding her hand pressed to his chest and the girl remembered the pain again.

Of course, he dug perfectly in her past. He clearly saw those people's faces whom she used to call friends then they betrayed her, tramped down her heart, having spitted into her soul. He moved her painful past again like pitchfork pierced through the dry straw.

Vic said nothing but looked at his eyes, being shocked with rushed memories. The tear was coming down her cheek. The demon was gazing the wet trace left on her velvet skin. He brushed away the tear and kissed her cheek.

'Don't...' he whispered, 'Tears are very strong particles having lots of information. You shouldn't shed. Any past, any bad past should be being thought of but not shed. You should thank your past for that today you're like you. Your friend has to come out of the second carriage already and can't understand where she has to go next.'

Victoria laughed, brushing away the tears. Kharon smiled, memorizing where betray pain located.

They both stayed at the square in fifteen meters far from the metro entrance. Finally, Vasilisa appeared from behind the doors.

Having seen her Victoria was glad and nervous at the same time. Kharon and she didn't make up a story of their first meeting... Vic didn't want to lie. But to say "this is Kharon, a man from Hell and I sold my soul to The Devil to get Kharon's love" wasn't a good idea.

A woman walking near Vasilisa cooled Vic a few.

'Vic, hi!' her friend shouted from far.

'Hi!' she answered and nodded at the woman.

She said nothing but silently looked at Vic in replay. Victoria shrugged her shoulders and switched over to Vasilisa.

Her friend was looking at Kharon. It was understandable. Kharon was very attractive. You just wanted to look at him...always and everywhere. His features would be good for everyone.

'This is Kharon.' Victoria introduced her company.

'Vasya..lisa.' The girl wasn't even going to hide her admire, desire to look and flashed envy. Vasya shifted her eyes at Vic, expecting her to explain the strange and unexpected acquaintance.

'Kharon and I... Hm...' Vic hesitated without knowing how to say and the most important what.

'Victoria is my girl!' the demon saved the situation.

'Well, that's great!' Vasilisa said having got nothing. 'So, you both will tell me your story in a café as I'm devilishly hungry.'

With no discussion they moved to the underground passage. Each of them felt strange at least. Victoria didn't plan to meet with her friend that day. Besides she was embarrassed because of the woman walking near Vasilisa. Vasilisa didn't introduce her! As there was no woman!

Kharon was thinking about his phrase – "she's my girl". What was he supposed to do to make Vasilisa believe him?

Kharon and Victoria sat at the table and Vasilisa and the woman went to buy meal. The girl was burning her "boyfriend" with her eyes.

'What've I done wrong?' he asked finally in a low voice.

'No, no, it's ok. I like what you said Vasya about us... Now we have to make up the love story...'

'Oh' the demon interrupted her, 'you can trust me and don't forget to play up to me.'

'Jesus, everyone has got crazy! I hardly bought my meal. God damn it. Well, tell me: what, when, how?'

The demon glanced at his girl. Vasilisa was staring at both of them, eating the sandwich with almost its cover.

'Maybe we'll start from you?' Vic asked carefully.

'Nope!' the friend shook her finger. 'I've got a usual after-three-months breaking up. But you... you've got something unusual. Where did you meet, Kharon?'

Vasilisa addressed her question to the man having got that her friend was shy.

'Three months ago, I was in metro... I saw a girl who was reading something in her notebook without stopping. She was leaned over her writings like a kite, having hid herself in her red hair. I was watching her and didn't move to scare her. Honestly, I was frenzied. There was something... demonic in the red devil. I couldn't tear myself away from her. After two stations passed by, I understood that I wanted that girl to look at me. No, I didn't want but I craved for it. Probably with the help of a thought power I made her eyes tear away from the papers and look at me. Her dark-olive eyes were staring my face for several seconds and it was enough for me to understand that I had to know her name and phone number at least.'

The demon stopped speaking and smiled. The both girls were looking at him, having opened their mouths. Vasilisa forgot herself to be hungry. Victoria was listening to a beautiful story, being a little bit upset with that the reality was different from what the demon was telling.

'What happened next?' Vasya asked with her mouth full of meal, after she finally remembered about it.

Kharon kept on telling his fascinating story. Victoria looked at the woman sitting near Vasya. She was silent. She had so whitish eyes. Vic had never seen such eye colour before. They were empty, terrible and colourless like transparent lenses sold for a half of a coin at a second-hand sell. The pupil was dirty with fat fingertip prints, the colour disappeared. You could hardly have looked at such eyes: you would look away because you'd feel sympathy or sick.

Victoria didn't feel quite herself because of the way the silent woman was looking at her in. Victoria felt like that because of the woman's paleness and white-pink lips, chapped thoroughly. Her lips were so dry that Victoria instinctively wanted to give water to that woman just to help her in any way.

'Who's it?' Vic asked, interrupted Kharon's story.

'Where?' Vasya looked around.

'The woman sitting near you. You haven't introduced us.'

'The woman?' Vasilisa asked in surprise, looking over the empty chairs near her.

Kharon was frowning. His face was so serious as if he was in the edge of discovery of something unusual. Maybe it was. Vasilisa smiled, put the rest of her sandwich at the tray and instantly pierced into her friend with her eyes.

'The woman, right?' she summed up. 'What woman? What's wrong with you, Vic?'

'This one!' Victoria said but not in such a confident voice as before, staring into the stranger's eyes.

'Listen, you started scaring me. There's no woman.' Vasilisa demonstratively got up and sat down on the empty chair.

It seemed like no one, but Victoria saw a greyish fog cloud raised up after Vasilisa sat on "the woman" and next second it came down again at another chair still near Vasilisa.

Little by little Victoria started understanding what woman she saw who no one else saw.

'You don't see her, neither, do you?' Vic asked Kharon with fear.

The man shook his head confusingly, taking the last hope from Victoria to believe her not to be an insane.

'You mean that you're still seeing her?' Vasilisa asked.

'No.' Vic said quickly and looked away from the woman. 'No, I'm just kidding.'

'I'm glad that it was your trick.' Kharon decided to say anything.

He, of course, understood more than others that there was nothing about jokes. He perfectly remembered Lucifer's words and was too afraid of that what was going to happen in future. The wandering witch near the demonic essence was bad for the witch and the demon...

'Fine.' Vasilisa exclaimed and turned her eyes to the man. 'You've met in such a romantic way, Kharon!'

'Yes,' the man destructed himself from his thoughts. 'From that very minute it seems to me that I've been faced love and I wanna it be nearby.'

Vasilisa mercilessly tortured the poor demon with questions which he answered let his amusing imagination be free. He studied to speak in reality, carefully following the girl's reaction. He was important to understand what she liked and did not. It was an attempt to put, immerse into a human psychology that the demon thought was something impossible and changeable. He spoke something funny as he thought he expected the girl to laugh but there was confusion and perplexity on her face. He tried to speak of serious things, and she smiled. What could be in her head? How to work with it he didn't know also.

Victoria wasn't listening to Kharon's stories. She was staring at what that no one could see, at what that didn't exist for anyone. She was observing the woman... the woman spirit which had been following her friend.

Victoria looked aside, called herself a crazy fool in her thoughts. What spirits? Could they exist? Idiotism! Vic didn't want to think any more about it. There were no ghosts, spirits and other dead.

Vic stared at Kharon trying to switch over to his unbelievable beauty.

Vasilisa was telling him about her painful feelings after she had broken up with her young man, whom Victoria even didn't have time to see. Her friend was talking about that life was unfair to mock her in such a way. She asked, when she was able to fall in love. She was getting through again and again.

Kharon was listening carefully and didn't understand what was going with that girl. The demon could hear not only what she was speaking about but what she was thinking about. And she wasn't thinking about her broken up and a poor fate but about she was unlucky because such man as Kharon wasn't sitting near her but near the red-hair witch.

The demon was sincerely surprised why it went like that. How could she speak one thing while she was thinking of completely different...?

He heard Victoria's thoughts who was clearly gave probably studied answers to Vasilisa, thinking about the woman with whitish eyes. At once she could be understood: how many times did Victoria listen to the same stories? How many tears did Vasya shed on her friend's shoulder? How many times did Victoria try to help? Then she got fed up with it.

There were three months of unrestrained passion, burning in agony love, languorous desire and that's all. After it doom and emptiness came. The feeling of loneliness... A lone wasp, striped, beautiful and bright... dead and covered with dust layer.

'Jesus...' Victoria whispered, taking her cell out of the bag, 'It's my mum...'

The girl looked up at the display: that's right, that was her mum calling her.

'Yeap' she answered with no desire. 'It's ok. It seems like I've got a job. I'm gonna prepare my papers tomorrow. Are you at home today? Good. Me? In the centre, at Mayakovskaya Vasilisa and me are drinking coffee. Late, mum. Ok. I've got it.'

Victoria was getting angry with every asked question, but her mother insisted on her question being answered by her daughter.

'Why do you speak with your mum in this way?' Kharon asked unexpectedly.

Vic looked at him, at Vasilisa and dropped her head. She touched the napkins, taking sighs but kept silence. What was she supposed to say? She didn't like speaking about her family atmosphere.

'It's complicated to explain,' at least she made herself speak.

The girl looked at the man with eyes full of tears.

Her mother and Vic's relations left much to be desired. They loved each other like other parents and their children did, but they didn't understand each other. Her mother wanted one thing, the daughter wanted absolutely another. For long time no one had listened to Victoria. Parents always had a great argument – "I know better because I'm older" and you could have nothing to do.

Olga Vladimirovna had been proving her daughter that she shouldn't get bad marks at school. She expected her daughter would follow in her mother's footprints and become a doctor. Victoria didn't want it. For some time, there had been flaming conflicts in their family until Vic entered the university to get degree in design art.

In her childhood her mother tried to make her daughter be in gymnastics because she had wanted to be the one when she was young. Victoria didn't like it and she got in dances.

That was what was going on for all her life. There was an opposition even about food: Olga Vladimirovna never made macaroni that Victoria liked...

At the deep evening Kharon was holding Victoria's hands and looking at her eyes, trying to smile. Vic was perplexed.

When Vasilisa left for home the demon, being tired of her gossips, breathed with relief. Victoria was watching the woman walking away.

'What time shall I come to you tomorrow?' Kharon asked to switch her thoughts over to him.

'I'm gonna get my insurance for work and... that's really difficult. Let's meet at three at the Arbat? I'll be waiting for you in the beginning of the street. Deal?'

'Deal. May I kiss you?' he asked for permission carefully.

Vic smiled and reached her lips to his.

'I wanna tell you something,' Kharon whispered after he had torn his lips away from hers.

'Speak,' Vic glanced at his eyes.

'Be careful with your friends.' The demon smirked in a sly way. A serious hint sounded in his voice, that made her heart shake.

'What does it mean?' Vic got nervous. 'Why are you speaking like this? Kharon!'

'Because I can hear and see what people think about... And today I've seen and heard...'

'What was she thinking about?' her heart was beating like a drum.

Kharon kept on smiling. He stopped embracing the girl and focused on her face.

'Sweet dreams, dear.' He stooped to her and whispered, 'at three at the Arbat, tomorrow.'

The man turned around and went in the direction of the park.

'Kharon!' Vic cried. 'Wait!'

But the demon rapidly walked into the darkness, covering with a dark shadow.

'Kharon!' Vic screamed again and rushed for him.

The girl was running so fast that she almost got under a car, crossing the street. When she came to herself there was nobody in the distance.

'Where did he get?' she whispered, stopped before the road.

It was silence around ...and only a thought: I don't have friends any more. "Be careful with friends" was a terrible warning! What did it mean? What did Vasilisa think of that Kharon decided to warn? Why did he do that? To disappear with no explanations...

Victoria was alone among the empty street and looked at 1905 station where life was still burning near.

There was her cell in her hand. Vic was phoning her friend.

'Vic? I've forgotten anything in the café, have I?' the girl got worried at once.

'No. I wanted to know what you think of Kharon?'

There was silence on the phone. Vic was looking at the frozen part of the park without moving.

'He... ' Vasilisa said, 'he's nice. Handsome.'

'Nice and handsome?' Vic asked quietly.

'Romantic.' The friend added.

'Did you like him?' Vic ask straight staring at a tree.

'I liked him as your man. You both look great! Don't worry.'

'I don't. I just wanted to know your opinion. Ok, I'm going to bed. See you.'

Nice. Handsome. Romantic. Be careful with friends. Victoria sat on a bench near the entrance. There was only one thought jumping in her head – no meetings with any friends. Plus, the demon's warning did its part. What was Vasilisa thinking while she was looking at the man whom Victoria had sold her soul for?

Vic closed her eyes. Morning. Maybe afternoon. It was her own place near her house at Bolshoy Predtechensky alley. There was nobody here. Suddenly a tall broad-shouldered man appeared with an insane mask on his face. With his big paws he shook the girl and asked for money. She cried and mumbled something not understandable through her closed with his hand mouth.

He drugged her behind the garages, threw on the ground and stabbed. Victoria screamed and rushed to help the girl but... she was back-strapped to do anything. She was a discorporate material. Victoria tried to catch the man's hand but her fingers, her own fingers went through his hand like in damn horror films.

No matter how many times Vic tried to catch his hand she did nothing and it certainly brought her into a gargantuan horror. The man kept on stabbing the girl one by one. With her last strength the girl cried that the man confused her with someone whose name was Yana. She begged him to stop...

Victoria opened her eyes. Darkness. Her entrance. There was nobody. There were cold sweat and atrocity in her soul.

The girl stood up and barely stepping headed to the mischievous garages. There was a body of that girl, whom Vic had seen in her visions, between the garages near the wall. It was in blood, half covered with a bag.

Having closed her mouth with her hand not to let herself cry, Vic moved back.

'Tell 'em...' she heard a quiet voice.

Victoria lifted up her eyes. There was a living girl's spirit near its body... Moreover, it could speak. It was difficult to get its words, but she understood. It sounded like a TV or radio electronic interference affecting its words.

Victoria shivered and ran home, praying under her breath. But the more she spoke the pray the stronger her tattoo hurt on her blade and the quiet voice of the cadaver affected by metallic sound didn't leave her head.

'No!' Vic screamed as she came home and slammed the door.

'What's up? What are you screaming?' Olga Vladimirovna appeared in the hall.

'Nothing. I've been speaking on the phone.' The girl lied along the way.

'You look very alarmed. Vic?' her mum called her and added some more light. 'You're pale... Are you ill? Vic!'

'It's ok, mum.' Vic answered finally.

'It doesn't look like it's ok...' Olga Vladimirovna was about to touch her daughter's forehead, but Victoria stopped her.

'I told you, I'm ok.' Vic tried to smile. 'Ok. Go back to bed. Work tomorrow?'

Victoria had to pull herself together not to let her mother be suspicious.

'Are you?' Olga Vladimirovna felt that something went wrong.

'Mum!' Vic screamed, stepped back from the door at least. 'I did tell you! Why shall I say it fifty times in a row?'

'That sounds that you're ok. I'm gonna back to bed. I work tomorrow... and please, don't scream like this.'

'Ok, mum.' Victoria smiled, closing the door behind herself in her room.

'Dinner's in the kitchen. If you're not hungry, take it to the fridge.' Her mother said after her.

'Yes, I will...'

A half of the night Vic was turning around in her bed trying to fall asleep. There was a real apocalypse in her head like a horrible war of thoughts. Everything connected with Kharon destroyed everything connected with the terrible vision. Her heart and soul wanted to think of her beloved man, his beauty and hellish existence, him in all his way. But her head tried to get what was going on to her exactly. What was the reason that spirits worried her? Was Lucifer's mark to blame? What attracted spirits to her? She didn't get struck by lightning and face apparent death. Nothing of those happened to provoke that vision...

... Or could she be crazy? A crazy fool who made up different nonsense, believed in it and pile of questions was breaking her mind at that moment. She had to believe none of those had happened. It was just her mind games.

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September 2013 (Thursday)

Having successfully completed her plan, Victoria came out of tax agency building. She was going along the street trying not to look at people, being afraid of seeing again empty eyes of lost souls. She was afraid of facing someone supernatural.

Victoria was heading to metro to get to Arbatskaya station where Kharon and she had agreed to meet.

There were different thoughts because of which the girl felt uneasy. Victoria had been already tired of thinking, but her mind kept on its weak-willed terror.

There was music playing in her ears not to listen to the outward things. She didn't want to listen to anyone not to get crazy completely. She was scared to feel her own mind leaving her body. Vacuum. She could understand nothing but perfectly see her own mind walking without saying goodbye.

What could she do? How was it possible to make her own mind to stay? It was terrible just because of one thought that she was a mindless cretin. A vegetable that was going to be fed on medicine in an asylum.

Victoria was in a good mind nobody had to know of her new ability otherwise an asylum would be exactly for her. Nobody had to know who Kharon was and where he had come from and what had been done for it. Nobody had to know of the meeting with Lucifer...

The girl was walking ahead with no lifting her head up, doing her bag right over her shoulder. She sniffled, tucking her hair behind her ears and talked to herself. She persuaded herself: *‘let's keep it in a secret?’*, *‘Sure, we will! It'd have been blindly to blub out about what happened’*, *‘Right, but you had to tell about the killed girl’*, *‘No, no, I'd be put into prison. What would I tell the police? A spirit of the dead girl came up to me, threw me a little bit in the past and I saw the murder in detail? That some psycho cut up carelessly the poor girl like confetti just because he confused her with someone else because his mind dived into madness? What if this madness will come to me? No, none of that happened...’*

Victoria dared to look up when she was near the very Arbat and bumped into Kharon with her eyes.

He was standing near the first building, looking up at something there.

He looked like an angel, looking at the heaven which he had been thrown down from for a long time ago. Here he was, wearing the black, having a bunch of bright blood-burgundy roses and a strange smirk, looking at the azure clouds.

The hot sun was gently touching his black shirt, feeding with its unmerciful warmth, tendering his face which was so unscrupulously looking at it and even didn't narrow his eyes.

The man saw nobody, he was interested in nothing but in the blue height.

Victoria was stock-still and staring the demonic creature of an unbelievable beauty and unusual behaviour.

There was a woman wearing a swinging dress in the wind. It was light turquoise colour and shining. The woman passed by Kharon so closed that beneath of her dress grabbed the demon's legs into its tender embraces. Kharon gave a smiling look at the smoothing dress over his trousers and then at the woman walking away. She looked at him back playfully and disappeared in the underground passage.

Victoria, staying near the passage, was waiting for the fabulous woman to obtain a better view of her. But she didn't appear like if she disappeared into a thin air.

Suddenly Kharon sharply turned his head in the direction where Victoria was, his frown took her, and he smiled. Victoria smirked, shook her head and went down to the underground passage. She was rushing to her beloved at full speed and even didn't notice her bump into a man.

What astonishment was when she understood that that man was Kharon who had been staying at the Arbat with no motion for a moment ago.

‘Are you running to me?’ he asked, embracing her.

‘How did you get here?’ Vic closed her eyes, pressing herself to him. ‘People can notice your sudden appearance.’

‘No, they can't. They are too busy with their life streams where they must dabble. You noticed me at once, didn't you? I felt your devouring stare at me. How strange it was crawling over my face, shamelessly trying to look under my shirt... Victoria... Your thoughts are luxurious, I'm looking forward to your letting them come out... no, capture the reality.’

The man kissed her. Victoria was melting in his arms, because of his curious kisses, of his words and whispers. She enjoyed every second that Kharon gave her.

‘Let’s have a walk, you’ll tell me how wildly you hated people in queue in the tax agency.’ Kharon slowly took her by the hand and led to the exit out of the passage in the direction of the Arbat. ‘Oh, I’ve forgotten,’ he stopped and stared at the girl at the loss. ‘I saw men give the woman flowers... Is it romanticism?’

Kharon stretched the bunch of flowers to Victoria. Finally, the girl had a chance to examine the flowers and she was shocked with the beauty of their petals. They were really of blood colour like if someone put a brush into a venous stream and then painted the flowers. The tips of the petals were velvet literally. There were specks of dust, weightless but visible ones of endearment which a human could scrutinize. The buds were very thick full of life energy.

‘Kharon,’ Victoria whispered being fascinated, unable to tear herself from the flowers. ‘They’re so beautiful. I’ve never seen such prodigious colour.’

‘That’s ok,’ the demon smiled. ‘These flowers weren’t grown up on the earth.’

‘What do you mean? Are they from Mars?’ Vic asked seriously.

‘Of course, no, they aren’t. I took them from the place, as you like calling it – hell. We have such flowers there. There are no such on the earth and it’s hardly they’re gonna be.’

‘The flowers from hell. Form the demon. Kharon, am I ok?’ the girl confusingly looked at her companion.

‘Absolutely. You believe in my existence, but you don’t believe in the world where I live, and such flowers can be? You’re so strange.’

‘Strange is better than insane. You see, that’s you and you know yourself all your entire life, you’re not surprised with yourself. And I’ve known different things all my life. I’ve been grown up like an atheist for my 20 years as well as sceptic and materialist. I’ve been laughing at others who believe for 20 years. My mother is resuscitation specialist. She will never believe that a dead body has a soul and it goes somewhere to travel. Of course, I feel stupid when you appear.’

‘I always had fun at the way people react to my appearance. I’m something unusual in their lives. But I don’t usually need to prove them anything. It’s different with you... I’m in your world with you, in your life... in reality.’

They were walking along the Stariy Arbat, hands in hands. They were like other millions over the world, they weren’t different. The demon in the shape of a man stayed unnoticed as the girl with her sold soul.

Kharon examined the world having no tiredness. He observed people doing that or this, dressing, combing, what bags and jewellers they had. He had been building the picture, immersing himself into a human life, trying to understand what social cell he needed to get to be comfortable.

Victoria was thinking of his warm hand, his fingers between hers, how pleasantly his thumb was gently and rhythmically touching her index finger and how pleasantly his finger could have been touching her body...

The demon smiled as he heard the girl’s thoughts. He liked the things she imagined, and he looked forward to having all those spilled out of her mind into reality.

‘Kharon,’ suddenly the girl stopped. ‘I gotta tell you something. Yesterday when you left, I saw a girl be killed...’

‘Are you speaking about your vision? I’ve seen everything already through your memories and eyes that happened to you yesterday.’

‘Then you have to know what it was.’

‘It was a vision of a past.’ Kharon shrugged his shoulders.

‘Do you think it’s ok?’ Vic couldn’t understand imperturbable calmness of the man.

‘Yes, it is. I see the same every day.’

'Kharon,' Victoria pressed to him, trying to get to his ear. 'What if I tell you that it is not ok to see any past in vision for people? We can't see past, present and future... We have no visions.'

'What if I tell you,' Kharon stooped to her ear and whispered in the same way as she did, 'that you can't know everything that happens to other people? The thing that you think normal or abnormal, happens to you, can happen to others and they're ok with it.'

Victoria was looking at his amber-brown eyes and getting him right. Kharon tried to explain in a veil way that that hadn't been the worst thing that could happen to witches. But he didn't want to tell her who she was. He didn't want to explain that the dying old woman managed to give Vic her gift under Lucifer's pressure.

'Have I calmed you down?'

'Yes.'

'Do you want to see my flat?' he smiled. 'I've concluded the agreement already... wait... Agreement of accommodation leasing for two years.'

'What an awkward hint.' Victoria couldn't help smiling. 'Then you ask me for tea?'

'Yeah, I can. I have tea. And coffee as I remember.' Kharon was confused.

He was serious and even offended a little bit with the girl's mocks and he tried not to look at her. Then Victoria understood that "wanna see my flat" meant to see his flat and nothing more. It never occurred him to blow the girl's mind with the help of such terrible human step to get her into bed.

'Let's go.' Victoria felt stupid again.

How could that be? Even the demon of sex sometimes thought of something else except sex and people were always thinking of it. They also tried to hang their desires on others.

'Why did you act so strange?' Kharon asked.

'Nothing, don't pay attention to.' The girl answered by a quick smile.

The demon stopped again and carefully looked at Vic's face.

'I've been like a young fellow, haven't I?' he asked in surprise.

'Kharon, stop poking into my mind.' Vic got more ashamed.

'No, dear, explain it to me!' he insisted. 'I'm gonna be on earth for a long time. I have to know all not to look like a young fellow!'

'Usually when a guy offered a girl to see his apartments, it means that most likely he wants to show only his bed and himself in doing. These are stereotypes. I've never met and heard anyone who really wants to show only his flat.'

'Oh,' Kharon looked aside. 'Did you really think that I suggested you get lain? Do I really look like a failure in your opinion?'

He was still smiling, embracing the girl, biting off her parts with his unbelievable eyes. She seemed to be going to blow up because of confusion.

'Kharon...'

'What?'

He was looking at the red-haired sun in his arms. Yes, he liked her definitely. He observed her nice smile and her smiling freckles. Her eyes. How much true happiness was there! The ocean of life. The demon heard her heart beating, filling with her beloved man's energy. Kharon couldn't believe were people really capable of being in love with someone else so much than themselves?

'You've embarrassed me.'

'Well here I've got some achievement at least! I almost got upset that I'm not your emotional experience.'

'You know about emotions better than me.'

'True. But first you have your crazy desire to touch my body, feel my lips on yours and you want me to undo my next button on the shirt, squeeze stronger your hand and all the other things in your heads... and the second thing is your behaviour in reality... you're like two absolutely different

people. You reject me and run away... I've started mistrusting my own powers to read correctly your mind. Tell me, dear, do I understand you right? Am I reading your mind correct?

'People are looking at us,' Victoria whispered and didn't let his hands get through where they wanted to.

Kharon stepped back. Victoria smiled, the passion flame was burning inside her, and the demon couldn't read it wrong. He perfectly understood everything, but he didn't understand the girl behave in such a strange way. Now it was people.

'Why are they looking at us? Don't they do the same?' Kharon surprised, having taken the girl's hand, kept on their way to the Manezhnaya Square.

'They do. They sometimes do worse things. As a rule, they exculpate themselves, why they can do this and why we can't.'

'Do you always eat out of people's hands?'

'No. I don't. I just don't like people looking at us.'

'Can you imagine how strong they hate us kissing in such a beautiful evening among the old narrow streets of Moscow? Maybe many of them want to get the same...'

'Maybe.' Victoria was adamant. 'But many of them are looking disapprovingly. This all is so intimate and shouldn't be observed by unfamiliar faces.'

Kharon stopped again.

'You surprise me! You, in particular! How now, dear? I don't understand! How can you speak about shame and confusion when there is so mind-blowing sex in your head that I'll hardly be able to see it come true?'

'That's just the point. I want it to come true but when I'm with you face to face but not to be observed by the whole Arbat street.'

'I got you. Got it.'

They came up to an amazing house architecture of which was different from the modern one. It was a building of Soviet Period, surviving nowadays. Looking at this building, you could hardly say that people lived there.

Kharon greeted the concierge and led the girl inside. The woman looked at Victoria with scrowy eyes, called her a prostitute to herself. The demon smiled after he had heard the label.

'On foot a little bit... On the third floor. There's no lift.' The demon warned about the forthcoming trip.

'I can stand it... just three storeys.' She smiled and went ahead.

Kharon opened the door and let the girl come in.

'This is my emergency accommodation among the people...' The man closed the door.

Victoria put off the gymshoes and went into the living room of a huge size. Kharon was following her with keeping his eyes open at her back of the head.

'Would you like some tea? You asked about it.'

'Yes, thank you.' The girl turned to him and creamed in a voice not her own, breaking into a run.

In her fright without seeing a projected wall, the girl flew into it with her forehead. Having fainted she fell flop in the floor and unexpected silence came out.

In surprise Kharon looked the girl lying on the floor, understanding nothing. What could frighten her so much that she wanted to run away?

He put her up and brought to bed. Here she was, unconscious in the night fantasy world. Just a second and Kharon would be there. But Vic was in his bed, defenceless, having a growing up clour on her forehead and with embryonic insanity inside. Her tender shoulder was denuded, there was an expression of fear and desperation on her face.

Kharon brought a wet, cold towel and put it on Vic's forehead. He hopped her clour was going not to be so big. He was confused with the denude part of her body. Despite of his lust and barely controlled passion Kharon adjusted her tee, having covered the part of nudeness.

He adjusted her pillows and sat into the arm-chair near, looking up at the ceiling. His thoughts brain storm attacked him immediately. He had a woman from the earth, reality and two years vacation. Would he be able to give to that woman all she wanted? Was he capable of that?

Someone cleared his throat in the living room. The demon smiled. He came out of the room, having closed the door behind and at once he found a handsome man at his table.

'My friend.' He said and stood up, 'I wanted to check up on you... To find out whom you've brought this bunch of lovely roses to. Is it for Victoria, I hope?'

'Lucifer, I'm glad to see you in such a good mood. According to the deal I have to make these two years gorgeous and if I am successful, they're gonna be ideal.'

'You're right, yes.' Lucifer was staying near the window.

'How's it going at home?' Kharon finally got tea. 'Would you drink something?'

'Oh, no,' the man turned to him. 'I'm on business here. It's been hampering me in my back two days already. You're my dearest friend. Be a good soul and look what there's...'

Lucifer pulled off the shirt and...

Many times, Kharon saw his Lord in such a way but every time his heart got frozen, admire covered his face, barely stand pain was in his eyes.

Lucifer was staying his back to him and there were huge white wings elevated. They were so majestic, powerful and Kharon imagined how much the master of the wings got through while he had coming down, Kharon kneeled more and more before his Lord with his respect and loyalty. You shouldn't look at the lord's face nor his eyes but only at his powerful wings. What a snow-white colour they were! In a dull weather, impregnated with melancholy they burnt eyes with their divine whiteness. If the sunrays fell onto the powerful wings any eyes were about to be blind. The flat and white surface reflected the rays, let them travel back to the space, depriving wretched persons from ability of seeing.

Of course, demons were stronger than people, but their eyes were also burnt. The wings had too bright light. It was like a lightning flashed in eyes but didn't disappear as it had to, and it stayed in the eyes, firmly having covered pupils with its merciless shroud.

There was eye pain pulsing in the head. Lucifer was spreading his wings. Having left his tea Kharon headed to Lucifer through the light, torturing his eyes, to get known what disturbed his Lord.

Examining the powerful spine, smooth roots of the wings, crying, the demon noticed a long feather stuck out, pointed into the waist. Despite its softness and gentleness, it was too hard. If Lucifer hid his wings, the feather stuck into skin, like a dagger, on the right from his vertebral column.

'A feather! There's a feather, Lucifer!' Brushing away his blood tears from his painful and blinded eyes, Kharon whispered. 'What do I have to do, it's not come out fully yet.'

'Tear it out and quickly not to torture your weak eyes.'

Kharon pulled the disturbing feather out, Lucifer smirked and got the shirt from the floor, hiding his wings.

'I'm sorry I got you blind again, but who would have helped me if it's not you?' he smiled, buttoning his shirt.

'Who?' the demon surprised. 'Anyone! A half of the earth population and the whole hell dream to do the same. It's honour, Lucifer.'

'Certainly, it is. I have no doubts. The point is that those who know about my wings shining can be counted on my fingers. And there will be never enough specks of dust for fools. They will be gonna be blind, writhing with pain. What do you think it would be an honour for them when their eyes are burnt like with acid?'

Kharon smiled and lowered his head, Lucifer was having fun as usual.

'What if it's an honour for them, nevertheless? Would you let them suffer for their entire lives in blindness?'

‘Oh, my friend, do I look like a sadist? There’s always a deal for such cases. Conclude. Take. Disappear. Besides, in two minutes the one opens her eyes who’s in agony when she sees only your face. If you have something to ask, then ask.’

Kharon was looking at the long feather on the floor and he wasn’t smiling anymore. His face became gloomy, enveloped with seriousness.

‘Why did you give her witch abilities?’

‘If I hadn’t then how she would have been supposed to impressed me and called in the end? I can’t allow myself to come to her after all that nonsense she did, having read internet and book ravings. But I hope you bear no grudge against me, right?’

‘No. On the contrary, I’m looking forward to getting trips and diversity. Shall I tell her about her new abilities?’

‘No, my friend, I’d like you to let her have fun, too. I’m sure your mission is gonna be fascinating not only for you. I’m observing your family also. See you.’

Lucifer smiled and disappeared at the very second when Victoria got her lungs full of air, shrugged with terrible memories and opened her eyes.

There was semi-dark in the room. The curtains were closed thickly, and the sun sat behind the house anyway. Victoria was staring at a big wardrobe along the wall. She was staring at the mirror and wasn’t blinking, being afraid of someone coming out of there.

‘Kharon,’ she whispered his name which she believed in.

The girl saw a saviour and defender in the demon. She believed he would never let anyone hurt her.

Vic touched her forehead – there was a wet cold towel fell on the floor. Feeling sickness and headache, Vic sat on the bed, kept on staring at the mirror.

The door hand smoothly went down, her heart squeezed into a fist, and it took her breath away. The girl was waiting for something. Kharon came into the room and Vic threw herself into his arms. She was too weak, and she was about to fall when the man caught her up, looking at her scared eyes and the mask of horror over her face.

‘You’re still weak,’ he whispered, hiding her hair lock came out behind her ear.

‘What was that?’ Victoria asked in a sepulchral voice.

‘What’re you talking about?’

‘About the man.’

Kharon glanced in surprise at the girl, lying in his arms. A suspicion crept into his mind what a man was there and why the demon didn’t see him. Holding Victoria in his arms Kharon sat down on the big bed, which size was more than standard one. The demon was examining her face in disarray, taking out by atoms threads impregnated with self-reproach, putting on the new feeling. The only thing he didn’t understand was how it was possible to have so extensive range of feelings?

‘With a loop on her neck. He was standing near the table then rapidly headed towards me. I was scared. He had so... empty and lifeless face. Didn’t you see him?’

Kharon nodded his head.

‘Why can I see them? What’s wrong with me? I’m insane, aren’t I? Oh, my dear.’

The girl put her cold palms on the warm, bristled cheeks of the silent man. She tried to feel every inch of his fabulous face, convincing herself of her more or less sane mind. Feeling his warmth running through her hands frozen with fear, she perceived it shoot at her capillaries, waking them up from sudden winter sleep, immersing them into a wonderful autumn evening. Vic touched his lips with hers. She closed her eyes. Here his warmth was... the fire which she had been looking for to get warm, understand that she was alive. No madness was left. Life was in full swing.

Kharon didn’t move but voluptuously answered the girl’s kiss. No, he didn’t turn into a sanctimonious person, he just fought and subdued his crazy feelings, he mocked his burning passion and desire to grab the ginger puny girl and despite of anything to demonstrate his many-thousand-

year experience, do something unusual and unbelievable in the middle of human abyss of ordinary and banality.

But Kharon didn't touch the girl with his fingertips. He was capable of waiting.

Victoria was getting deeper into the kiss, thinking that she was about to get her mind back but in fact she didn't notice her losing her mind. The demon's sensual lips played tricks with her mind. Her disobedient hands lasciviously and awkwardly tried to unbutton his shirt to touch his "divine" body. She wanted so much to feel a life streaming through his muscles into the black soul.

'No, no, no... If you don't stop me then I must do it...' she whispered, embracing hard the petrified man.

'Do you know how much strengths I need not to fall upon you and get known what to rape means by my own? I know only too well that you're not gonna let me go further than your childish kisses. Tell me, by the way, why?

'Ah...'

'Wait, I'll do it myself. Romanticism, right?' he gave her a poisonous frowned look, buttoning his shirt. 'We're studying what romanticism means. I remember, dear, I really do.'

Kharon got up from the bed and added lighter, adjusting his hair and collar. Victoria closed her eyes and fell on the bed.

'I'm so stupid...' she said quiet.

'I don't think so.'

'No, Kharon. There's something wrong with me. If I'm not insane then I'm stupid.'

'Your tea got cold, dear. Let me do a new one for you and you'll say me your thoughts and sufferings as regards what exactly deprived you from saying "yes" to me. You did really want to say it. I heard you begging your stubbornness and it repeated about romanticism. You'll say me in detail what I should be ready for while I'm advance studying the XXI century romanticism.'

Victoria hardly didn't laugh when she was on the bed. She couldn't still get over and understand that with no difficulty the demon penetrated her mind and absorbed all her thoughts and after it he threw them like lances into the girl hinting at "Look what your naughty mind was thinking of while your body was so irreproachable".

'You're insufferable. Stop getting into my mind.'

'Alas, dear, it's impossible. I can hear your thoughts as clear as your voice.'

'How can you distinguish them?'

'Like linguists... by the con-text.' Kharon smiled. 'Moreover, if I took everything that you think, like a sign to act, we'd have already had something that could be described in more than a book. And some of your thoughts, I'm certainly sure, you'd never ask to release. Unfortunately...'

Vic sat on the edge of the bed, trying to understand how she felt. She seemed to have come to herself, but the memories of that man didn't live her alone. Through the laughing and enjoyment, she was sending away the bad vision. Her all efforts were futile.

As soon as they came back to the kitchen, Victoria understood the man go nowhere.

'Kharon' Vic whispered, grabbed his hand.

He stared at the girl: she was pale, her eyes scared, her hands were shaking. Kharon unwittingly thought that the girl was about to faint with fear. To be on the safe side he embraced her.

Victoria was staring at a point not moving and breathing. Her fingers squeezed the man's hand seeking for defence and support. Her fingers were so cold and tenacious. Her heart was beating in a crazy way, her chest heaved pushing out the air. The girl was looking at him whom Kharon didn't see.

'Is he here?' the demon asked the girl in a low voice.

She nodded silently, being unable to tear herself away from the spirit.

'What's he doing?'

'Looking. Pointing at his neck...' Vic held back tears.

'What does it mean?' Kharon glanced at the girl carefully.

‘What the hell do I know!’ she sobbed. ‘It hurts so much inside me. My heart hurts. It’s empty and broken. I’ve been betrayed by someone. It’s exquisite pain, suffocative and pressing. I’m at the end of my tether. I can’t bear to live...’ Victoria closed her eyes. ‘A girl. She is very beautiful. Big light-blue eyes... like a doll’s ones. She’s happy and loves her life. Love. My heart’s full of love for this girl. My heart beats only because her heart does. I can breathe only because she does. How gentle and tender she is...’

‘Vic...’ the demon whispered, understanding nothing.

The girl hanged in his hands like a deflated balloon. Her eyes were closed, her lips were dry and a silent mask of desperation and sufferable pain on her face.

‘Victoria,’ Kharon called louder. ‘Stay with me... Hey...’

‘That morning, I’m coming into the flat. She’s with him. She is with him. In my bed. Pain. It hurts. Emptiness. Sufferings... She left me for him. A loop on my neck... I don’t feel pain anymore. There’s no desperation. There’s still emptiness... and peregrinations.’

Victoria opened her eyes. Tears were running down her cheeks like hails, her eyes were washy and lifeless.

‘Hey, dear... What’s wrong?’ Kharon touched her forehead.

‘I don’t know, Kharon...’ the girl looked up at him, weary.

He took her up at his arms and sat down on the wide windowsill, being worried that she would faint.

‘I’m sick. I have no strength to move, breathe. I’ve got such a feeling as if I went through an awful lot.’

‘I’ve lived with you all your emotions you got through. With you I’ve got through and felt it... But I don’t understand what it was. I feel almost the same every time when I see past of a person. But I don’t know what it was with you.’

‘I saw his past. By his eyes. He hanged himself because of her. Can you believe?’ Vic looked at the demon. ‘Kharon, can you believe how much he loved her and what she did? Poor guy. How much it hurt him... Why can’t you see him? You’re... very powerful.’

‘I work with people. With women. I don’t need to see the dead, stuck between two worlds. Lucifer can see all of them, but he doesn’t pay attention. He absolutely knows who of them are alive and who aren’t.’

‘Why can I see them? Is it because of the deal?’

‘I don’t think so. Honestly, I don’t know. I don’t understand how it works and what benefits people can have while they contact to the dead. What’s he doing now?’

‘He’s gone. He showed that he hanged himself in your bathroom and disappeared... Jesus I can’t live here knowing what happened here.’

The demon frowned, got gloomy like a thundercloud, pursed his mouth and shook his head.

‘Why are you looking at me like this?’

‘Don’t speak his name in my presence.’

‘Whose name?’ the girl was surprised.

‘His one.’

Victoria was looking at her beloved man with her blank eyes, trying to understand him a bit. Maybe he went crazy? Could demons be crazy?

‘Sorry, but I don’t understand what you’re speaking about.’ Victoria embraced him, pressed her forehead against his chest.

Kharon took a sigh and glanced at the street.

‘Stay with me.’ He asked quietly.

‘Here?’ Victoria doubtfully exclaimed in surprise.

‘Yes...’

‘There’s a dead man with the loop on his neck here...’

‘You’re with me, remember?’ he kissed her cheek. ‘He’s not a threat to you while you’re with me. I’ll be with you everywhere. Stay with me today.’

The lifted her eyes at him and realized that no matter how scared she was in that flat, she was unable to decline his ask. Her tongue didn’t obey her. It couldn’t say “no” anymore.

‘I know and hear you making yourself decline my ask. But you can’t. You can’t. Don’t tease yourself nor me. Here’s the phone, call your mum, tell a story that Vasilisa and you’re at her place... Tell her...’

Victoria did everything that Kharon told and under the weight of his kisses she didn’t make neither head nor tail of what was going on. The demon didn’t leave her alone for a single moment.

‘What’s that?’ Victoria jumped down from the windowsill, after she had noticed something bright and shining under the table.

‘Where?’ Kharon followed her with his eyes.

‘There...’

Vic pulled the long feather from under the table and occultly looked at it with the finding. The eyes hurt so much, the feather reflected bright-blinding light. Victoria screwed up her eyes, wiped them, but continued looking at the piece of unheard pureness.

‘Don’t look...’ the demon stopped speaking seeing Victoria carefully and pretentiously examining Lucifer’s part.

The girl pressed the feather to herself, closed her eyes and sat down on the floor. That’s all. All hell broke loose. Close-ups were flickering before her eyes. Time was running, pictures were flying, memories were going...

Beauty. Light. Tenderness. The soul is happy. Respect. Charming love. Obedience. Taste of rivalry, bitterness and insult. He’s not been understood. By no one. Falling. Long, heavy, insufferable falling. Everything is falling down quickly. An unheard speed. The light swoops down. Collision. Pain. Ground opened wide because of the collision, letting the light inside. It didn’t fade away but flared up, getting into the depths, lightening them. Stop. No awareness. Insult. Despair. Betray. Hatred. Exaltation. Subordinates and army. Admission of lordliness. Overall love. Respect. Pedestal. Equality... Indifference.

Kharon was listening with no moving. Victoria was sitting on the floor with half-closed eyes, firmly pressed the feather to herself.

‘This is the part of Lucifer...’ she whispered when she opened her eyes. ‘He lost it in the people world. He had to take it but forgot.’

‘You saw the history in pictures. You saw those things that even I didn’t see... Thank to you I’ve done it now... But no people can see it.’

Kharon stopped speaking. He didn’t want to tell that no one could live in a usual way having such knowledges. You would need to pretend a mentally deficient to get rid of other or to keep your mouth closed. To be silent all your life.

The demons weren’t a great expert of human lives but even he clearly understood that no good would go if Olga Vladimirovna heard Lucifer’s story which had passed through her daughter’s mind.

‘I wanna keep it.’ Victoria ordered, getting up from her knees. ‘Lucifer was here. When?’

‘Victoria. No...’

The girl smiled and reproachfully shook her head. She was fun with uncovered lie of the man.

‘I didn’t know that such thing could happen.’ The girl said, touching the feather, trying to look through her screwed up eyes. ‘I’ll keep it, Kharon. And...I’m not asking any permission. It’s out of the question.’

The demon was at his loss: he had never seen the same. Certainly, for all his centuries-long existence he had deals with witches. They called him into their beds. They knew what to wait and never objected to him. Some of them tried to do magic on him but they died. Their graceful self-confidence destroyed their lives.

But Victoria was different. The demon liked the girl. He liked her embarrassed inapproachability, her filthy mind, easy acts and golden smile, her hard temper and childish naiveté.

Kharon waited for Victoria to find out what abilities she had. He was interested in what the girl would do and think, if she would try to do another stupid thing.

Her fingers, soft and gently were touching Lucifer's feather, transporting all the feelings and painful memories into her soul. They hid. They didn't want to be discovered. They fussed and swarmed around like gnat-warms. But it was enough for Victoria as well as for Kharon.

The girl completely forgot about the spirit with the loop on its neck, recalling Lucifer's pictures, his burgundy eyes and fir scent. Because of understating his life, a pity and sorrow woke up for the Lord of hell. What a man with a loop?

That night Kharon and Victoria slept together. On the big bed. It was their first night.

She dreamt about a thick stand of fir trees and a huge eagle-owl which hooted so loud, looking at the world with its big yellow eyes. Half asleep Victoria felt unbelievable peacefulness and calmness. Her beloved man's warm hands were touching her relaxed body all the night. It was the first time for the long time when Victoria was really relaxed.

That night Kharon covered her body with light kisses. Every inch was enveloped with miracle caress. It was the first time when he felt everything in a different way because his life wasn't in a dream. He liked so much that new, improved feeling. The girl's answer was not tricked by a dessert of dream but deliberated.

That night they had nothing between them. Victoria kept on insisting on romanticism and flourished time of court. Kharon was amazed. All what he could do with this woman of the Planet Earth, was to be amazed.

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September 2013 (Thursday)

The month passed since Lucifer and Victoria had concluded the deal.

September was stealing up to the end. It was getting colder. But wagtails and starlings were still trampling with their little legs the merciless causeways and railway station forecourts seeking for food. They were waiting for people to give them some crumbs as blackflies had hidden already. Fortunately, not all people were mean and in a hurry. They feed plump birds and their fledgy nestlings before they flew away.

Leaves were slowly getting yellow and falling. In the silent park leaves were heard to come off the sleepy treetops and whispering, falling slowly down, dancing in light vorticity. Anyone would be amazed by their marvellous colour. There were so many colours and tinctures on trees, leaves and grass. Were there so many names for all those colours of autumn palette?

Of course, it rained. It rained in a soft, monotonous way but not torrential. Water whispered and whispered about something from the sky. Nobody listened to it. All the world had music in its ears, its neck is enveloped with the wires, devastating its mind with suffering hypoxia of artificial and non-existed sounds. The rain still whispered and whispered, the ground exhaled fragrance before to fall asleep.

For a month Victoria had job that she had got with Kharon's help. She like her job and Olga Vladimirovna kept on mumbling that her daughter had to be a doctor not a street painter. There were quarrels and scandals. The mother and the daughter understood each other less and less.

Olga Vladimirovna didn't want to admit the fact that her daughter was already an adult. She could be let to a life sea, sometimes giving a piece of advice if she asked for, but her mum shouldn't trust down throat.

For the month after work Victoria met her mysterious friend. She was going deeper and deeper into unheard love for him. She wanted always to see him. She wanted his voice to sound in her head and ears for her entire life. Victoria was filled with her desires for the demon. She always touched his

hands, examined his long, beautiful fingers, neatly trimmed fingernails, soft skin. His hands didn't face with household use not orally neither in dictionary.

Sometimes when she stayed with the demon at nights, Victoria liked looking at his fabulous trunk. She liked seeing his fingers move awkwardly, hardly being able to button his shirt and how quickly they unbuttoned it. She liked seeing them tear off cloth when he didn't succeed in undoing just one button.

His rarely laughed. Kharon nearly always frowned or was suspicious. He studied to live with people. It didn't amuse him. Besides after the demon had noticed that Moscow wasn't too much smiley, especially when it was about mornings, Kharon stopped smiling at streets at all, accepting it as ill-mannered and idiotism sign.

Victoria tried to explain that people in Moscow had an original opinion about laughing. Russian people didn't use to smile just for nothing; it was a bad behaviour, an imbecility wave. But it didn't mean that in Moscow laughing was tabooed. You just needed to find a good reason to smile and laugh and also convince others that you were mentally healthy, here was your reason to laugh. Kharon was difficult to understand it. He was easier to say good-bye to his smile than to adapt to changeable social mood.

Victoria liked walking with Kharon. The demon sometimes examined with pleasure and admire one or another historically significant building, being amused with human abilities: it turned out that people were capable not only of destroying but also of creating.

Vic often argued with Kharon about this theme. She wasn't fascinated by the modern buildings; most likely she was irritated with them. She was perplexed with obscure tendency to create phallic forms and structures. Where had all worthy architectures gone who had had perfect imagination and abilities to realize all of those into life? Why were there similar skyscrapers, spread all over the world? It was ok with the world, but did they try to fill Moscow with lean, tasteless and simple buildings everywhere?

Certainly, Kharon enjoyed both modern buildings and past centuries architecture. It was simpler for him as he had had no chance to examine carefully none of them before Victoria appeared.

They walked over the whole capital of Russia on foot in the evenings, speaking about everything what they thought of. The demon confessed that he hellishly liked Moscow, its buildings, structure and movement, frowned people who, despite their gloominess, were ready to help and smile at any time. He liked movement most of all. It was everywhere in Moscow: on the roads, under the ground, in the sky, in buildings and basements, on roofs and railways. There was nothing static in this city. The tartar representatives were fascinated with crazy Russian chaotic conditions.

No Victoria's arguments worked that to live constantly in turmoil was very difficult, it sucked out of you your energy... life in the long run. Moscow absorbed everything. It was like a black hole, swallowed up you. Few people could notice them be in the centre of the vile city abyss. That was because no one wanted to run away from it.

Moscow made most part of its population exist but not live. It managed to keep millions of people with its beauty and massiveness. Perhaps it was tired of us but due to its habit it kept on absorbing and sucking surrounding materials.

Victoria told about miracles of underground life in the capital, about true architecture that was covered under the strata of the ground.

The demon visited every metro station in the underground, having looked over great mosaics, statues, patterns, frescos... It would be nothing to say that he was shocked. He didn't suppose people to have done those. People weren't supposed to have definitions of beauty and ability to give life to beauty.

Certainly, Kharon couldn't help seeing female part of Moscow. He happened to be with people, but it hadn't been for so long and as a rule it'd been in Europe and its buttoned-up ladies. He had one-day relations and none of those women did even try to have a walk with Kharon. None of them

gave him a possibility to see also beautiful medieval London, pretentious Paris and laid down base of the Elfie Tower. He saw nothing but respectable ladies who were preoccupied with their own desires when they, hiding from their husbands, enjoyed sins of the flesh not only with people but with incubi. Before Kharon had seen nothing bad of it. The demon was had been created to satisfy the fair sex, what did he have to complaint of?

Kharon read like a neon signs, women's minds, their desire no one knew about. He liked their minds. Women didn't always think of sex: they had a lot of things to do and feel, which their minds were full of. They tried to keep everything in mind. They were in a hurry.

Every time Victoria was madly jealous when she noticed Kharon looking at one or another girl. He could fascinatingly smile at any girl that made Vic angry and confused. The girl said nothing to him. She silently got over her emotions. What could she say to him? She didn't even know if Kharon was capable of being jealous and what it was in fact?

In his turn the demon understood what to be jealous meant but he didn't understand well what he did so special that Vic was getting angry. It was enough to give a good look to any girl and he could hear her teeth grit.

Victoria almost got used to her visions and spirits. She saw spirits every day. She could see the same souls near her colleagues who accompanied them. Almost every person had near the deceased. Victoria didn't know why the deceased were among people. Fortunately, spirits didn't speak to her. They sometimes brazenly immersed her into their own memories, showing their past lives. Most of all those were moments of their deaths. Rarely they showed to her something good or other happy moments.

Victoria changed her mind about death. Now she was sure that no reason was to be afraid of death as there would be a life after it. Yes, it could be probably not as funny and happy as it was before, but it would be. There was a soul that continued to live, and it remembered how it used to be. Once it threw its corporeal skin it started remembering about what a person dreamt but while he was alive, he didn't get.

Spirits often showed their memories of childhood to her, wiping away tears of impossibility to be there again, embrace a young mum whom they pulled from with their hand and legs. Souls remembered everything.

Victoria still didn't understand what all that meant but she took it rather coolly. A man's walking – ok. A soul's walking near – ok. Nobody can see it but only I – ok. That was what the girl thought of it, assuring herself that she was ok. Vic made herself believe that everything happened to her was ok.

The girl sometimes could see lonely spirits. They followed no one and existed on their own. They slowly walked down the streets, percolated through the walls as if they were on their way to somewhere, they needed.

Some of them smiled but the smile was sad and enchained. If you saw such a smile, you'd never understand good or bad made the person smile like that. Maybe he didn't smile at all, but he had a trifacial problem... You could hardly believe such smile... there was no soul. It was pretended. And when a soul with such smile walked you overcame with horror: souls couldn't pretend. So, what could make it smile in such way?

At the beginning Victoria was uncomfortable when she met spirits and when they smiled walking towards her, it was getting worse.

At times the girl felt sorry for them. Once when Vic was walking about the Old Moscow, she saw a girl in a hurry and there was a spirit of her mother behind, trying to braid her hair in the wind. Here it was rushing to the girl, screaming something with its voiceless mouth, as it wanted to stop merciless time.

Seeing those pictures was very uncomfortable. Many times Victoria saw lovers parted by death itself. They shed bitter tears, raking up memories, pulling out the pain on the surface. But the beloved

was near! He was always near, touched her hands, stroked the head, smiled. But nobody could see and feel him. There was pain again.

It was worse when a soul in love with its beloved was following him in the rear, but he was already touching a new living person's hands, making himself love again. The spirit suffered. It remembered very well how it was and knew better, how it could have been, and it couldn't understand why all it happened. Why didn't anyone feel his touches? Why didn't anyone kiss him back? He busted his guts, yelling into the living person's ears about fading away love again.

Victoria's heart was blowing up because of those visions. What a cruel substance, maybe, material, ruled the world if some people were doomed to suffer even after their death? Sufferings that were caused by woe and incomprehension. Some of spirits didn't understand that they were spirits, that they were dead. In every way they tried to draw attention to themselves of the person who was important for them. But nobody, nobody noticed them. When someone like Victoria saw them, they tried to pass by with their eyes locked on the ground. Who would like the brand of insane person? Keep all your visions to yourself.

Grief wiped out all those who finally understood that they had been parted. Forever. The grief didn't look like that which living people could feel to other ones. It was stronger, more painful and poor souls were imprisoned by forcible grief.

Victoria often asked herself why she could see it all. Why did she have to see all those sufferings and be unable absolutely to help anyone? Because of her own inability she was overcome with horror. She had to close her eyes or stoop her head, say to herself that she saw nothing, heard nothing and she didn't care at all. She had to do what others did – just pass by. She had to leave the agony unnoticed in the middle of the great crowd. Victoria said nothing about spirits and ghost to anyone. She didn't tell about it even to Kharon. Nobody had to know that she was insane.

A month passed after the deal was concluded. If there hadn't been spirits, her happiness would have been unlimited.

Kharon studied to be a human, live like a human, tried to understand what to feel meant and what exactly he had to feel.

The jealousy issue was still opened: Victoria kept silence, the demon carefully waited until the time was ripe.

While Vic was at work Kharon studied people. He followed them everywhere, listening to every sigh and word said to anyone. He followed couples creepingly and got more and more surprised with speckled diversity of feelings. They were able to love, and it was important information for Kharon. His mind tried to understand how people loved. One thing was determinate absolutely: there was such couple whose feelings were the same. Someone loved too much to rave about his beloved and there was only his image before the eyes. The image was unchangeable and static. It stood to give a small chance, thin hope to look at the image in own subconsciousness. How strong the heart was beating! No. It was shaking and filling with life when the beloved appeared in life. The air stated walking inside the body, breaking up the breath. Pupils were madly black, dilated. They sucked into the face like big leeches. They sucked in, pulling out the image to keep it in memory. Adrenalin was injected into blood; a shudder ran over the body. Was it fear? No, it wasn't. That was love. It had gentle touches, almost impalpable but penetrated straight soul, fondling it, desirous to touch it. And the beloved allowed to touch his soul.

Kharon knew Victoria to feel all of those. Almost a month of his own being with people, he finally understood why Victoria had done that crazy thing, why she'd been looking for meeting with Lucifer and what for or whom for she had sold her soul. She loved him. It buttered him up. Too much. It was the first time in his life. It was usual thing for him when women wanted more. But there was nothing about love but lust. Victoria...

Almost every night with scandals with her mother, Victoria stayed with Kharon. Every night his fingers barely touched her skin, her body, ran through her hair, unbuttoned clothes... His lips kissed her hands and body. But there was nothing serious between them.

Victoria fell asleep being embraced by him, broke down with love and passion but there was nothing more. Kharon didn't even think that something was going to happen, but for sure he liked being loved for nothing. He was scared because of a thought what could happen to the girl's mind when they used the bed finally not only in frames of a place where they could sleep. Sometimes he thought in what way his true face would change the girl's love.

Kharon saw other couples in streets. There he and she hated each other. They were ready to kill, destroy but they couldn't live without each other. He was absolutely surprised by such couples' existence. None of them were neither demons nor angels but they had so powerful energy and invincible spirits. Maybe sly spirits deprived them from being together without scandals.

The relations with Victoria were far from the standards, fortunately. The girl was too complaisant and ready to do whatever the demon asked. She idealized and worshiped him. Kharon sometimes thought that if he had asked her to jump from a roof of a skyscraper for him, she would do it with no thinking.

Victoria texted Kharon to introduce him to Olga Vladimirovna and they both would be waiting for him at 8 pm at her place. For a long time Kharon was trying to find out why she needed it, but he wasn't capable of reading her mind on the phone. That's why he was on time before the door, contemplating the doorbell. He wasn't scared but he didn't get used to it. The demon could see through the walls Victoria putting on, combing her hair, her mother sitting at the table. Without coming into the flat he had already known that Olga Vladimirovna didn't like an idea of her daughter.

As soon as Kharon heard *the idea* in the woman's mind he immediately switched over her daughter, greedily picking her thoughts to seek for *the idea*. But there was nothing.

In thought the man came back into Olga Vladimirovna's mind and heard again "*Bad idea, Victoria, very bad*". Kharon frowned. Instinctively he turned out to be in Victoria's mind, having immersed inside fully. He was looking for the idea. Demons had an amazing vice – excessive curiosity. But a new disappointment befell him again. There was no idea in Victoria's mind. Being already irritated Kharon placed his hands at the door, burning through the erected obstacle by humans with his eyes, he immersed into Olga Vladimirovna's mind. "*What an idiotism, Vic... with your ideas. To leave your mother for a man... I don't like it.*" Kharon stepped back from the door and smirked. That was the idea Victoria glimmered. The demon was satisfied after he had found out everything that he had wanted to. He pressed the doorbell.

Suddenly Olga Vladimirovna gave a jump on the chair. Vic ran out of the room, zipping the shorts. Kharon had already heard her heart madly beating, joy being reborn into an indescribable admire, her soul wanted with awe to see the demon.

The door was opened, Victoria turned out to be in the beloved man's embrace. She closed her eyes, basking on his shoulder and tenderly whispered: "It's been a long since we saw each other last time. How much I missed you!"

'It's been a long?' Kharon smiled, firmly embracing the girl, looking through the walls at Olga Vladimirovna's mean face. 'Oh, dear, what do you know about the infinity? We were together last evening at the very place saying good-buy each other, embracing. It was 18 hours 10 minutes and 35seconds ago. 18 hours is not an infinity, trust me.'

Victoria was listening to Kharon's sentimental whisper and scarcely suppressed her admire and happiness. What could she know about infinity? What could he know about infinity being unable to love?

'It is, actually. Even a second without you is infinity. Come in.'

Kharon came into the flat, squeezing the girl's hand. Her mum was staying in the hall and trying to smile, pretending to be glad of a new acquaintance with her daughter's man. The demon

looked at the woman, greeted her with smile and stared at Vic. She held his hand and her happiness had no limits.

‘Good evening, young man,’ Olga Vladimirovna answered for greetings. Her voice was dry, stern and powerful. All the doctors usually had the same. The woman pretended easy to smile and be glade of that party. But the demon gloated as he clearly saw Olga Vladimirovna dislike him at all. He liked the beginning of the evening.

‘This is Kharon, mum.’ Vic introduced her young man.

The girl, being so blinded by unknown love, didn’t see that her mother’s amiability and smile had nothing to do with reality. She didn’t feel that real hostility from Olga Vladimirovna.

‘Kharon?’ she asked in a mentor voice. ‘What an unusual name.’

‘I was called different. Kharon is the name I gave to myself.’

‘How did your parents call you?’

The man gave the woman a playful look, dropped his head and slyly looked at Vic from under his eyebrows.

‘Parents?’ he grinned. ‘If I want everyone to know my name, I got from my... parents, I wouldn’t have used different one.’

Olga Vladimirovna took a sigh, making her displeasure public. Victoria still noticed nothing but only the demon’s magnificent face. He hypnotized her, extinguishing her mind neuron by neuron.

‘Shall we go?’ Vic took his hand.

There was a serviced table in the kitchen: snacks, salads and a bottle of wine.

The man sat to the table, Olga Vladimirovna was nearby. Her green eyes were scrutinizing the face in front of her. She was looking intently at the couple. The mother understood very fast what was going on in that relation in fact.

‘How did you meet?’ she asked, put the salad to the guest, saw her daughter holding his hand.

‘Four months ago, I was in metro. I saw a girl read intently something in her notebook...’

The demon retold word-for-word the story he had told before to Vasilisa. Vic listened to the fairy tale with pleasure but the same could hardly be said about her mother.

She liked the young man less and less. Unfriendliness was getting worse and worse. She did want to say to her daughter: “Break up with him, Vic, and run. Just run, without looking back.”

‘Do you have any intensions to my daughter?’ suddenly Olga Vladimirovna asked.

‘What do you mean intensions?’ Kharon asked in all innocence.

The woman’s face fell, her eyes filled with suspicion and indignation. At that moment she couldn’t hide her disappointment. Kharon had fun instead, as he enjoyed the woman’s evil thinking.

‘How do you see your future with my daughter?’ Olga Vladimirovna asked after she had counted to ten and took a sigh.

‘Very colourfully. Absolutely. Overpoweringly. Epochally. Pushy. Eccentrically. Extravagantly. Sometimes freakishly. Exotically. A little paranormally.’

‘We love each other, mum.’ Vic told in flurry of words, after she had noticed her parent to be agonizing and even irritating. ‘We wanna live together that’s why we’re here now.’

‘Live together...’ Olga Vladimirovna lowered her eyes. ‘Ok then Kharon, tell me about yourself: where you work, live, what your parents do. I want to know everything about you.’

‘I don’t have parents. They died. A long ago. I’m an orphan. I live in the centre of Moscow.’

‘Renting?’ the mother asked in surprise.

‘I am’

‘So, you have no your own place to live, right?’

‘Mum!’

‘A second please, Vic.’

‘I do but in another country. My own home is very far from here. It’s a diabolic distance, Olga Vladimirovna. It hurts me to remember about it.’

The woman was looking at the incubus like at an odious grub worm. She insanely wanted to smash it not to let be the bane of her daughter's life. But she was enervated to lift her leg to kill the maggot, creeping up to her girl.

'Well Kharon, do you work? Where? Victoria has told me nothing about you.'

'Oh, I work for well-known company, but I'm forbidden to speak about it. If you worry about my affluence,' Kharon clarified, having screwed up his eyes, after he had read the woman's mind, 'you shouldn't then as I am enough financially backed not to let Victoria be in a downtrodden.'

'We're gonna be ok.' Victoria tried to convince her mum.

'I like to believe...'

Olga Vladimirovna silently saw her daughter looking at the cocky man, putting him on a high pedestal. Vic had never looked at anyone before. Her eyes had never shone like this before. Love for that man, whom Olga Vladimirovna didn't like at all, was struggled out of her eyes.

The woman spoke with Kharon through clenched teeth after she had finally found something obnoxious and unpleasant of him. She was sure that the man of such face, such money, such body and speech couldn't be a good man whom her daughter needed. She noticed his exaggerated and caddish self-confidence, mischievous countenance, lofty mien... "*Big-headed asshole*" was what Vic's mother thought. All the evening she was waiting for him to leave finally.

Victoria was in the well hall, embracing with the man of her dreams. She didn't want to let him go.

'Let's do it tomorrow?' she asked.

'What?'

'Move to your place.'

'Yeah, about "move to my place"... I didn't hear you have such a desire. I was in your mind but there was nothing. Do you hide it from me? How?'

'Hide?' Victoria frowned. 'The whole evening I've been thinking that we'll go to you tomorrow... whispering to you to say my mum about it but you seemed not to have heard me and it's not about the move.'

The demon frowned, put his warm hands on her temples and closed his eyes. He easily came into her mind to look for her thoughts. There were many halls and greyness. It was like drizzling eternally, that covered visibility, occulting with its monotonous whisper every rustle and move. Kharon was running through the halls, seeking for anything, any sound or letter. Fortunately for him, he found. He deafly heard a vacuum whisper of invisible lips, asking for kiss...

'I can hear them.' Kharon said quietly, having pressed the girl's temples stronger. 'I can hear. They're asking for kiss. Asking for tearing off the clothes and examining the perfect body with my lips by inches. They're asking: "*I wanna go with you...now*" Take you? Now?'

Kharon opened his eyes and studied the girl. There were tears in her eyes, they were begging him to do it now.

'Go get ready for move. I'll be waiting for you here.' Kharon nodded towards the door and smiled.

Vitoria kissed the man and ran back to the flat to pack things she would need at first.

'What're you doing?' Olga Vladimirovna was staying in the doorway, having grossed her arms on her chest.

'Packing my stuff.'

'Where?'

'To Kharon. Where else.'

'I don't wanna you go to him. I don't like him. Are you listening to me, Vic?'

'Mum!' Victoria got frozen for a moment. 'We've discussed everything already.'

'Do you hear me?' Olga Vladimirovna raised voice. 'I don't want you to go to him.'

'Is there anybody who's gonna accept the things that I want?' Vic turned back to her beg, putting her laptop and cosmetic case into it.

'This is a bad idea, Vic. Absolutely bad.'

'Why? Why are you speaking like this? Why don't you want me to be happy?'

'Your happiness is what I'm speaking about...'

'Oh really?' the girl glared. 'I think you're speaking about your happiness, as usual. All my life you've been thinking for me, imposing your opinion on me. Sorry mum, but can I choose a man for me from my personal perspective? Can I like him, not you?'

'What the hell are you talking? That's disgraceful! This is his influence, isn't it? Daniel was a good man for you... But you're not interested in him. Of course, you look for freaks and peasants. What do you know about him?'

'I know about him enough!' Vic shouted, having grabbed her beg. 'I'm not interested in Daniel because you like him not me! Let me go!'

'What's there on your blade?' Olga Vladimirovna stayed in the doorway, blocking her daughter's way.

'Nothing.' Vic answered with a snarl.

'Vic!' an austere voice sounded.

'Tattoo!'

'Tattoo...what? Are you out of your mind?' the woman asked in a low voice, being worried. 'I'm asking you, aren't you quite right in the head?'

'That's all, mum. I'll call you tomorrow.'

'No, not tomorrow. I forbid you to go with that bastard anywhere!'

'Mum!' Vic smirked. 'I'm not a child. I'll go with him. Tomorrow I'll pack other stuff I need. I'm begging you don't be upset with me and try, just once in my damned life, to understand me and my feelings. I love him. Do you understand it?'

'I do, Vic, I clearly do, moreover I can see! You know what I see? He doesn't care about you and your feelings. I don't want him to break your heart.'

'You're the person who's breaking my heart now. Stop it, mum. Everything's gonna be ok. You can trust me. Is that too much to ask?'

Olga Vladimirovna sighed and let the girl in the heat of rage go.

'This door is always opened for you.'

'Thanks.'

Victoria came to the well hole and found Kharon smiling. He defiantly took her bag, instantly looking at her eyes.

'Your mother doesn't like me at all.'

'Yeah, that's true.'

'That's true? I think it's called hatred. Certainly, I'm not used to hear women hate me, but you know, this is a funny feeling. She's selfish. Is that what you call it?'

'What it?' Victoria smiled.

'When people hear and listen to only themselves. When they are sure that the sun goes around only for them. When they think that all the world will be waiting. From here,' the demon took the girl's hands and out them on his chest, 'Yes? The heart, and then into the mind, yes? Is selfishness here?' Kharon pointed at the girl's temple. 'Yes, it is. It's not in your hearts. Come to me. Closer. Closer. I wanna our bodies adjoin...'

There was a fillip and then it was darkness. A second. Another one. Bright light. Kharon's kitchen.

'How did you...?' Vic looked around.

'How did I do this? You've been preoccupied with this question for a long time...' Kharon took off his jacket to hang. 'Do you remember, dear, I told you that we don't surprise with space and time. But space and time are surprised with us. We subject them, not they. Why are you so surprised?'

'Why? There are many things in the world you can be surprised with having no stop. You're surprised with people, but you shouldn't.'

'Oh, dear, I'm in the human world for the first time ever.'

'Oh, I do, obviously, spend every day with incubi and know everything about them!'

Kharon smirked, studying the girl before him.

'Then surprise me with the joint living...' The demon came up closer to her and unbuttoned her jacket. 'Your mother's seen Lucifer mark. Why didn't she like, how you call, tattoo on you? What's the deal with it? I saw millions of people have tattoos.'

'True, but there are millions of people who think tattoo abnormality and ugliness for the entire life. You see, Kharon, the war between "good" and "bad" will never be finished. The only one problem is that in fact nobody knows what good and bad is. It doesn't exist but your attitude does, and it can be good or bad. My mum thinks tattoo bad and ugliness...'

'It's only for two years.' He said with a touch of sadness.

'You're so strange sometimes!' Victoria smiled. 'I know Lucifer to be your boss, you know him personally, you can call and meet him. But if I say to my mum that Lucifer left his mark on my blade who was a guest at our home and we concluded the deal, she will send me in an asylum. It's not bad already, it's impudent overkill!'

'Stupid people,' the demon whispered, pulling the unbuttoned jacket with his two fingers from the girl. 'You know almost nothing indeed...'

His mouth greedily came down on her and without stopping, went to the bedroom.

'Kharon...' the girl closed her eyes when she felt gravity-free and then the soft bed.

'You know nothing about the light that gives life to you every second.' The demon's pressure drew Vic crazy as she was drunk with the feelings. 'You don't know how much strengths and wishes it has to have to give life to the light... How much energy it gives you!'

'No, no, Kharon, please, stop...' the girl hugged the hot man too who had deftly relieved her tender body from clothes and there were only her panties left to be put off from the girl magnified with magic whisper.

'Then what can you know about the darkness? Ugh, dear, what?' in the semi-dark the demon with a wolf-grin looked at the white cloth, meanly hanging on his index finger.

That's all. There was no defence on Victoria left and her mind was about to betray her. The man was too pertinacious, too strong and handsome. She couldn't help wanting him... She couldn't help rejecting him...

'...None of you know,' his hot lips came down on her body, on her belly.

Vic gave a shake. She wanted to open her eyes, to stop charming and making craze touches. But she couldn't move. She was too much ashamed. But her enjoyment didn't doze. It penetrated her muscles, forged them with its resilient body. Oh, what an enjoyment! How was it possible not to love it? How to reject it? What a hard-hearted piece of iron you need to be to wipe away this omnibus enjoyment?

'You part everything into bad and good,' Kharon was coming down, making her heart almost jump out of her chest, 'You do it so blindly because you're injudicious barbarians...'

Teeth. It was a gentle, pleasant bite on her inner part of the thigh. The girl sighed and warped like a snake. His hot breath nibbled her gentle skin, bringing Vic above.

'What can you know about the truth?' Kharon hanged over the girl again. 'Tell me, Victoria. Tell me!'

She couldn't speak anymore. Her heart was about to stop because of the bliss of touches and kisses. The girl had lack of air to keep on living in that mad stream of emotions.

'I'm ready to show you the truth... It's not bad not good. It's faultlessly pure, spacious and all-consuming. I'm ready to immerse into it with you... right now. Vic, dear... Only one move separates us from the truth...' Kharon was whispering in her ear, tenderly biting her earlap, burning with his hot breath.

'Kharon,' Vic gasped, having wrapped around his body with her legs, 'I can't... I can't reject you anymore.'

'Ask me then!' he smiled. 'I can hear your mind speaking, screaming, begging me to do this move! But I can't hear your voice! Will you let me show you the absolute?'

'I will...' Vic breathed out. 'Thousand times yes!'

The demon smiled and did that move which Vic had been dreaming about and waiting for several months. She held on his hot back. Under her finger pressure the muscles screamed put and the girl did the same simultaneously, fainting. She thought that because of that tremendous splash of many hormones her hypophysis was going to die, her heart was about to stop, her lungs were going to stop to rich themselves with the oxygen. But no. She kept on breathing. More often. Shallower. Her heart went on beating. Stronger. Faster. Her consciousness was losing itself in her own head.

Time had stopped. The heavy darkness, that didn't know what mercy was, ran down because of the girl's scream, but it didn't leave. It lightened behind the window. It thundered. Why? It was late September... She was feeling so good that she was ready to die in that mind-numbing ecstasy. Insanity. It hovered nearby, saw her thin pale fingers torment the man's back. They wanted to rip the flesh, to squeeze and cut up carelessly something. To squeeze firm. Her eyes were closed. They didn't want to see anything. They didn't want anything in the world to distract them from that what was happening. His strong hands, having no obstacles, studied her body. Her lips didn't know what tiredness meant. He had so much life and energy in him. He gave her something unbelievable with his every touch. That was something that mind hid deeper than drugs and alcohol.

The storm flooded over, the strongest wind beat down the window with the branches, the weather came unstuck at all. It cried... Victoria screamed, ripping the flesh into parts. The weather screamed, ripping its flesh. The girl opened her eyes. There were huge shadows of wings on the ceiling...

'Oh, God...' Vic closed her eyes again.

'No, dear,' Kharon whispered, having wrapped her waist around with his arms. 'I have nothing in common with God.'

After he heard the name of God incomprehension awaked in the demon. He stopped to let almost dead Vic have a rest, to pump air in lungs.

'Why, dear?' he whispered. 'That's me who's leading you to the pureness. I'm giving you desirable enjoyment. Why do you say his name?'

The demon started again the passion wheel, firmly squeezing her in his arms, kissing her neck, hearing her heart beat, failed her breathing.

'I can hear your thoughts. They're so... passionate. Here you are as you are! Finally, my name sounds... And I like it... how modest it sounds... and I can hear it.'

'I don't wanna you stop...'

'As you wish, my Lady.' Kharon grinned, penetrating what was going on fully...

Kharon was used to hearing begging women and such kind of speaking. He liked being deified, begged to continue, embrace and kiss. Victoria wasn't the first and the last who was going crazy in the incubus's arms...

Almost lifeless, exhausted, fragile girl was relaxing after having had stormy passion. Victoria was lying on her stomach, arms outstretched. She was sleeping in a profound beautiful sleep which she could only dream of.

Her naked body bathed in the night, gently wrapped with a sweet scent. Kharon was nearby. It was the first time in his life he was lying near the woman after coition. He silently was studying the night ceiling, lights reflected on it, silence.

He didn't know what to do next, how to be, what she would say. Although about "*what she would say*" he knew the answer – she would say nothing. She would think, imagine, remember, confirm in thought that the night had been the best in her entire life, but she would say nothing.

Victoria hardly moved a little. Kharon surveyed her and rolled over on his side to examine the little horizon border. He smiled.

'I can't wait for the morning,' he informed, having found the girl in a stable.

Victoria was combing a black horse. It was glossy in the broiling sun, stamping with his hoof, stirring the dust beneath and shook its head.

'You're here...' the girl murmured peacefully, turning to him.

The black horse snorted and glanced sideways at the man. Victoria turned to the demon: she was so happy to see him, she missed him so much as if she hadn't seen him for several weeks.

In a second she turned to be in the passion and strength arms, giving herself again to the demonic creature, thinking of only the dream to be never ended.

While Kharon was destroying the sundress with barely noticeable moves, showing her gentle skin to the soft sunrays, Victoria remembered her having felt those touches recently. Recently she had almost lost her mind, answering for the dizzying, voluptuous kiss of the godlike man.

'My gentle, sagacious, human miracle,' Kharon looked into the girl's eyes. 'I have to report on my actions if you're asking me... in your mind. I must give everything I can give to let you understand sex isn't a two-minutes game between sexes, ending in a messy sleep in exhausted poses. Just recently we have let the huge ball of physical energy out... but in a dream I can do something more that's impossible to do in a real life...'

Kharon dropped to one knee before excited Victoria, slowly pulling down her panties...

'Do you confirm my arrogant, insolent invasion into your Edenic dream?' he whispered, touching her hands with his lips.

'Yes, I do,' the banal and usual answer sounded...

The alarm was ringing off in the morning. Victoria opened her eyes and wanted to turn the ear-shredding device off as she understood her not have any physical strength even winkle without saying about move. She commanded her brain to take the cell, but her hands didn't obey, in replay they cried that nobody understood and heard them not have strength to move.

Victoria tried to move her legs and it turned out to be worse. Her hands weren't able to do anything, but the girl could feel them, and she couldn't even feel her legs. She had no any. Her mind didn't know how to command to make anything obey.

'Kh...' Vic was strong enough to say the first letter of the demon's name while she exhaled.

The man couldn't hear her. He was so much interested in a noisy traffic-jam under his windows. There were multi-coloured and the same cars, screwed-up drivers, annoyed pedestrians. Kharon had no idea that Victoria was calling for him.

Suspicious crowded upon him when he heard the ringing off alarm for the third time and there was nobody in hurry to switch it off.

The man came quietly into the room. There was breathless silence. Kharon frowned, sat down on the edge of the bed and called the girl. There was no answer. The demon closed his eyes, trying to go into sleeping Victoria's mind but he faced a strange obstacle: there were twisted halls again. Empty. There were no thoughts.

The demon went around the bed. He had to see the girl's face right now.

Victoria was still lying on her stomach, arms outstretched. Her eyes were opened, and a tear was running her cheek. She had a soft whistle of her breath and feeling of fear, her heart beat weakly. Victoria didn't understand what was going to her, why she was incapable of taking a good sigh and

even of moving. The numb body that she didn't feel, made her panic. Could it be a blood-stroke? Blood-stroke had hit her was her the first thought. She was getting worse and so upset she could cry. She didn't want to live like this. Victoria appealed to the demon to kill her, but he was incapable of hearing her. He was walking about the grey halls in the girl's mind to seek for her mad thoughts, being unable to catch any of them.

Kharon looked at her running one by one tears and slowly he started getting what was going on. He couldn't help smiling and, of course, he didn't feel any sympathy for the girl.

The demon turned her on her back, took her hair away from her face and kissed her numb lips. 'Today is a day of my monologue.' He said, lying near Vic.

Vic could lie and move her eyes. Having seen Kharon smiling she felt uncomfortable. She looked pity and awkwardly while he dared to make fun of her when her body had broken down.

'Well, I'll start with myself.' He said, fondling her naked shoulder. 'I'm confused a little bit... I better say I'm scared of your strange system of twisted halls in your clear head. I've seen it twice already. It could have been nothing but there's a slight objection – I can't catch any of your thoughts. I can't read your mind but see your foolish halls and corridors.'

Kharon looked at Victoria's face: there were no emotions just frustration and indifference. Vice versa was about her heart and soul. She had been already scared of misunderstanding her condition after Kharon's word she got more scared. If he couldn't hear and read her mind, then he couldn't help her...

'Silent human child...' he murmured, still smiling. 'Do you know what the reason of your physical condition is now? Do you know why you can't move even your little finger and sigh deeply? I'll tell you...'

The demon lay on his back with his hands under his head. He saw the morning light line slowly stealing over the sleepy ceiling. The city was greeting the morning, meeting another new line of life like previous ones that had been yesterday, the day before yesterday and years ago.

'This is not a disease nor illness, this is tranquillity. Any sexual influence made a person let so much energy to fill a flat with... It's ok! It's ok when you have sex with someone like you... with a human. You chose another way and another man one. Knowing nothing about me you gave yourself up to the blind impulse that consumed you fully. I know this night was the best one in your life, you whispered it to me when you were capable of... As usual in any coition you, being in arms of extra-terrestrial passion, burst all your energy... I've taken it.'

Kharon rolled over on his side, having stared at the girl's face. Of course, she almost calmed down that that wasn't blood-stroke, but she was still afraid of what would be next.

'You'd have been alright if you hadn't been so... avaricious.' He smiled. 'I came into your dream... if you had told me the night before had been enough you would have moved, breathe and live as usual. You'd have been had a slight malady, tiredness but it would have been ok. But you, dear, couldn't resist your desires... I took the rest of your energy in your dream. That's why you're incapable of moving now. On the contrary I really feel groovy. I've never felt better than this. I can't still read your mind... Let me.'

Kharon put his hands on the girl's head and slightly pressed on her temples, slowly like a corkscrew, penetrating her consciousness.

'You're hiding them from me, dear... How can you do this? Ah?' Kharon kisses the girl with no taking his hands away from her head. He wanted with the kiss to distract her from blocking her thoughts. 'Many corridors and halls... Holes and ways in and out. Oh, here they are! Your intimate thoughts!'

Kharon closed his eyes and smiled, reading all her feeling. He read all her fears for her life, all the memories about the divine night having spent in the best man's arms, all her worries about her incapability to get to work, her original happiness that they were going to spend that day together with Kharon. She didn't care that she was like a statue lying with no moves. The main point was that

he was nearby, his velvet voice whispered in her ear pleasant words, his hands touched hers, and he chuckled at the youthful greediness.

‘Don’t worry.’ Kharon took his hands away from her head. ‘You’re gonna be ok. Soon. Honesty I don’t know when exactly but soon. Then I’ll take your energies again, won’t I, dear?’

The demon touched her hand, smiled and gently kissed her on the cheek and his arms came tight around her waist.

‘It’s an interesting thing, Victoria. There’s never been a woman who didn’t embrace me... Your physical helplessness and incredibly beautiful nudity provoke in me a new spurt of only now born feelings and emotions. I’m not gonna even read your mind to know if you agree or not... thousand times yes were your words...’

He took a corner of her quilt and flipped it off and started covering her body with the smallest kisses. The girl wanted to smile, take him into her arms, maybe laugh, because his light stubble tickled her body. But she couldn’t do anything. Nothing.

Suddenly Kharon stopped and with a sad grin, he looked at the girl’s eyes.

‘I can’t do anything.’ He whispered, taking his hands from her. ‘You’re weak, you have no energy that’s why I can’t do anything. I’m sorry but I have to wait for your energy stores to be obtained again.’

Certainly, the demon didn’t tell that energy of a witch was a thousand times stronger and greater than energy of an ordinary human. He didn’t tell her that a witch was more difficult to obtain her energy stores. That was the secret Victoria had to realize herself.

‘By the way, your job...’ Kharon took Victoria’s cell. ‘Shall I tell that you’re ill a bit?’

The man easily managed the task, having informed Victoria’s manager that Vic felt ill and asked for compensatory leaves. Victoria took a sigh of a relief when she realized that Kharon fixed everything.

The man turned on relaxing music, lay near the girl and fell asleep. Victoria, being tired to look at the ceiling, closed her eyes and got to sleep.

It’s summer. It’s 1948. Moscow. She is a travelling substance. She can’t see herself, but she can hear and see everything around. She has a great ability to move fast in space like a comet or asteroid in the depth of the universe. She has no obstacles: as a bodiless spirit, she can easily go through walls, buildings, fences, big factories and whatever else.

Here she is rushing through Moscow narrow streets. The streets aren’t crowded yet. The huge pedestrian areas are empty. There are almost no cars. One maybe two... the roads are empty. It’s so good.

Victoria is flying somewhere. She doesn’t understand why and where but some power pulls her as if she was in the middle of the strongest whirlpool. She has no possibility to resist spontaneous forces that are pulling her forward.

She turns out to be at Vagankovo cemetery. There is no one on the paths but only a young girl and walking old lady. The girl is staying near a grave of a man. The hill is new-made. The black ground hardly had time to get covered with dry crust, the flowers are still alive, come out with the buds, giving beauty to the dead. I wonder if they know they’re already dead, too.

The girl is near the new-made hill and has tears in her eyes. She carefully wipes them away with her palm, a smile appears on her face for a second, full of happy memories and desperation. She asks the questions which no one hears but only the dead and her own mind. It’s not a surprise that there are tremendous scales of hopelessness.

The old woman is slowly walking along the path, at a modest pace tapping with her walking cane made from some wood. She’s mumbling words, speaking and asking someone. The old woman lifts her eyes up and sees the grieving girl. Serpentine, fast and swift moves and the old woman, seemed before to be hardly stand on her feet, turns out to be near the mourning girl. The woman touches the girl’s palm with her bony and sinewy hand. It is wet because of tears...

‘You...’

Victoria opened her eyes. There was Kharon's face with an obvious riddle on before hers.

'What an interesting dream,' he whispered. 'You seem to be coming to yourself.'

The girl carefully moved her fingers and she was so happy when her limbs responded to the call of the brain. She couldn't help smiling.

'Kharon' she said in a strident voice, having understood her organism functioning again. 'I've been so scared.'

'Hush,' he put his finger on across her whispering lips, 'you have no need to speak now, to expend your energies to describe the thing I've been watching the whole day.'

Victoria looked at him in surprise. What did he mean the whole day? She thought she was sleeping for ten minutes. Victoria shifted her gaze at the clock and got surprised: it was seven pm. The picture behind the window told the same.

'7 pm?' Vic decided to confirm the seeing.

'No, it's 58 minutes and 32 seconds to 7 pm. You have to rest. Don't speak and move.'

'I need to go to the bathroom.'

'Bathroom?' Kharon asked in amaze. 'Oh, sure. Bathroom!'

He took her in his arms and went to the bathroom.

'I need to put on.'

'Why? You look beautiful. When finished your business, call me. I'll bring you back.'

Touching every inch Victoria was moving forward, holding the wall. Having done her business Vic got into the shower cubicle also by inches of the wall. The night before was too pleasant not to let any tracks which had to be washed off despite she'd like to keep them forever.

Water quietly purred, enveloping the body with cool freshness. Vic had to sit on the floor under the shower as she had no strength to stay but she had to wash herself.

Having heard water sounds Kharon came up to the bathroom door and closed his eyes. He wanted so much to read the girl's mind, understand and accept it. But her heard nothing. Unconscious instinct of the witch worked well, and the demon realized it. Not knowing Vic hid and closed everything that was on her mind from him. Witches were usually very powerful and strong creatures. However, to have any impact on incubus she had a little strength, but she would obviously try. That was for sure. Kharon didn't want that to happen. But he didn't also want Victoria to hide her mind from him. If he said to her that it was her exactly who closed her from him, there would be many questions which the demon wouldn't like to answer.

A loud crash distracted the demon from thinking. He immediately came into the bathroom. Under the water pressure, having leaned on the glass wall, the girl was sitting with a smile on her face. There were bottles lying around which had fallen with crash.

The demon silently and thoughtfully looked at the smooth legs, holding together, tucked up beneath the girl. The smile was on her face. The stupid one. Shameful eyes yearned him to see her nakedness and by leaps and bounds being afraid of it. Her fingers nervously touched the lying near bottles. Her wet hair, having become different colour, curled because of water, hid the upper part of her body.

Kharon was serious, quiet and pensive. Slightly screwed his eyes up, he was intently looking at the girl's smile. How much strength she needed to smile? To keep that smile? Why did she do that if she couldn't almost stand it? She had no energy, it'd been taken away. The died-out site of life fire was still in her eyes, her fingers shook, the heart beat quiet, she had barely energy to take a sigh to fill her lungs with air... And now she was wasting energy to smile.

'Why are you...?' Victoria closed her eyes, made a pause, exhaled and whispered again, 'looking at me... like this?'

Her question didn't sound like a question. If there'd been no "why" Kharon would hardly have got that Vic had asked something.

‘You’re strange people. I’m getting more and more interested – why? Why are you smiling when your heart’s crying?’

Kharon squatted down near the girl. She closed her eyes and was about to faint again, relaxing her body as her strength failed her quickly. But she didn’t wipe her smile away.

‘Because it’s always more pleasantly to look at a smile,’ she muttered, throwing back her head, gasping.

Kharon kept silence. He didn’t understand. Who carried what others like? Why did she need to think of it?

‘You have to think of obtaining your energy stores not of smiling. It’d be better and... more logically.’

‘I don’t think...’ a deep inhale. ‘I just wanna smile... at you. Wash me, please, I’m exhausted.’

The girl stopped moving her fingers and got frozen. Then her smile died on her lips. She seemed not to be breathing, looked like a dead. Kharon took the washing spray and directed the gentle water trickles on the weak girl. The goosebumps appeared at once, but Victoria didn’t shiver.

The man carefully raised slightly her head to kiss her wet lips. They were lifeless fully. He wetted her red, grown dim hair again.

‘Every time I touch your head, by force of will I can hear your thoughts streaming in your head... I can hear you want to smile because you’re happy with what’s going on now... But you have no energy to do what you want to. I feel your thoughts speaking impudently and unwittingly, begging me to lay your body in arms of fondling... now. Tell me, Victoria, are you... out of your mind?’

Having heard the question Vic tried to open her eyes, move somehow, deny persecution. But all was for nothing.

‘No, don’t. Don’t speak.’ Kharon stroked her with water then put his hand on her forehead. ‘No, dear, I didn’t mind offending you. Don’t take it so hard. I’m just trying to understand you.’

The demon didn’t take his hand away from her head, reading all the information like if he had been blind touched with his fingers Braille script in a speechless book. Her thoughts were so pleasant for him! He loved her thinking about him, he liked that she liked him. He just liked... But Kharon even didn’t try to get that unusual feeling of love. He had never felt nothing of it and in fact he didn’t understand why he needed it.

Kharon brought the weak girl in the room and got her to bed. For a long time, he was sitting near her, examining the night coming down, made him deep into his thoughts.

He glanced at the sleeping girl and, having grinned, he left home. His interest in everything around him didn’t leave him alone. He wanted to study people...

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October 2013 (Friday)

A week later after the night spend with almost the Devil Victoria finally felt healthy, found energies and easiness. That was Friday. Victoria was at work, tried to project a new design of company product.

She drew with not stopping, examined fine details and dashes, having no desire to think about anything. She had a well-drawn sketch when there was a small envelop in the display corner.

Vic stopped drawing, having torn herself away from the sketch and looked at the blinked envelop.

‘*What’s that?*’ was her thought when she thought gritted teeth put the pen aside and started reading message details.

Good morning, Victoria

I inform you that on behalf of the country manager, Gregory Dogmanov, the meeting has been arranged for today at 3 pm. Business-lunch takes place on the 3d floor in “La Esperanza” café. Please, have your laptop with you.

Executive Assistant

Lidia Sviridova”

The girl frowned and read the message again. She didn't know who Gregory Dogmanov was and what a business-lunch was settled and why her participation was necessary. She got share of distrust and doubt in her mind. What if they were going to dismiss her? On the other hand, the country manager absolutely had something else to do but not to invite potentially dismissed employees to lunches.

The girl let it all hang out and kept on drawing. She bended very low above her sketch, intently scratching details with the plastic pen, which were transferred into the display at once.

Suddenly all stopped. There were no moves. Silence. Victoria didn't like it ahead of the game. As she was no stranger to when the world stopped moving and it meant a crappy omen completely.

Her eyes became heavy... Victoria resisted but as a result she closed her eyes and turned out to be in some washy hall. Flying through it at a great speed, she tried to see murmured things. The walls were enweaved of glimpses of strangers' faces, indoor scenes, multi-coloured lightings and letters. There were many different letters not only in Cyrillic. Everything surrounded flew through Victoria fast-paced. She didn't have time to catch anything with her eyes, dissolving in the eternal vision stream.

Then all stopped. Again. All was paralyzed. There was an intimate atmosphere. It had a soft semi-darkness, failing light, cosy arm-chairs with cushions. Vic felt sitting in one of the arm-chairs. There was a glass table but not transparent. Napkins, cutlery, salts and casters were carefully served the table.

Relax music sounded, warmed and filled with romantic pictures. There was a female tone. Sugary one. It was so pleasant to listen to it and understand nothing. The song was in French. It was for the better.

In front of her a young man was sitting. No, it was a man. A solid, self-confident one.

He wore a jacket with cuffs, smooth face, straight parting on his head. He seemed to be an ideal and mannered. He had neither imperfection nor defect.

Victoria cocked her head, having frowned, studied the cared-for look man.

'Victoria' he stood up and extended his hand. 'I'm pleased to meet you. I'm Gregory.'

The girl stood up, too and took his hand and smiled having known what to say.

'Pleasure is mine.'

They both sat to the table. Gregory studied the girl sitting in front of him, she studied his professionally and carefully done nails.

'I'd like to discuss current situation about the re-design of our main package.' The man gave the fat paper case to the girl. 'But let's begin with our lunch. Lady's first.'

Gregory gave the menu to the girl also, intently following her with his eyes.

'Ok.'

Vic was laconic. All the atmosphere confused her a bit. After quick glance at the menu Vic ordered just sea-buckthorn tea.

'Mr Dogmanov,' the girl closed the menu and looked at the man's eyes. 'I've already projected a new design of this product. I was going to send it for your approval. So, as you started talking about it, let me show you some sketches and templates.'

Vic took out her laptop, moved closer to Gregory and opened the laptop.

'Well let's see,' she began, after she had opened the first presentation slide.

Vic spoke a lot, clearly, trying to convey a persuasive message her interlocutor. Unexpectedly she felt his leg touch hers under the table.

That was an accident, she thought. Vic shot a surprised look at Gregory and stopped speaking for a moment.

‘I’m sorry,’ the man smiled. ‘Go on your presentation. It’s very interesting.’

‘...This slide consists of a new form, more advanced that, my opinion, matches the product better than the previous one.’

Gregory watched the presentation of the new project carefully. His lunch was getting cold but they both dipped into the bright display.

‘Wow!’ the man exhaled, having fixed his tie, as Victoria had finished her presentation. ‘I’m really glad that our HR employed you. This project has to be on my table by tomorrow afternoon. I approved it fully and give the go-ahead for realization of each slides.’

The girl couldn’t help smiling, listening to flattered and winy boasting in her way. Words dint fail Gregory when he heaped the girl’s efforts with expressing thanks and enthusiastic shouting. Only the next touch of his leg to hers made Victoria come back to reality.

‘I’m sorry,’ Vic thought she was to blame. ‘I should move back.’

The girl rose quickly when she felt his strong fingers squeezing her wrist.

‘Victoria, please,’ Gregory rose, languishingly looked at her eyes.

Victoria couldn’t believe neither her eyes nor her ears. What was it? The country manager asked her to stay near him... It couldn’t be.

‘I’d like,’ he added, ‘to see another project. Ludmila told me about your initiatives in the field of graphic representation of the product slogan. I’d like to see it. Do you have it?’

‘Yes,’ the fascinated girl answered, looking into the man’s eyes.

Gregory liked madly liked her look, full of interests, misunderstanding, charming and ambitious to know. What a man wouldn’t like that? There was only one problem which the man had no idea about: Victoria was looking at a woman, standing behind Gregory’s back. Only Vic knew that woman not to be seen by anyone.

The spirit stroked the man’s shoulders, shaking off invisible flecks of dust, motherly touching his back. A smile of pain froze on her lips, the glass tears were on her cheeks. Of course, there was her son before her!

Vic clearly saw every resemblance between them: they both have the same noses, lip lines and plush, eye shape and colour, more looked like European than Russian. Having completely realized that it was a spirit of Gregory’s mother, who carried her favourite son even after the death, Vic finally looked aside, sat and opened her laptop.

‘There are only sketches here they’ve not been dotted and crossed yet.’

‘Ok, I’m ready to follow your ideas.’ Gregory smiled, sitting closer to the girl.

A half of hour had passed before they finished discussing the second project sketches. Gregory made a few simple modifications more likely for form’s sake. Victoria listened patiently to the country manager’s commentaries, finishing her tea with sea-buckthorn.

‘Well, colleague,’ Gregory found himself taking the girl by the hand and smiling.

Vic looked at his smile and more and more understood that his smile had nothing to do with job. It looked like friendly but there were barely noticeable and captured shadows of affection in moderato in value of thirty-second notes.

His hand, tenderly holding her cold, pale and tired fingers just accompanied those shadows in his smile, confirming their existence.

The spirit of the old lady, being worried about her son’s fate, frowned. Vic realized the woman looked exactly at her, straight into her face. Its gaze was unbearably heavy, painful and awful.

‘The Devil’s bride...’ Vic heard the certain whisper.

The girl looked around: people wearing suits, were busy with their lunches, from time to time saying something about business; the woman-spirit studied with a cool stare her son's hand giving its warmth to the odious girl; songs were in French.

Who said that? Whose whisper was it? A female one? The spirit? No, it couldn't. Its lips silently compressed.

'The Devil's bride...' the same whisper sounded again.

Victoria got more frowned. She looked at the spirit of the old lady and saw her whitish discorporate hand raise and try to unclasp his fingers which had been still holding Victoria's hand.

'No...' Vic murmured, having noticed being accused with the worried spirit's eyes.

'What did you say?' Gregory looked at the getting nervous girl questioningly.

'Nothing.' Vic saw the old woman step behind the back of her son. 'Nothing,' Vic repeated.

'So, I'm glad to have such a specialist working for our company. By the middle of the next week my assistant will have arranged lunch out of office. Prepare the pilot product project with your sketches, put exactly them into project originals and present it to me. Are you ok with the deadline, Vic?'

'Yes, I'll manage it, Mr. Dogmanov.' Victoria adjusted her hair trying not to look at the spirit's eyes. 'No problem.'

'Ok, we should go back and... It's been a pleasure to work with you personally.'

Victoria cracked a smile and hastened to the exit to turn away from the ghost.

Time started moving again into a hurry. Victoria opened her eyes. She was at her worktop. She had been holding the plastic pen. There was almost finished sketch on the screen. It was fifteen minutes past two.

Then other fail to understand happened. What was that? How did she have to feel about it? Victoria leaned back carelessly in her chair, trying to understand what was going on in her head. Would it ever come to an end? Suddenly it had dawned upon her: it was the very time! She had to run at the meeting... again...

The girl grabbed her laptop and ran to the appointed place, fortunately she had just been there. As she appeared at the restaurant Vic saw the same tables, faces, designs and waiters. Everything was the same she had seen already. Even the music was the same! The question "what the hell" didn't leave her mind.

There was an identical table, the same cared-for look man whom she had already seen, waiting in great terror if all the other that had been in her vision, was going to happen.

To her horror every second of her prediction happened... even the foreseeable appearance of the old lady's spirit, followed mannered Gregory whom, despite his high-status in the company, Vic didn't like at all.

The only thing that didn't come true was the label "The Devil's bride". That certainly calmed the girl down, obviously her subconsciousness took the decision to make fun of her.

After the meeting had been finished, Vic tried to subdue her jitters in her legs and hands, being happy that her vision and the reality were just a coincidence and that's all.

Staying in the hall, Gregory looked at Vic with the smile while she was losing herself in the corners of her mind, had no idea how to behave.

'Have a good day,' he said.

'Thanks... you too...' Vic turned back and went to her work place.

'The Devil's bride...'

The girl stopped dead. Having turned around she saw in the lobby the same old woman's ghost. It stayed and intently looked at scared Victoria.

'What did you say?' Vic asked out of foolishness.

The old woman silently raised her hand and wagged her finger at Vic after she disappeared.

Vic was paralyzed. For the whole time of being with the demon she had got over that she could always see something or someone other couldn't. She didn't know what exactly she saw – spirits, ghosts or something unknown. But the girl couldn't get over the fact that those guys started speaking with her and not just speaking but labelling her.

'Kharon,' she whispered on the phone after she had heard the man's voice. 'Meet me at 6.30 near Barrikadnaya metro station.'

'Your voice is very odd, dear.' The demon said puzzled.

'It is probably, I need to talk to you.'

'Oh, why? I've never had any serious talk before. How am I supposed to react? Wait, keep silence. A serious talk... Well. The word serious doesn't cause any positive thoughts if to put it logically. Hey, Vic, what've I done?'

Despite of her being in panic, Vic smiled. Guessing Kharon distracted her from her thoughts of the ill-fated old woman.

'You haven't. That's not so bad. Just meet me, ok?'

'As you wish. How do you feel, love?'

'Love?' Vic smiled again.

'You're so...like me, asking about every word I tell.' Kharon smiled, too. 'I got you. At 6.30 near Barrykadnaya metro station. I bet I'll guess the carriage you're gonna be in.'

'Try your best.' Vic almost forgot about the accident at work.

The memories were destroyed with the pictures of Kharon's face. His nice smile and gentle gaze conduced the girl's sooner rehabilitation.

Vic heard the phone hang up, grinned and already looking forward to meeting.

At that time Kharon was walking along the city, revelling in the view of streets and beautiful women, persistently collecting all information about human behaviour. Ideally curiosity made him flirt with girls, using all conceivable and inconceivable tricks to see what would happen next. He was interested in reading their minds and he liked to listen to their voiced answers. He had fun.

"By accident" he stepped on some girl's foot, stumbled and almost fell. She was about to attack the awkward man, say him many bad words. But Kharon started twittering in Spanish that he was so sorry to be so an awkward not to notice the girl while he had been seeing the sight of Bolshoy Theatre vault.

The girl immediately smiled, having forgotten about her dirty suede shoe. Kharon went on saying sorry in bad Russian. Of course, his foreign splendid accent, innocent eyes, beauty of his face played its role.

The next conclusion was drawn: Russian women weren't so angry as they wanted to look like. Their mean faces very fast turned into bright smile with sincerity and they were already ready to help. Kharon saw it better than any other men. The sexual energy he had, charmed women when they were awakened.

To other couple, that had drawn the demon's attention with its passionate kisses in the middle of Alexandrovsky Sad, Kharon said that he could predict everything. He turned into a blind old man, took the girl by the hand and whispered in a hoarse voice:

'The wedding is on 10th of October.' Looking at nowhere, strongly holding her hand, the demon was reading her mind. 'You're waiting for the wedding. Everything is bought. He's your fiancé. But he has a mistress already.'

The man got pale and contradicted, banishing the old man from his sight not to let him talk nonsense. The demon insidiously smiled, his eyes flashed which had nothing in common with old age and kept on telling some things that nobody could have known but the couple themselves.

Indeed, the tear-stained girl punched him with the thorn roses in the face, threw away the ring and ran home in tears.

'You, freakish old grumbler...' he hissed, clenching his fists.

‘You’re gonna be an impotent in a year, young man,’ the demon predicted in a sepulchral voice. Having had fun with the passer-by Kharon went down in metro as crowded as a can with sprats. People went home, tried to smile, pretend they were fun and glad the day was over. By the way they didn’t forget to shout at others, having wolf-looks, hated them.

When the carriage was at Kuznetsky Most a great crowd invaded into and Kharon turned to be almost at the very corner. There was a nice-looking girl before him, and she looked at everything around with understanding in her eyes. Her shoes were stepped on, someone pushed her, but she thought that it was ok, none of those were on purpose.

The demon was too close to her and without hesitation staring at her face. It had sadness and sorrow a bit and some desperation. Kharon saw her eyelashes freeze, her eyes were staring ahead at his chest.

The door opened and more people got into the carriage, pushing and kicking each other. The demon had time to set his hand against the wall not to let him press the girl.

‘Unbelievably...’ he said quiet looking at her scared eyes.

Looking at her face you could see the girl waited for the man to be about to fall at her with his body, tramp her foot or make a nasty trick. Her eyes got scared while Kharon’s eyes smiled.

The train steamed out of the station and people mechanically waved aside but the demon kept his hand against the wall not letting large-tonnage wave come down on the girl. The smile played across his lips while he was looking at the understandable confusion.

The girl tried not to stare at the man who was heroically covering her with his body. In the glimmering of the carriage Kharon gazed her cheeks were overspread with a faint flu and her eyes looked lower.

Using his position and potential coming closer together the demon moved to her. He did so close he could feel warmth of youth. The girl felt too the atmosphere and lifted her eyes.

‘I’m sorry.’ He said quiet slightly bowed to her.

The train was running down, and the wall of passengers leaned upon the demon’s back. He, of course, couldn’t hold himself such pressure and the crowd bumped him into the girl.

Instead of screaming and going into hysterics the girl smiled and turned to the door in the glass of which leaned on her demon was reflected.

Daria... The demon closed his eyes and let the thought stream so uninteresting break into his head... I’d like to go in this way eternally... Mine is incapable of anything like this... Cans are on his head... the cell is in his hands... here the stranger is like a protection from everything. I don’t wanna you go out...

“Go out” came Kharon back to reality, letting out the girl’s thoughts from his head. He shifted his eyes to get what the station was.

‘This is Barrikadnaya station, change here for the orbital link...’

Kharon smiled once again, glanced at the girl interested and left the train.

He was in the middle of the station having his eyes closed and listened. No. He didn’t listen to neither people nor unceasing clatter and chatter around, mechanical voices... He tried to listen to her.

Then some visions flew one by one: an intimate atmosphere, a pub, café, restaurant. He couldn’t understand what a place was it, but he knew a place to eat. Victoria. A man was confused. An ambitious precisionist. What his name was G...Georgy... Gregory... It started with G... He wore a grey shiny suit. His hair carefully done... Supper. Business lunch. Some food. Something whitish. Who knew what was it exactly? But it could move. That wasn’t a human. No heart, disincorporate. A spirit. Female energy. Fear. There were Victoria and her fear. Why?

The demon read the girl’s visions who was coming to meet him. The closer she was the better he could see what she had seen.

Kharon turned back and headed to the head car coming from the centre. Yes. The closer he came up the better he could get Victoria was in the very carriage. Her crazy energy... the energy of the witch gave itself away and Kharon could feel it coming closer to the doors.

The man stopped near a supposed carriage and stared at the wall where like on TV he could see the train rush in the tunnel. In several seconds bright light showed out from the hole. Kharon smiled.

The train was running down at the station, the man stepped back, hiding in the crowd. The train stopped, the doors, near which Victoria had been staying, opened and a hand appeared before her.

'How do you do this, ah?' Vic asked with obvious smile of admire.

'You, dear, stream through my body. I can feel your every atom and neuron. By the way, I'm glad that your mood has been enhanced as you see me and I can hear now a pleasant tune of your voice. I wish you hadn't remembered the lunch with that man... But this is what you're gonna speak about, isn't it?'

'That's impossible, Kharon. You can't just so unceremoniously dig in my mind. We're gonna have nothing to speak about if you keep on reading my mind. Shall we go outside?'

'Actually, I didn't read.' Kharon led the girl through the crowd. 'I've almost stopped being able to do it. I can still see your past by bright and picturesque images. I can still feel your feelings. Why were you confused with the invitation from that man?'

They were at the long moving staircase. Kharon was on the lower step, embracing the girl. Being only in his arms she could relax totally, let everything be as it was, without interfering in anything, thinking of nothing. Only his arms could help her to distract from all the world and make her think only of him. She desired to think of his warm, gentle hands, stroking her back under the jeans jacket with no stopping.

'It scared me.' Vic put her arms around him, having laid her head on his shoulder and closed her eyes.

'Scared? Don't you like surprises?' he took up the girl and careful brought her from the moving staircase.

'I don't.' Vic said the truth, coming ahead in the street while Kharon was holding the door for her.

'It wasn't the one for him, indeed.' The demon followed her and at once it started drizzling like the thinnest needles falling on his face from the sky.

Victoria was staring at the sad sky, feeling its tears on her face.

'It's raining... ' she whispered, and something brought her into a country of illusions and dreams.

The demon held her strong in his arms, trying to protect from raining. Being under his arm, she felt like a peregrine falcon nestling under its mother's wing.

'I've heard that raining in the human world is very romantic event for lovers. This is romanticism, dear!'

'True. But it's not for everyone. There's a touch of romanticism for both of us but there's no any for these who are pushing and cursing us. I wanted to walk home...and it's raining. Are you so romantic Kharon to walk in the rain? I know it's not so warm and tender as the summer one, but it's good anyway when you're with me.'

'We can find out about romanticism of my... soul,' Kharon looked at her.

'What are we waiting for then? Come on!' Vic grabbed his hand and hurried to the Garden Ring Road.

They walked put arms on each other, stepping on the Garden Ring Road, trampled by the times. It was still raining but was ready to leave with no breaking down the lovers. People ran under umbrellas, constantly bumping into each other with their umbrellas. Vic didn't care! Rain. Snow. People. The world. The planet. Was there any point to see all of those? All lived in its own circle. This circle had been before Victoria was born and it was going to be after she was dead. The only thing she would hardly have was the man. But at that time he was walking near her.

‘Didn’t you want to know the man whom you had lunch with?’ Kharon asked being curious.

‘To ask how you can know is stupid... I think I didn’t because I don’t like him, I don’t feel anything for him and the only man in my mind is you.’

‘I know, dear. But, how to put it right... He’s a human. You have more chances to live like a human with him.’

Vic stopped, came up to Kharon and looked at him with indescribable fear and despair in her eyes.

‘Tell me the truth, Kharon.’ She asked quietly. ‘Will I have a chance to live like a human with anyone after that night on 26th of September? Will I be able to love a human as I love you? Will he be able to give me what you do? Tell me, Kharon. Don’t be silent!’

‘Are you giving up for lost? You’ll be only 23 on 16th of September 2015 and now you’re speaking about your future and abilities to love?’

‘I don’t wanna give up but I’m a realist. You are the most perfect happiness that could ever happen to me for my eternal life. I regret nothing and moreover I’m not gonna be regretful about your appearance in my life.’

‘You know, dear, you have to live with people a bit to answer your question now... Honestly I don’t know what to say, what I have to say...’

‘You don’t need to say what you have to. What’s there?’ Victoria touched his chest. ‘What does it say?’

Kharon said nothing. Tears. There were tears in her eyes. Vic was waiting for an answer like manna from heaven.

‘I...’

‘The truth, please, Kharon. Tell me the truth, what do you feel here?’ the first tear dropped on her cheek and hurried to run away to flow together with the rain.

‘The truth?’ the demon defined. ‘Nothing. I feel nothing here.’

The demon put her hands away. Vic pursed her lips, fighting the coming up tears. She took his hand and kissed his fingers, pressing his warm palm to her cheek.

‘That’s ok... I’ll do everything to fill you with a human life, make you hear your heart trembling when you see the eyes of a human whom you really like. I’ll teach you how to feel, Kharon, I will. Please don’t resist me.’

‘I’ve got you. I don’t mind. Try your best. But don’t let them drop, ok?’

‘You don’t wanna me cry, do you?’ Vic smiled through tears, still pressing his hand. ‘I won’t.’

‘And you’re still doing it?’ he smiled.

‘No. The last ones. Shall we go further? I have something to tell you.’

‘About your meeting?’

‘Yes. There was a woman.’

‘Called you the Devil’s bride?’

‘Did you...’ Vic was about to get surprised but grinned instead of. ‘Exactly. Why did she say it, Kharon?’

‘You again listen to everyone and think that’s it all about you, don’t you? When we were going out from the metro some girl called you...just a second, I’m trying to remember. It was something like a bitch. Why didn’t you notice it? So maybe you shouldn’t notice what ghosts say?’

‘Do you want to say that the insult was about nothing?’ the girl exhaled.

Kharon stopped near the sad girl and with words “*come to me*”, pulled her into the nearest archway. He pressed the girl understanding nothing in the corner and put his hands on her head.

‘I’m sorry, Victoria, but I understand nothing what you’re speaking about... I need to know... Now!’ The demon pressed her head stronger with his hands with difficulty getting into her mind.

‘No, no. Kharon, that won’t work...’

‘It’s all useless... I want to get your honesty, Victoria, and how I’m supposed to get it without being in your mind?’

She closed her eyes, gritted her teeth because of the man’s pressuring, threw back her head and soundlessly squeaked. At that time the demon was covering the twisted corridors and halls of consciousness and subconsciousness looking for the answers.

‘Here they are,’ he whispered, stronger pressing the girl’s head. ‘You can stand it a little more... I’ll get them out.’

A minute had passed before Kharon let go of the exhausted girl. He relaxed his hands, gently kissed her lips and stepped back, having turned away from Vic.

‘I’m not a murder, dear.’ He said with his back on her.

‘What are you talking about?’

‘I’m not a murder but you make me be.’ Kharon turned to her. ‘I’m really sorry that it’s me who has to do it as no one will.’

‘What are you talking about, Kharon? You’re scaring me...’

‘Tell me, Victoria, what on earth prompted you to think so?’ He folded his arms. ‘What was your logic?’

Vic frowned and had a blank nervous look, looking at the man.

‘Now you don’t understand what I’m speaking about, do you?’ the man came up to her again, grabbing gently for her shoulders. ‘You make me kill your hope.’

‘My hope?’ Victoria had a lump in her throat as she started getting what a hope murder Kharon was speaking about. ‘No, Kharon, don’t. Don’t shoot from the hip...’

‘I saw it in your thoughts. Is that old woman who gave it to you? Why did you believe her so ridiculously?’

Someone coughed and steps were heard. Kharon let the girl and stepped back. It was the first time in his life he felt so strange. He looked at a stranger, at his leaving shadow and didn’t understand his feeling that had appeared with the stranger together. That was the first step of shame.

‘The Devil’s bride doesn’t mean, dear, that you’re the one. There are no weddings in my world.’

‘No, there aren’t, but there are in my world!’ Vic interrupted him, grabbing his hand. ‘There are weddings in my world. There are brides and fiancées... There’s love. All of it exist in my world. And I have right to dream about it. You can’t make me stop doing it. You can’t. There are lots of things in my world which hardly can happen in yours and they’re immune to you. But it means nothing, does it? Jesus, Kharon...’ Victoria put her hands on her head, being shocked with the conversation. ‘I’m in shock indeed! I’ve never thought that living in your world is torn to pieces and wounded with stereotypes and prejudices which you’re not able to get rid of!’

The girl experienced great desperation. No, it wasn’t about the man. No. She was upset with that fact that some things didn’t depend neither on you nor your surroundings.

‘What’s it, Vic?’ the demon asked, touching his left side of his chest. ‘I can feel your feelings. How do you call it? I wanna know...’

‘It hurts now, and I feel desperation because of your words. I don’t like it and I’m hurt. I would call all of it disappointment... Let’s go. We’re wet through. This conversation happened too early and now I’m catching up to it. Not for all the world borrow this dispiriting feeling for yourself. Nothing can change my feelings to you, but death can.’

Disappointment. What was the level of it? Was it a strong sense? What was going to be after? There was a small of human senses into insensitive depth of the demon and now he was preoccupied and tried to understand what and why. Most of all he wanted to know why. Why could people experience those terrible feelings? Why couldn’t they reject to experience them, harking after other feelings? Why did people like being disappointed? For a month of being with people Kharon had time to know what joy meant. Why not to use this perfect ability to be happy... What stupid things

those two-legged creatures were. They had so wide range of positive thinking, but they ate dirty and garbage without stopping.

‘Ok, Victoria. At this time of day, I got your mind. Thank you. I’ll take this lesson into account. I’d like to tell you something about the man you had dinner with. There’s a thing for you creeping in his heart that you call affection. Certainly, it’s not a love. I don’t feel him feeling the way you do towards me. But as I see all people can fall in love. But, saying it in your language he’s ready to let you see what can be done in his bed.’

Victoria was listening so-called exciting story about her boss and instead of understanding the news she tried to realize if there was a share of jealousy in Kharon’s words, whose love she wanted to arouse. Just a little of jealousy... But she was either deaf or there was no jealousy. Kharon just spoke like a morning greeting or what’s up.

They went away from the Garden Ring Road to Tverskaya Street at Mayakovskaya metro station and headed towards the Red Square. It was the first time they kept silence for a long time. They both had something to think over. At that moment they both were ok. Kharon couldn’t and didn’t want to get into Victoria’s mind and one could hardly get into his except Lucifer. They gave a little time to each other to think over something, work on misunderstandings.

When they were at Pushkinskaya Square Kharon stopped and looked at a big building, proudly elevated behind the monument.

‘Why did you never tell me what a building it is?’ he asked Victoria.

‘This one?’ the girl nodded at the building. ‘This is a cinema. You’ve never asked me.’

‘What’s the sound?’ Kharon asked under his breath turning to Vic. ‘You... Is this a chatter of your teeth? Why are you doing it?’

‘Kharon,’ she smiled, rubbing her sniffly nose, ‘people usually do it in two cases: when we’re afraid or cold.’

‘You have no fear now that means you’re cold... Cold...’ Kharon repeated mysteriously, ‘I see, once I saw a young man put his jacket on a girl in the cold evening... I’ll give you my coat.’

Victoria kindly smiled and stared at Kharon watching him build his logic chain in his head and she looked forward to waiting for it to be done. Kharon quickly unbuttoned his coat, easing down when undid the last buttons.

‘But it’s wet... through. It’s the same as yours and that’s why your teeth are chattering... Oh people... What’s going on in cinemas? Can we go there to get warm?’

‘Sure, let’s go. Moreover, we can watch a film. A cinema is the place where you can watch films.’

‘Really?’ Kharon ‘Then let’s go. By the way why do people go to the cinemas if they have TV and internet at homes where they can watch the same?’

‘Oh, Kharon, it’s so meaningful question it can be answered for a long time and in a variety of ways. Any cinema isn’t just a place to watch a new film, catch a break with no sleeping. You can get new emotions, sympathize or be happy for the main characters. You can be upset a little bit because all that is showed in films never happens in life. Or you can breathe a sigh of relief that things you see are just film and nothing more. So, any cinema is nothing more but the place where you can get emotions. Couples often go to the cinema. They are there to enjoy each other and don’t care about the actions on the screen. As a rule, if you ask them what the film is about, they hardly would remember its title.’

‘Umph...’ the man looked at the girl attentively and smiling. ‘Then we have several reasons to get there.’

There was a world drama on the screen which everyone knew by not a generation. It was the Titanic.

First twenty minutes of the film Kharon was busy with his girl. He kissed her fingers, warming them up with his breath, rubbing her skin, warming up her chilled hands. He embraced Victoria softly

rubbing her shoulders, awaking her endless passion. The man intently looked at the sitting near girl. He wasn't interested so much in actions on the screen. He was more interested in Victoria.

Twenty minutes later the demon glanced at the huge screen and... Victoria lost an interlocutor in him. The demon of lust was buried with unbelievably beautiful and incomparable frames.

'Who's it?' he asked Victoria having seen a red-haired girl on the screen, standing on the deck.

'The main character of the film. Haven't you seen the beginning?' Vic smiled, stroking his hand.

'No, honestly I've been busy with your chilled hands and I wish we had been at home in bed. I'd have warmed you up faster. You'd have been exhausted with unexpected heat... Then I saw this beautiful woman. Why does she look like this?'

'Are you about her dress? It's the beginning of the XX century, Kharon. All looked like her then. I think you were with women at that time, weren't you? Obviously with no dress. Films can show you features of the past and even future. So, there's nothing surprisingly.'

'I see.'

Kharon looked back at the screen where one of the main characters tried to speak with the red-haired girl. That's all the man was consumed with the frames.

Victoria even didn't try to prevent him from watching this splendid film about love. She was surprised and fun a bit that the demon who was thousands of years old was interested so much in the dramatic film, you can say, even girlish. Of course, all his life Kharon had deals only with women and their sacrament parts of bodies. He knew nothing about what existed in human world and what for. The demon had the better day at that moment: there was no definition of a film for boys or girls. He knew nothing about gender separation. He didn't know that he had to pretend saying "*ugh, this is the wimpy drama for stupid first-year girls and this one is for the real men*". There was not a touch of stereotypes imposed by the society. He had no need to be cool at work for workers in the mornings. He was completely independent of society and its venal opinion. He didn't even know that he was watching girlish film absolutely. And the best of all was that Kharon didn't imagine and think that after watched the film he would have no need to say "*ugh what a shit*", giving 105 Oscar reward to the actors and director in depths of his heart. The demon just watched the film, giving birth to his pure opinion.

There was love raised in the screen. True and sincere one could ever happen between a man and a woman. Kharon followed that love very attentively. He followed the young man's actions, his emotions and experienced feelings, the moves of his lips and loudness of his words.

He observed the girl and her emotions, experienced feelings also. He felt such tenderness walking between the two main characters. He had never felt nothing of that with women before. He didn't because he didn't believe or despise but he just didn't know that he could do it, he had a right to do it.

He watched the scene of shipwreck with his opened mouth and getting frozen heart. The enormous thing in all subtexts, in historical and perfection especially, was destroyed by nature... The demon couldn't believe his eyes: how did people manage to build such unusual miracle covered with luxury? Why did absurdity happen to it? With one slight move nature razed that huge ship to the dust, showing people what they fought against, reminding them of that they shouldn't think they were gods. Nothing was eternal, everything had the end.

There was a scene, where light hardly begun to live love tried to survive with the help of the hands: they both wanted to be saved to keep their love. Kharon was very interested to watch both of them. He carried about them, soundlessly whispering where they had to ran, where they would probably find the rescue. With curiosity he watched the second beloved man, his insult and humiliation. He also was in love with the red-haired girl.

Then the demon realized that love was really stupid and foolish. Why did it do what it did? It was ok, that rich man loved that girl, they would have got married and the happy end! Suddenly

Kharon realized that the girl didn't love the rich man! Damn reciprocity. The demon had time to draw parallel between his in his own relationship with the human was in love with him.

Victoria looked at Kharon's eyes where sometimes terrible frames were reflected in. Did he blink? Vic knew the film almost by heart she had no need to look at the screen. She was more interested in originating emotions which probably the first time distorted his face. She was hardly able to abstain from smiling when Kharon instinctively squeezed her fingers seeing the terrible actions on the screen. Did the demon try feel what those people did when they were getting through the catastrophe? Did he realize how horrible and deadly was it?

'It's the best one I've ever seen while my being with people...' Kharon whispered glowingly when the screen was covered with the black veil of the emptiness. The light was getting brighter covering the place. There was silence and seldom whispers cut through the after-euphoric silence.

'I'm glad you liked it and that we came here but my jacket's still wet inside... We're gonna in the rain again.'

'We're not. Literally I realized that heroes are what girls expect men to be. I was reading women's minds who were in the cinema. There was no one who didn't want to have such crazy love.'

'I'm not surprised. Unfortunately, two people being in love with each other is very rare to happen. More often is when just only one is in love... Our relationship isn't an exception.'

'I'm sorry.'

'Me too! But I'm really glad you're with me, studying to feel and don't face like a thunder, hating me because you have to live with people.'

'Come to me.' Kharon stretched out his hand. 'We have to find a quiet corner. Here it is, is this quiet enough? I think it is. Come closer. Closer, dear.'

'What are we doing?'

'Closer. Touches of distrust. Do you trust me?'

'I do.'

'Close your eyes and count. Aloud.'

'One' the girl said in a low voice, pressing the man to her, 'Two.'

'Three, Victoria, you can open your eyes.' Kharon relaxed the grip of his arms. 'We're at home. It's warm and not wet.'

'I wanna have the same ability. I always forget you can do this.'

'The main point is don't forget about my other abilities.'

His strong hands, seemed to be awkward, freeing the hot body from clothes very quickly.

Victoria was glad to be in the embraces of hell again. She was excited and already knew what to look forward to. She already knew what she had sold her soul for and what for that man was with her and what he was able to do. She crazily, fiercely and passionately yearned for him. She yearned for his divine energy, touches and charm. She desired for his making-crazy kisses because of which her head went around, the breath came faster, and she didn't know if there was ability to breathe again. Her heart lost its mind, beating in dead run as if it had beat its last minutes and wanted to have time to catch more life. She craved for the warmth stroking her skin, burning through flame, setting her on fire and she didn't care about her skin burns. The euphoria on its plumes was the main thing.

She wanted to feel his tongue that would never know what shame and modesty meant, to hear wicked words that made her hackles rise, infecting her body with sexual energy. She was ready for being paralyzed after to pay her voluptuousness, for drinking it with no human but with the demon. She cared about nothing again. She waited for his arms and kisses.

Like no other Kharon knew the girl's feeling, her obstreperous desires and in this case, he knew no refuse. Moreover, he was able to be initiative in bed, no initiative went unpunished didn't work here...

Clothes. Fitfully wet laid on the floor and nobody needed it. Nobody wanted it. His arms seized her round the waist and Victoria didn't open her eyes feeling the floor, the earth stay beneath, her body

in the strong demon's arms was coming high, straight to the ceiling. His canoodling, unbelievable and mind-bending made her want to abut against something but there was nothing under but the abyss.

'We're gonna fall' the girl whispered, having totally relaxed in the demon's arms.

'We fell a long ago, dear,' he answered, passing his hand over her hip, 'We have no place to fall deeper... Just one word from you and I'll stop. We'll hit the pillow, pretend that we need nothing. Come on, dear, tell me *no* like you did before... Tell me about romanticism...'

'I'll never say it again.' Victoria whispered through slight narcotic madness.

'Then trust me and don't ask anything.'

Oblivion. Reality was dead. The outside world was dumb. There was a shadow of the huge wings on so much whitish ceiling. His breath was near her ear. Her eyes were closed. They didn't want to see anything. Nothing had to prevent her from enjoying the physically close moment. Her ears were deaf. They listened only to their own sounds, nothing more they wanted to. They weren't interested. They were silent in time with beating of the heart.

It was unusual gravity-free, bewildering, tormenting the atrabiliary capsules with a red-hot hammer demanding to let adrenalin out. Endorphins were indulging the hypophysis mad already. Energy. Like a furious volcano that had already broken the holistic earth cover, destroyed life, immersing it into an adult metaphor, offering to go through a hyperbolic way up to personification with no hesitation and shame of itself, with no care of the world time, its nasty mocking hands that ruthlessly touched cosmic matter, moving it closer to the inevitable vacuum black, voracious hole.

There was no end. Nobody waited for it. They both like naïve children, believed in its absence, pretending that it was ok, life wasn't as bad as they used to think. It was so good to have all desired ability to play tricks with yourself and believe in illusion for a while. There was no desire to refuse it and the girl wanted her to belong to it... to him fully.

The demon devoured the energy she let out. He couldn't help taking it. He needed to feed to give him to her again. He had no thoughts to give up her energy.

Space was still unsustainably, confusing with its spatial hammock where they both were lying. It was talking, cradling them like a babe. Victoria wasn't there. She wasn't on the earth. She was mastering the space, studying its internal structure, molecule and atom structure which didn't exist when Kharon didn't touch her. He was a magician. Was he good or bad? There was no answer. It didn't matter. Kharon created a perfect illusion of a popular fairy tale.

The more pleasant the girl was, the stronger she felt her energy leaving. The more energy she lost the stronger Kharon became that had a staggering influence on his loving actions. The stronger the demon became the more energy he made the girl let out. It was a vicious circle filled with viciousness and cyclicity. He didn't want to abrupt it. None of them wanted to come out of it neither the demon nor Victoria.

And the light... it was nearby. Here it was. It stroked the couple, hovering in the gravity-free who stroked each other in the ceiling arch.

'I'm sorry, dear,' the demon said very quietly, 'I can feel you be about to release all your potential,' he clasped her in his arms, 'and I have to take it.'

And it went again...

The next morning Victoria could just open her eyes and nothing more. This time she wasn't scared. She knew what was going on and when it was over. It was just pleasure and feelings of that she had got everything out of her life and indeed she had no need to live further. She didn't care if she faced sudden death, she was ready for it. Both her body and her soul were full of indescribable admire and happiness.

Victoria just lay naked in her owns silence, with her closed eyes and felt Kharon's gentle touching. She wanted to smile but she was in no state to do it. Her soul smiled instead, and the demon saw that fabulous smile and was glad that he was the reason of that happiness and readiness to go to another world.

10

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October 2013 (Thursday)

A week passed like a mad second, having left neither trace no moment memories. The world ran around, the universe twisted its hot record, setting a time, comfortable for it. It had fun looking at struggling people stumbled trying to catch and even outpace. Victoria danced in that chaotic, whirlpool-like stream being consumed with the universe love for the demonic creature.

The merry tempo exhausted the girl. She was tired and wanted to close her eyes to have some rest... just to breathe. But no. Would you be ever able to get out of tornado if you were in the centre of it? There was a crazy tornado outside when wind speeds exceeded F5 according to F-Scale. No, you would never get out of there. You would have to run with it like a squirrel in a cycle.

Victoria was in the country manager's office again and waited for the meeting with him, thinking that she was fed up with him.

Every morning Gregory came to the girl to find out how she was getting. He was sitting with her for fifteen minutes, asking some questions which the girl didn't answer. But she couldn't ask him to go away.

There was silence. A dead silence. The clock hands broke it with its second time. It was silent compulsion. The implacable circle was on the wall and ticked and ticked and ticked. With a sad look under her eyebrows Vic followed the second-hand scoured circle by circle, suppressed and was unable to say no.

'Victoria,' Gregory broke into the office and with rapid steps came up to the girl. 'It's a pleasure to see you gain... I wish it had been in the formal setting again.'

Vic raised and took his extended hand. The man slightly squeezed it and started mumbling something, but Vic didn't listen to him.

The unexpected touch provoked the storm of unconnected pictures. In the beginning Vic saw everything like by a child's eyes. Funny, carelessly, small problems, worthless draw the childish psychology crazy. There was a phrase "*I want*" blinked before her eyes. Then the world changed. It grew up, lost its colours and details. But "*I want*" was still there. Plus "*I'll get it*" was added to it. Views of the teenager were so proud, arrogant and stupid, understanding nothing or accepting everything exactly the opposite. And the last world view was filled with the statement "*there's nothing in the world that I won't get if I want it*". Different faces changed each other in her visions like if someone created a new level one by one in Photoshop with the transparency in 30%. Smiles were broken with tears, tears went into a wrinkled joy, eyes were being emptied, other were being filled with life sense, others sorrowfully looked through the emptiness. There were voices intently whispering in strange language. They were tender, sad, dispirited and stricken. They intermitted with each other like a carefully organized DNA threads, patterned with molecules. There were hands stretching out to embrace and warm, stroke but then those hands wanted to take away, pick up and steal...

Vic opened her eyes and saw Gregory's face before hers with a share of surprise glanced at her.

'What've you been thinking of?' he asked with smile, letting her hands. 'I called you, but you didn't answer. What's it?'

'No,' the girl whispered, smoothed her hair, 'no, it's ok. Just a slight dizziness. Ugh... I'm ready to show the project.'

Gregory smiled with his hands behind his back. Victoria was standing near the table under the pressure of his piercing glance, hiding hers. She frowned, pursed her lips obviously being nervous. The man was relaxed and kept on smiling. Being unable to stand the emotional attack the girl turned her laptop to Gregory and began to jabber her project presentation.

While she was telling the country manager said nothing. He was carefully looking at the screen, diagrams, columns and pile of unbelievably perfect sketches.

‘It’s a good idea, yes, it is.’ Gregory looked away from the black screen. ‘But I think something is missing. What do you think, Vic?’

‘What exactly is missing?’

‘You’re a designer, Vic, so you tell me what is missing.’ Gregory unnoticeably moved closer to her.

‘And as a designer I told you that it’s ok. I don’t see any gaps. If you do, then tell me and I’m ready to correct it’ Victoria quickly smiled at the man.

‘The only gap is that we need to meet in informal settings,’ the man said.

His voice was serious as it had never been before. No mock nor other hints were given. He silently looked at the girl, having turned to her and thrown back on the chair. That was the most disgusting moment when the word “*no*” stuck in the throat and had no chance to get out of there. It wanted so much but it couldn’t. The girl was unable to say no. How actually was she supposed to say no to the country manager?

‘No problem.’ Victoria lowered her eyes.

‘Fine.’ Gregory rose up from his chair. ‘Lidia will arrange a meeting and send the details to you. I think it’ll be the next week. Is it ok with your schedule?’

‘Yes, it is. Thank you. May I go?’

‘Sure, Victoria!’ Gregory shook her hand and came up to the doors with her.

Kharon was in the centre of Moscow, with no tiredness watched people whom he had never been interested before. In fact, he had despised and mocked them. He beguiled his pride. But it changed now. Funny things were over.

‘It’s been so difficult to find you!’ a man appeared near Kharon. ‘You smell of people totally, you have no yours own. We’re gonna lose you.’

Kharon folded his hands on the chest and pretended to be mean after he had stared at the man.

‘Does Lucifer know you to be here, Akton?’

‘No. I didn’t tell him. I don’t think he notices my absence. I’m here for little, for two hours. I’m fed up with people’s ribs and waists!’

Kharon silently smiled in reply. He couldn’t be said he was too glad to see his compatriot, but he was ok with it.

‘I wonder... Is that the truth what they gossip about behind Lucifer’s castle walls?’ Akton whispered in mystical voice.

‘What do they gossip about?’ Kharon raised up the big cup of coffee demonstratively.

‘Well... about your exile to earth. What did you do to enrage Lucifer so much?’

‘It’s just gossiping.’ Kharon was confused. ‘You shouldn’t believe in what they tell you. I’m tired of so many years work with no stop... I decided to take... vacation.’

‘A vacation?’ Akton looked at the demon suspiciously.

‘A time when you can have a rest.’ Kharon explained. ‘I studied it here. By people. They are always on their vacations when they’re tired. We didn’t even know that it was possible’

‘Did Lucifer just let you go?’

‘Not just but he did.’ Kharon smiled again. ‘How do you like people outside?’

Akton looked around. What could he say about people having glanced at them? People were beautiful. They were proportionated and well-built. They talked a lot and listened less. They thought a lot of themselves in general. They didn’t smile and they weren’t friendly actually at the first sight. Women. They wanted to be more beautiful than they were. People walked quickly. They walked on roads without looking at sides. They laughed a lot and had many cries in their minds which were firmly closed from others. Their thoughts were something personal that shouldn’t be shown to society. They got angry when someone pushed them or walked slowly before them.

That was all that Akton could say about people having been with them only an hour.

'I had the same thoughts of people... But after I lived with them, I started accepting them different. I understood them very sensitive. They can experience true emotions which we will hardly be able to get through. So, if you think to have a rest somewhere, with no thinking go to the human world. You'll have no regret. There's nothing in common with being in their ribs. Yes, dear!' Kharon interrupted his story with the call. 'Where? Just a second... In the café not far from Patriarchy Prudy. Shall I be waiting for you here? Are you sure? Ok. I got you.'

'And... who's it?' Akton didn't miss a word.

'This one? It's a cell.' The demon stretched his cell out.

'You will show me this stuff later. I want to know whom you were speaking with. That wasn't Lucifer, was that?'

'Why can't he speak with me on the phone?'

Suddenly a man appeared at the table. He seemed to be airy and light but to have so deep bass voice and stony stare. Then his stare became stonier. It had burgundy tone in his pupils. You could hardly notice it, but it was charming, attractive... forbidding. The both demons stopped speaking and looked at their Lord. If Kharon was ok, then Akton was noticeably nervous.

'Why are you here, Akton?' Lucifer wondered looking at Akton's troubled face.

'I... I wanted to see Kharon.'

'Why do I know it at the time you're seeing him?'

'Lucifer...' Kharon tried to speak.

The light elegant but powerful gesture turning into an obvious "stop" forbid him to speak. Lucifer didn't take his eyes off Akton. There was a mocking and manneredly arrogant smile frozen on the lips.

'Akton,' the Lord kept speaking after he had understood nobody was going to answer him. 'Why do I have to look after this, my dear friend? You do know better than I that you're forbidden to appear in human world. Why did you break my order?'

The smile faded away from Lucifer's face. Having settled in the cosy arm-chair, the wrathful man with his menacing look was creeping over the scared demon's face. It had passed more than just several minutes before Lucifer started speaking again.

'Heh, Akton... My silent friend, you're coming with me to my private room, we're gonna have a very serious talk. As I have a feeling you stopped understanding me and my language. And now...'

Lucifer snapped his fingers and the world became deaf for Akton. He was unable to hear neither a single sound nor rustle, there was vacuum emptiness in his ears.

'What's he done? What's wrong with him?' Kharon finally caught the possibility to speak.

'Nothing. Akton is a good demon but stupid and naïve. If he comes to earth, he's in a strict sense he will have a mash on human life. Then I have to annihilate his painful memories about earth life. Do I really need it, Kharon? I'm worried that I can lose such a good demon in love for humanity. I don't want it. Being aware of your unsociability, my conscience was clear when I sent you here.'

Akton was sitting with no move and looking at Lucifer's mouth opening without sound, he was trying to guess what the Lord was speaking about. There was a smile on Kharon's face, and he kindly looked at Akton.

'I see, Lucifer. You're always considered being the Lord worried about your subordinates.'

'I'm glad to hear it. What's up, Kharon? It's been long time I came to you, forgive me please. I had a lot of things to do quickly and that made me put off our meeting.'

'You don't have to answer to me...'

'No, Kharon. Primarily you're my friend. I want my friend to know me not to have forgotten about you. I was busy but in my mind I'm always with you. I'm acutely aware of your so-called wedding night in the human bed... Unfortunately, I can't see your emotion at all that you got through that night. Tell me, Kharon.' Lucifer glanced and smiled at almost dead Akton.

'It is a kind of challenge.' Kharon confessed, 'feelings are different from I used to have in dreams. Her performance made me wild. Everything I use to have in dreams now is just a dream. I know what I'm able for now. I wiped away my self-confidence with a more powerful one. I'm so proud of myself... And it was the first time I stayed with a woman in bed after. I slept with her, Lucifer. She was lying nearby, with no life and move because I took all her energies. I felt her have peacefulness... Until now I haven't regretted about your decision to send me on earth.'

'I hope your efficiency isn't going to be worse after you tried a woman in your hands in reality?'

'Of course, it's not, you have nothing to be worried about. I like Moscow, people but I miss my home. I miss my work. After coition Victoria is recovering within a week. She gives herself to me till the last drop and I certainly take her last drop.'

'I would do the same... and I did the same.' Lucifer still glanced at Akton with mysterious eyes.

'Did you?' Kharon surprised.

'My friend,' the Lord smiled. 'I'm a man. I like women. This is normal natural law. I want to touch them, feel their gentle bodies in my arms, hear their languishing breath and feel their sharp nails tearing off my back... I understand all that you felt that night.'

'Oh, Lucifer...' Kharon wiped his forehead, puzzlingly looked at the table. 'You know I couldn't even think you relate to women... with human ones in reality.'

'What's wrong with you, Kharon?' Lucifer looked at the waitress. 'Any male creature in our place looks for sex with women. It's not a surprise and new. Not only incubi come down in human world, do they, Akton?'

The demon was enjoying unbearable scared silence and dumbness, which he had been rewarded by Lucifer.

'You know the worst thing is that girls of my choice turned into dust at the last second. It's black, loose dust. My energy, my sudden light that I can't hold inside anymore, bursts out of me and as you know it's not for human eyes. So, we all are connected with one female vice on the earth. But I can't give such possibility to someone like Akton. I see you want to ask something else. Come on, my friend, don't be shy.'

'I... can't read her mind after that night. I don't know what she thinks about. I can see only empty halls and stream of them. But there are no thoughts. I can still read her subconsciousness stream when I touch her head. Every time to read her mind is more difficult for me. She's difficult to be with her.'

Lucifer cocked his head to the left and regarded a girl at the next table with his fond eyes. He seemed not to be listening to Kharon after having been totally preoccupied with the view of the lone girl.

'She's a witch, Kharon.' He answered suddenly. 'That's ok that she doesn't want anyone to dig in her mind. You're not an exception. She's getting stronger and she doesn't understand it. She unconsciously prevents you from accessing to her thoughts. Don't worry, you'll do it. I shall warn you that the witch might is still sleeping in her. All she does now is just a game. It'll be interesting to look when she realizes who she is.'

'She sees spirits, she doesn't allow me to read her mind, her energy is gargantuan, and all of these is just a game? She's unusual... Why can't I see ghosts, by the way?'

'Shall I give you this ability?' Lucifer smiled at the very girl and confused her after with his smiling. 'Why do you need to see ghosts when you're surrounded by people, Kharon? You're being irrational today. I don't like it. I don't advise you to see ghosts. There's no point in it but you will see more people. Forget about it. By the way I can feel my part at the girl's place... I can't understand what's it?'

'Oh, Lucifer, I should have told you, but I forgot. The very feather that led you to me the last time is at Victoria's home.'

‘That’s interesting.’ The Lord smile and cocked his head. ‘Well, let it be. I don’t mind. Why didn’t she become blind?’

Lucifer looked at the ceiling. Then his eyes without blinking, like a black shadow crept to the that girl he had looked at before. He liked her. He did like her.

‘Victoria’s gonna be here in ten minutes. Have you missed?’

‘Me what?’ the demon surprised.

‘Nothing, my friend, nothing. I think you should know the poor guy, Gregory to have decided to hit on your ginger witch. What do you think about it?’

Kharon was calmly finishing his coffee with a sidelong look at the surroundings. Lucifer was smiling from ear to ear, snapping eyes at that girl.

‘Gregory?’ Kharon asked. ‘The man she had lunch with?’

‘Oh, yeas!’ The Fallen Angel flickered with his burgundy eyes and finally stared at his friend. ‘He wanted his touches under the table to be never ended. He was so stupid to touch her knee and study her reaction, if she liked it or not. With boasting he examined her ring finger with no ring, dreaming about dull, dead-alive, human sex. He has already splashed her with his saliva... while you’re amusing Akton now.’

Lucifer carefully put the cup on the table and smiled. He was amusing. Yes, Kharon was his friend but Lucifer couldn’t help having fun. Even he was shocked how much uncaring his subordinates could be. At this time, he was slightly jealous of them.

‘You don’t know how happy you are, my friend. You’re not spoiled with human feelings as I’m, thanks to my father. Nothing can throw you off your stride, you have no morality to be ready for. There are two absolutely different ways. Ones want to be uncaring pieces of iron, others want to be caring. Don’t make for this temptation, don’t, Kharon. You’ll never know what a loss means... Now. Just two seconds and the door’s opened.’

Kharon looked at the door and in a second he saw Victoria enter. She glanced curiously at the tables looking for the lovely face. The girl well knew what to miss and heavy emotions meant.

‘My love,’ she whispered after she had seen the demon at the table.

She burst herself into his arms but faced an unexpected obstacle. In a matter of seconds Vic almost ran into Lucifer who appeared on her way.

‘Oh, dear God...’ Victoria stepped back at once.

Of course, she recognized the Lord of Hell and she felt terrible because of unplanned meeting. The girl stepped back, spellbind looking into the romantic eyes where the devil fire of burgundy colour was flaming up.

‘Good evening, Sunshine!’ Lucifer smiled, barring the way.

Victoria had no desire to get through. For the first time ever, the girl remembered the mark on her shoulder blade. She felt it like an unhealed cut, tightened with new skin. There was no pain. Vic was paralyzed. She saw neither Kharon nor his grin being rather kind, nor Akton who greedily studied her like a hungry dog, dreaming about a bone with meat. A posthumous silence marked Lucifer’s appearance. Everything around stopped existing, moving, breathing. All was still.

‘How do you do...’ She stammered.

The creaking of the chair was heard behind: Kharon rose up and wanted to come up to the girl. He felt her wild fear and heard her tongue whisper a single prayer frantically and silently in her mind, constantly crossing in tumultuous imagination. In reality the girl couldn’t still move.

He hadn’t got far when he met the Lord’s hand with a gesture making him stop. The demon obeyed and stopped. Lucifer didn’t even look at his friend. He held an invisible thread between him and the girl. Lucifer moved closer to Victoria’s face and with self-confident smile said:

‘What, Sunshine? I can’t hear you... Say it aloud!’

Being like hypnotized Victoria opened her mouth and started speaking. The things she was speaking made already surprised Kharon sit up and take notice. Fortunately for him, Akton had been still in artificial deafness created by Lucifer and he saw and heard nothing but the moves of the mouth.

Victoria was speaking in Latin. With each word her voice became more confident and stronger. Her speech didn't stammer a word like if the girl came out of the Era of Caesar, from the Senate, filled with incomparable eloquence and metaphors. Kharon heard just stunningly beautiful Latin speech, understanding every word like it had been before in the days of Caesar when the demon had lived also, but he wasn't able to catch the meaning. Lucifer, having frozen smile on his lips, realized that the witch was plotting one of the most powerful, ancient spell-protection against him. He was more fascinated with the way Victoria made the spell: her eyes didn't blink and move but looked straight into Lucifer's ones; they knew no fear in contrast to the whole body; her lips were whispering the endless text; her voice like a voice of a nightingale was so feminine and magnetic.

'Lucifer...' Kharon called softly.

In reply The Fallen Angel waved his hand, intently watching her whispering lips. Then he lifted up his hand and turned his palm up to Victoria. On his open palm a ball burning with fire was born, having inside lightings fulgurated. With admire and inspiration Lucifer was looking at the lighting ball and the whispering lips. Nobody in the café seemed to be noticing anything unusual. All were busy with their own business. Maybe Lucifer didn't want them to notice...

Suddenly Victoria stopped speaking, took a deep breath, blinked her eyes, trying to see something through a veil before her eyes.

'I can't anymore...' she said barely above a whisper.

'Goo try, Sunshine!' Lucifer blew out the fire-ball on his palm and flicked the ashes. 'I'd have been to be covered with fire, haven't I? Next time, dear, next time.'

Victoria breathed hard, still experienced worry and fear of The Lord of Hell. But she had no strength to be consumed fully by panic.

'I've been glad to see you, Kharon.' Lucifer waved at the frozen demon. 'And you, Sunshine,' he came closer to the girl. 'You've seen nothing. We haven't met today. You've just come in and seen Kharon. See you.'

He looked mockingly round the girl, snapped his fingers before her nose and having grabbed Akton, disappeared.

'Kharon!' Victoria exclaimed, having seen the man.

The demon was totally frustrated. The thing he had seen made him be speechless. Honestly, he got nervous. While he was looking at Victoria his seriousness didn't face any limits. The true witch was before him and five minutes ago she had tried to set fire on Lucifer.

The evening was brooding. For a long time the girl tried to find out what was wrong with the man, but he made excuses too skilfully use them in response.

Victoria told him nothing about her work, Gregory and his too frequent appearance in her life. She was still naïve to think that Kharon would be nervous because of another man in the girl's life. Partially she connected the demon's decadent mood with it. She was unaware that demons couldn't love, feel and they didn't know what jealousy meant. They knew nothing about those emotions in relation to a human. Between them they could plunge themselves into argument whom this victim belonged. But to plunge into people's emotions was no way for them. Lowest, primitive, knowing and seeing nothing creatures that was most of the demons thought of people. But who could explain it to the girl in love? She wanted to get mutual feelings. But she didn't get them. She had to compensate for missing with her fantasy about that the demon would be angry if he had found out his rivals in love was coming.

In his turn Kharon tried to get all that human grab bag of feelings. But that night he studied the girl who had been spelling. After it he had a pull of questions. Kharon was patient to wait for Victoria to fall asleep and she didn't make him wait for a long time. The girl quickly went to Morpheus, as she

was unbelievably tired as if she had been working for a month with no weekends, waking up at 4 am every day. Of course, it was stupid for her to vie with Lucifer himself. But that was just desperate desire of the witch's spirit whom Victoria knew still nothing. She didn't even guess about it. Thanks to sagacious Lucifer she didn't still understand anything.

'What the hell was that?' Kharon unceremoniously burst into his Lord's apartment.

The Morning Star was sitting near the window with a mysterious smile looking at the silent valleys behind the horizon. It was night. There was a bloody big moon on the sky. There were no stars but only one too far from the Moon. It was the Sun with its solar system. There was the Earth. It was so far that the dim light could hardly be seen in the black canvas of the sky.

There were the highest grey mountaintops on the horizon. They seemed to be so whitish because of the fallen night. Kharon was sure that in ancient times the scene from Lucifer's apartments had been always fascinating.

'I've been waiting for you, my friend.' The Lord was still looking at the window. 'I felt you thinking and raving about the meeting with me, while for the whole evening your Sun was dreaming not to provoke you to be jealous. Well, you're here and I'm listening to you.' Lucifer turned away from the window and looked at Kharon.

'I wanna know what it was in the café?'

'This could not be much clearer. Want some coffee?' he poured coffee for Kharon and him. 'Look. There's a girl and a gift that she got from the witch. As the girl and the gift are coexisting separately the thing that has happened today can happen. Victoria as a human feels a great fear for our world. Actually, for me. Certainly, it's ok! I'd have been surprised if she doesn't. Her gift activated defence reaction. Instinctively. It has no brain and doesn't understand that any enchantment on me... is just nothing but funny.'

'Lucifer, your palm was in fire. What's funny?' Kharon took his cup.

'It was a defence spell. I was supposed to be fully covered with fire. Like in a cupola. For this time the witch would have a chance to run away and fire and smoke smell would hide her tracks. There would be nothing I can do, I wouldn't be able to retrace her.'

Lucifer shrugged his shoulders and smiled. He obviously liked playing with witches, which was certainly not the case of Kharon. He was suspicious as he had met witches only in beds while they had been sleeping. And he had never met a witch to be in love with him.'

'Do you think it's safe to provoke the witch in such a way?'

'I do, it is. Moreover, it's very alluring. You shouldn't be worrying as this girl loves you more than her own life.'

'What's your interest in it?'

'I'm always glad to have fun with people. They're so funny and like babies. You can say them whatever you want and having added the miracle item – it's beneficial, we get their souls. And people in love are indescribable miracle. I had no need to speak about benefits to Victoria. She didn't care about it. She just wanted to get you. And she did it. You're like a rainbow for her.'

Kharon was carefully listening to Lucifer, drinking his coffee, grown up in his place of his own birth, with different taste.

'Honestly I don't remember any witch to be in love with you.' The demon said. 'How can you be so sure about Victoria?'

'You're right, my friend. I have never had a witch who was really in love with me, but I have had women. Women and witches are almost the same. I got on the right side of them and I think you'll do, too. If you need my help, remember I'm at your disposal.'

'Of course, I do, Lucifer. How does Akton feel about what he's seen?'

'He remembers nothing but one of my most perfect lectures about why he's forbidden to leave our world.'

'What if he disobeys again?'

‘Again?’ Lucifer gave Kharon a serious look. ‘I’ll have to divest him of his wings. You know what it means as he does. Certainly, he knows about sanctions, if he dares dispense with my law. Don’t worry Kharon, I’m not a tyrant. I just want my orders to be executed. I’ll let Akton walk in human world definitely as soon as he is ready for it. But it’s not now.’

‘Lucifer,’ the demon said dully, ‘can I ask you a question, away from the certain subject?’

‘I’m listening.’

Lucifer was sitting at the living wooden table, legs of which rooted into the ground from the many-thousands-old oak. The table top was a perfectly turned marble slab of rich black colour. Kharon was sitting opposite on the same chair stylized like the table.

‘Am I able to fall in love?’

The smile quickly faded away from Lucifer’s face. He frowned, rose from the chair and walked about the huge room.

‘I’ve confused you, I’m sorry!’ Kharon rose too.

‘Don’t be, my friend, but your question really made me upset. I’m sorry but I want to know the reason of this question. Can you answer me?’

‘Yes. I’m living with people and many of them are in love with each other. So, this feeling... I wonder if I am able to feel it on my own not on Victoria and having felt her love?’

‘Actually, I’ve never met myself any incubus in love. And I’ve never heard of any...’

Lucifer’s answer surprised Kharon a bit: it was too simple. His Lord never answered like this.

‘Never?’

‘Never. But it means nothing. It doesn’t mean there are no any of them. I can’t meet and know everything what happened before! In our world there’s a definition of love and I know it exactly but I’m not sure that all our habitants are able to be in love. At least I didn’t give love to everyone. It’s the same about people. Not all of them can love and they take a one-sided view that’s gonna be differ from the view of those who faced love before.’

‘Have you ever been in love?’ Kharon asked.

‘I’ll not play cunning, my friend!’ The Lord smiled. ‘Once I face love. She was very beautiful girl. She died. For a long time I couldn’t get over her disappearance, I annoyed to magicians and witched asking them for help. Alas, there are no winners against the death neither here nor by my father. The death makes all be equal.’

‘How did you get that you were in love?’ Kharon was very interested in how that pathetic feeling could be born.

‘Kharon,’ The Fallen Angel smiled and came up to the demon. ‘If you are in love, you’ll get it. It’s a dawn in the human world. You should go back to your Sun.’

‘You’re right.’

Kharon got up, thanked his friend for his treatment and Lucifer called him when the demon was near the doors.

‘You’ve been in the cinema. How did you like it?’

‘It’s the best I have ever seen.’ The demon smiled and disappeared.

Victoria was sleeping like a log with no moves for the whole night. Kharon had time to get to bed in second when the alarm clock went off.

‘Jesus...’ Victoria whispered through the cooling down dream. ‘This is the latest day...’

Kharon was lying with his eyes closed, pretended to be sleeping. The girl started being ready for work, having left the sleeping man in lulling cosiness of the morning obelisk.

The demon was thinking about Lucifer’s words for a long time, analysing all people in love whom he had seen. He was too interested in how love worked. With his arguments he didn’t notice him fall asleep. Through his dream Kharon felt the warm lips, gently kissing his cheek, his should and

the pleasant whisper, telling about love. Still glowing in his endless dreams beyond human's control, Kharon took the morning kiss of Victoria.

25

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October 2013 (Friday)

That was the end of the second month of the girl's unlikely love and the demon. Victoria fell in love more and more and was only glad that the man allowed to love himself, and sometimes he even very well played.

Everyday Victoria worked, trying to avoid her persevering manager, soothing her memories and imagination with recent pictures of being together with Kharon.

The demon with all his might hanged out with girls. He studied Moscow quickly and well. He had favourite places where he could have time. He had places which he hated and nothing in the world would make him be there. He sometimes was bored: Victoria worked all days long.

Kharon decided to meet a girl and contribute his energy store. He loved Vic... in the bed. He loved her madly. He believed in this love. The problem was that Victoria needed more time to recover strength. That was the reason why they didn't sleep in bed only three times in a month. For Kharon who got from women everything he wanted and not once, to fornicate three times in a month wasn't a few it was nothing. And if his hungry thoughts were covered by the first month of being with people then by the end of the second month his nature gained the upper hand. He gave the look at other girls more often.

It was almost afternoon when the demon opened his eyes. The sun was shining through the window, the world seemed to be so warm that the demon smiled, looking at the window.

Drinking hot flavoured coffee, the man was near the window and examining how Moscow was getting ready for lunch. He took his cell waiting to see some beautiful pictures and nice message from Victoria. Every morning on her way to work the girl took pictures of something interesting and sent it to Kharon with the next confession under. That afternoon the demon studied the smartphone but there was nothing. The absence of a picture confused him a bit but not enough to make him panic.

Kharon slowly buttoned his shirt, looking at his unshaven face in the mirror. He didn't like shaving so much! He considered it a very serious punishment for a human and couldn't understand what for. There could be only two days without shaving and it was not much! But there was bristle on his face again.

A music which the demon didn't know to exist made him distract from looking, touching and rethinking of his life. Having frowned Kharon studied Victoria's phone and an incoming call on the display.

'Victoria's phone!' he took the call, listening to the answer.

'Thanks God!' a happy sigh and chuckle were heard. 'I thought I've lost my phone. Kharon, what a happiness that I've left it at home.'

'Hello, dear.' Kharon was serious.

He was confused as usual with Victoria's wordings. What a bag of words "Thanks God" in relation to the demon! It made him angry and he couldn't and didn't want to calm down.

'What's wrong with your voice?' Vic immediately understood only by his intonation that something went wrong.

'Honestly Vic, I don't still understand why I'm supposed to listen to it.'

'What's it?' the girl got confused, digging in her mind, remembering what an insult she said.

'Heh, dear, same old Vic.' the man smiled being upset.

'Are you about "Thanks God"?' Vic spluttered with laughter. 'This is just a parenthesis. It has no meaning. All people say it independently on their being of passionate believer or atheist. You shouldn't pay attention. If you're upset with it, I'll certainly exclude it out of my lexicon. Don't worry...'

'Where shall I meet you?' Kharon ignored all the girl's arguments and excuses.

‘Umph... At 7 pm at Kuznetsky Most metro station. If something changes, I’ll call you... But if you have something changed, I’ll not know about it... Oh, my god! Put down my work phone number.’

‘Don’t worry nothing’s gonna be changed. I’ll be waiting for you at Kuznetsky Most at 7. I know your work phone number.’

‘I love you...’ Victoria smiled.

There was silence in respond. As usual Kharon didn’t know what to say.

‘Fine,’ the girl grinned, ‘I’m not gonna torture you. Don’t make up what to say. I just love you.’

Victoria hanged up and looked at the window with the smile on her lips.

‘Victoria!’

The girl gave a shiver and turned around. Gregory was near her.

‘You’ve scared me.’ Vic lowered her eyes and got up.

‘Let’s go to my office. Take your laptop.’

Gregory ordered and went ahead. Vic walked behind him already hating next two hours...

Kharon fingered Victoria’s phone, looking through the photos. All her phone was full of his photos: he slept, his eyelashes, his eyes, he smiled, mysteriously looked at the window, wet after being in the rain, with tea at the kitchen. Mostly Kharon didn’t see Victoria take pictures of him. He was tired to scroll up volumes of his photos.

The display turned on with bright colours and Vasilisa’s picture appeared on it. The demon smiled and accepted the call.

‘Victoria’s phone.’

There was silence on the phone and quiet sighs of breathing of surprise.

‘Kharon?’ Vasilisa finally started speaking.

‘Good morning, Vasilisa.’

‘Hi... Is Vic there?’

‘She’s at work and has left her phone at home. What can I do for you?’ Kharon closed his eyes and the imagine of the girl came into his mind.

The wild lock or ponytail of chestnut hair, oversized sweatshirt, running down her shoulder, the strap of which was on her wrist; leggings cut up like shirts... Her eyes were filled with happiness and satisfaction.

‘Yes... I’m just gonna have a walk with her in the evening, we’ve not seen for a long time.’

‘Let’s have a walk.’

‘With you?’ she was surprised.

‘With me. Am I not too good for it?’ he said resentfully.

‘Why... not to good. Ok. Where are we to meet?’ Vasilisa was excited.

‘Do you live near 1905 metro station? Near Victoria?’

‘Yes, almost near. I live between 1905 and Barrikadnay metro stations.’

‘I see. I’ll be waiting for you near the Zoo entrance. Do you remember how I look like?’

‘Hell yes! How much time do you need to get there?’ Vasilisa was putting on her sock.

‘I’ll be there in a half of an hour.’

‘Ok, deal.’

The girl hanged up the phone and rushed to get ready. Kharon kept on looking his photos in Victoria’s phone. Finally, among those pile of his face and body he found the only one photo of Victoria. She was so... beautiful. She had eyes of olive colour and big black pupils. Her stare was senseless and studying. Despite of it was a picture there was life streaming in her eyes. Her hair was done in an evening hair style. Her mouth was pursed like if some a severe thing was about to come out of it. Kharon liked the picture definitely. He felt unclear emotions, looking through the photo. He just wanted to look at her brooding eyes, at her lips...

At the fixed time Kharon appeared at the Moscow Zoo entrance. Needless to say, that the girl was being late. He wasn’t confused with this. For two months he had been observing different

relationships and he already knew if time was fixed at 3pm and it was 15 minutes past 3 it didn't mean that the girl had forgotten and been going to come. She was just being late. It was a sign of privet convenances between women.

Kharon was standing near the off-the-job fountain when he suddenly understood Vasilisa was about to appear and he even knew from where. The girl came out of the corner and met the lone demon at once. The man took her in a rapid attentive glance and caught himself thinking that he was interested in her... certainly as in not a new friend.

'You look amazing.' He looked at her eyes, getting into her mind. Until now Vasilisa didn't make him be surprised. The fact that he was handsome Kharon had already heard from her when they had met at the first time. He had also heard the question why not her but Victoria was lucky to have Kharon.

'Hi.' Vasilisa didn't felt confused. 'Thank you. Where shall we go?'

'It's just the same to me. I like walking everywhere. Your preferences?'

Kharon carefully trying not to provoke the girl, with light airy smile, took her hands and raised it to his lips.

'Kharon...' the girl astonishingly whispered, staring around and with ineffable joy watching the man.

'Your hands are cold,' he scorched her hands with his hot breath, trying to warm them up. 'So pale and cold...'

She didn't protest at all as her hands were really cold and the tender attempts to warm them up gave her some cares.

'Let's go down.' Kharon kept on chaffing her hands. 'Wait. Give me your hand.'

The man put on his mitten on her hand and smiled.

'Put your hand into your pocket...in the mitten.'

'Listen, I don't know what to say. Words failed me.' Vasilisa with a broad smile looked at the companion.

'You can try to say what you're really thinking but you can also lie.'

'You'd not be able to know what I chose,' Vasilisa looked at Kharon's eyes.

'Of course, I wouldn't...' The demon smiled, stroked his finger over her cheek. 'I wouldn't know.'

It was about 4 pm when Kharon caught the thought that the girl was hungry among the mess of pleasant thoughts about his person.

'Shall we have a snack?' the demon asked her.

'I've just thought of it!' Vasilisa exclaimed in admire.

The girl had warmed some time ago but kept on wearing the demon's mittens, holding his hand. She was buttered up with the man's gentlemanlike things. She grooved on listening his nice timber of his voice and the words he spoke. She liked looking at him. It was understandable. Kharon had created a unique body which was bound to grab. And Vasilisa was being grabbed stronger and stronger by that hellish hook. Kharon was bored and... interested a bit.

They were sitting at the semi-round sofa in a quiet corner under the second-floor balcony. There was nobody nearby.

Almost imperceptibly Kharon moved up closer to Vasilisa. They were chattering. The man was moving up closer and closer. The girl pretended not to be noticing anything and all that was going on was ok. That was as it should be.

Sometime later Kharon was reclining on the soft cosy leather sofa, holding Vasilisa's hand tight. She was smiling. His fingers so beautiful, long and warm were between hers. They were giving and stroking the warmth. There was laughter and smile. Out of the corner of her eye Vasilisa was studying the man and slowly going out of her mind under the influence of the awakened lust. She insanely

enjoyed his touches and stares. He sometimes looked at her in such a way that she wanted to feel his charming stare forever.

In a minute the demon of the lust heard a very clear dream about a kiss... Their lips locked in a passionate kiss and the only thing Vasilisa had time to understand was that she had never felt anything like this.

None of them thought of Victoria. The demon felt perfect. Actually, the kiss energy was insignificant but nutritious a bit. Kharon understood that he more liked kissing and making love with women in reality than in dreams. Women were so alive and energetic, so sensitive and had kindly hearts! He felt his own libido different and more powerful.

Vasilisa couldn't think of anything in the arms of the seducer but of him. In comparison to Victoria she had many men but none of them were like Kharon. She just gave into her animal instinct and own immoral desire. She didn't stop the cocky man. She didn't want to stop him. Moreover, she wanted more and the only one thing she yearned for while his arms were embracing her waist under the jacket was the fact that they weren't in bed. She'd have never rejected him.

'I can hardly control myself not to tear these stupid clothes to tatters and not to...' Kharon came back with the kisses again.

He was still looking at bright and audacious pictures streaming in Vasilisa's mind. He liked those pictures and their rampageous content. But he was realistic about what was going on: not people and the atmosphere prevented him from tearing the clothes in tatters but price and pay. Vasilisa wasn't special but was like any woman whom Kharon could indulge. He usually took lives for his services! Sooner or later he had to stop himself.

When Kharon finally did away with his passion, having let his lips rest, Vasilisa saw Victoria's face before her eyes.

'Kharon,' she whispered in scare.

'Hmm,' he mumbled in respond, moving the girl closer to him.

'What're we doing?'

'We're doing what we both want to.'

'What about Victoria? You love each other and you let yourself behave like this?'

The demon was slightly surprised by an unexpected pretension, but he didn't remove his smile.

'You, my sweet crumpet...' he said in a low voice touching her face, 'I just wanted to do what I did. Even more I'm sure, don't even have an argument now, that you, even more than me, wanted me to do what I did.'

'True!' Vasilisa smiled, having laid her head on his shoulder.

'I know. And I know something else, if we'd been in a quieter place, we'd have never stopped, would we?'

'I wouldn't... You're not like others but I think of Victoria... She's my friend and what we did is called betrayal. We mustn't say her about it. Are you listening to me?'

'Why?' Kharon got surprised.

Vasilisa stared at the man intently with eyes almost starting out of her head. There were no limits for her surprise.

'Are you out of your mind?' she hissed angrily.

'No, I'm fine. I just don't understand what so special we've done? We just kissed and it's ok for men and women. Women actually are created to be kissed.'

'Do you live on the Earth?' the girl asked and smiled. 'You'll break her heart. She'll hate you! We're doing bad things for her. Do you understand? Lordy, why am I speaking it to you? You're not a child, you have to understand!'

'I see.'

In fact, Kharon understood nothing but feeling indignation from the girl and that's why he decided to agree with her.

‘Can I ask you and you’ll be honest with me?’ the man took her hand again.

‘Listen, you’re really strange guy,’ Vasilisa looked at his eyes. ‘You’re very handsome and strange. We’ve been kissing with about two hours and you’ve been touching my body, whispering beautiful words in my ear, I thought I’m in love with you... Now you’re asking if you can ask me something?’

‘Yes.’ Kharon answered considering. ‘I think I am. Is it bad also? Am I not supposed to behave like this?’

‘What’s your question?’ Vasilisa ignored the man’s question, having accepted it like a jerk.

‘If we turned out to be together maybe in a café or not in public, would you say me no?’

‘No. Having known what you’re capable of and you’re supposed to be capable of more, I would never reject you... I wouldn’t be able to. My conscience will eat me away. It’s doing now. I don’t even know how I will look at Vic’s eyes when we meet. I really don’t know. But I want today to happen again. I shall burn in hell for it, but I want...’

‘In hell? Burn?’ the demon grinned. ‘It’s not as bad in hell as you think and not all burn there.’

‘I’m not gonna inquire where you got this information and I do get you’re a weird dude but it’s to your advantage. Victoria mustn’t know about kisses and that we met at all. Kharon, can you hear me? She mustn’t! This is betrayal and adultery. Give me her phone, by the way.’

‘Why?’

‘I’ll delete my call not to let a suspicion crept into her mind.’

The demon handed her the phone and got immersed into his thoughts. Betrayal and adultery. Strange people. Why did they need to complicate everything? The problem was that the demon mixed the definitions of feelings. He knew a bit of friendship and less of betrayal and nothing of adultery. He wanted to know more but any question about those topics would inevitably confuse Victoria. Kharon was really fed up with that people considered him to be strange.

Having chattered and embraced so-called friend came out of the café.

Vitoria had been in Gregory’s office the whole day. They were closing the project and the man gave the girl no mercy.

By 4 pm she had been almost dead and just stopped getting her mind right to understand what Gregory wanted from her. Fortunately, Gregory, finally, said that he approved the draft and it could be sent to be printed. Victoria sighed with relief.

‘Thank you, Vic, good job. You’ll be rewarded this month.’

‘Thank you.’ The girl answered tiredly, paying off the wires.

Gregory smiled. He looked the girl fought with the wire, trying to unscrew the wire from her laptop.

‘Let me help,’ Gregory rose up and with a subtle movement of the hand unscrewed the wire. ‘You look tired. Have I wearied you?’

‘No...although,’ the girl smiled. ‘You’ve your hands in it.’

‘I’ll wash away my guilt. Bring your laptop at your place and I’ll be waiting for you on the first floor. Take your coat. We’re gonna visit a very good place to have lunch and relax after.’

‘But it’s only 4. I gotta be at work.’

‘No, not today. Since yesterday I’m your line manager. You have no manager but me. Even more, you’ll place in your own office near mine.’

‘Hum...’ Victoria was confused. ‘Why did I get privilege?’

‘Do you think you don’t deserve?’

‘No, I do...’ the girl turned red to her hair. ‘You’re cornering me. Ok, I’ll take my coat.’

‘I’m waiting in the lobby on the first ground.’

Vic took a sigh, gave a quick smile and went, almost ran out of his office as she didn’t want to be asked something new.

She picked up her bag at her work place seeing nobody. Her colleagues envied and were angry with her. They didn't understand for what services the country manager was so favourable to her. Victoria was reserved trying not to speak about anything with anyone. She didn't impose her friendship. Especially she didn't try to be close to Gregory.

While she was coming down, she called on her phone that she had left at home.

'What's up? I miss you...' Victoria stood near the lifts with the smile on her face.

'Hi, dear. I'm walking.'

'Where? In the centre as usual?'

'Yes. Has anything changed with your plans?'

'No. At 7 as we agreed. Just calling to know how you're getting on and to say that I wanna see you so much.'

'In two hours and a half I'll be waiting for you in the middle of the station.' Kharon smiled too, squeezing Vasilisa's hand.

'Ok, I love you.' Victoria hanged up the phone and entered the lift.

Gregory was waiting for her on the first ground near the entrance door. Vic glanced at him and took a sigh again. That solid man in the coat, patent-leather shoes, in ironed trousers wasn't the one whom she wanted to see. But she had no right of choice till 6 pm.

Gregory opened the car door, waited for the girl to get into the car, who didn't used to cars and sat to drive.

'You should belt up. We're not gonna drive far but nevertheless... By 6.30 I have to get back to the office.'

'No problem' Victoria started belting up and no problem turned into a problem.

Gregory smiled, having bended to the girl, took the belt and pulled it to him. Victoria clung fast to the chair. Her nose caught the scent of bourgeoisie and shaving cream. The man glanced at the feeling constrained girl and smiled.

'You're very nervous,' he said in a low voice, 'Relax, I don't bite.'

Victoria was looking at his green eyes intently studied hers, still hanging over her although the she had been already belted up and the man could have moved away.

'Your eyes colour is madly beautiful,' Gregory said in a lower voice, slowly bending down to her lips.

'I'm so sorry, my phone's calling!' Vic waved her hands hardly didn't punch the man in the face.

The girl pressed the phone to her ear and started speaking with the emptiness. She clearly understood that probably she looked very stupid, but she didn't want to kiss with her newly-made boss. Besides she didn't like him and at that exact moment she had an aversion for him. The closer he moved to her, the more tears she had in her eyes. If he had managed to kiss her Vic wouldn't have been able to hold her tears.

All the short way while they were driving Victoria was speaking with an invisible man not to let Gregory speak with her. Out of the eye corner she followed him, his reaction and prayed for that nobody would call her indeed.

Hardly had the car stopped Victoria said good-bye to her switched off phone and jumped out of the car like a bat out of the hell. She wanted most of all that terrible lunch to be over soon. She wished she had been a demon to control and distort time. In addition, the always followed for its son ghost of the woman started pretty annoying the girl. But she was glad that the spirit didn't want Gregory to touch Vic.

They were sitting face to face and waiting for the waiter to bring their meals. If Gregory was under fire pseudo moaning that he was hungry as a hunter, Victoria wasn't hungry at all. She had a lump in the throat.

'Victoria, I invited you here to have a rest a bit and communicate about something else not about work... and here should be no subordination. Agree?'

The girl nodded and smiled a bit, sadly looking at her companion.

‘You’re not yourself today. What’s wrong with you?’

‘What are you speaking about?’

‘About frustration in your eyes. Why?’

‘I don’t know. It’s Friday, the end of the working week. I’m really tired. Haven’t you been tired at all for this week?’

‘I’ve been living in non-stop rhythm not for one day and even not for the first year. You know, our body is a machine, a computer. It will work as you program it. This week has no difference from previous ones. May I?’

The man sat at the side chair that was closer to Victoria. She was just thinking why Gregory’s “may I” didn’t sound like a question but an imperative affirmation. Trying to make no sign Vic started being nervous again. Gregory took her hand and started intently looking over her fingers.

‘Your hands create so wonderful masterpieces...’

‘There’re no masterpieces.’

‘Your self-esteem is very low. Who imposed it on you?’

The girl felt giddy and she didn’t know what it meant. While her boss was speaking Vic was seeing through a mist him burying his mother. He was alone at the cemetery. There were no relatives nor friends. Nobody. The weather was warm. It was a daytime. The sun was shining. Two workers were burying the coffin with the ground very fast. Gregory frowned. There were tears in his eyes. There was only one thought in his mind: “she hasn’t come”. He looked at the pit and didn’t want to think of anything. Victoria felt pity for him! She could feel all his grief and how deep he got over his loss. For a moment she felt his life be lost. How was he supposed to live further? He had a feeling of guilt. The deepest guilt. But even money didn’t have a possibility to get life back if it was really about to leave. His heart ached. And the last blade with the ground was thrown on the hill. Then the realizing that this was the end came. You could get back nothing. That was over.

Victoria came back to reality as soon as Gregory took his hands away from hers.

‘Oh my God...’ she whispered, brushing away tears from her cheek, trying to forget what she had seen.

‘Victoria? Are you crying?’ Gregory bended down to her and touched her hand again. ‘Have I insulted you?’

The girl shook her head and asked God not to show her anything from lives of the dead people. She didn’t want to know the pain they had got over. She didn’t want to feel it together with them again and again. She was fed up with the ghost and spirits that endlessly came to her to show their experiences. She didn’t want to see them all. The tears choked her not because she saw Gregory at the cemetery but because she was tired to see it in general. The girl had stopped asking why she could see them. She was preoccupied with another one: “what should she do not to see them at all?”

‘Speak to me, Vic. What’s going on?’

‘I’ve got something in my eye... It hurts... too much.’

‘Let me see!’ without a second the man grabbed the girl and started examining her eyes, carefully looking for a sore. He wiped her tears away, stroked her cheek and kindly stared at her and for a while Victoria felt better.

‘Is it better?’

Vic nodded her head, intently gazing into his eyes.

‘I’m glad.’ He smiled and let the girl. ‘Tell me about yourself, Victoria.’

‘What exactly do you want to know?’

‘What do you like? What don’t you like? What do you expect from your life? What about your family... everything in shorts. I’m interested in everything about you.’

‘You are first.’

‘What does it mean?’

'It means you answer your questions first.'

'Are you really interested, or you want to get off?' Gregory smirked, having had a sip of a tart juice.

'I'm interested. It's true.' Vic smiled.

'Ok, I'll give you a head start. I was born in 1979, on the 8th of August. I have a single-parent family... I had. My father left me when we were 2.'

'We?'

'I have a sister... I had a sister – Polina. We quarrelled and I decided that she doesn't exist for me. I've heard nothing of her for ten years already. I finished school, graduated Economical Department in MHU with honours. When I was 23, I came to our company as a financial specialist. I've been making my career for ten years and as a result I'm a country manager. That's my story in shorts.'

'What about your mum?'

'She died ten years ago.'

'I'm sorry.'

'It's ok, it was a long ago. I keep good memories of her. When my sister quarrelled with her, the thrombus tore off and you know what could happen next. Polina still thinks that she was right. She didn't consider coming to our mum's funeral. I'm sorry for telling all of that, it's really boring.'

'No, it's not. We're having hear-to-heart conversation, remember?' the girl smiled.

'Yes, you're right. What's your story?'

'My? I have almost the same. My dad left us. But we see each other very rarely. My mum's alive and kicking, fortunately. We live a cat-and-dog life. She's impossible.' Victoria shook her head. 'I'm telling she's impossible. I sometimes understand why my dad left. He couldn't live with her. To get over her contrary disposition is impossible. That's why he left.'

'And you left too?' Gregory regarded her in all seriousness.

'Yes, I did...'

'Did you leave her?'

'No! Oh, dear, no! I left her because I couldn't stay with her at one territory. It's very complicated. You will never understand it. Your mum always stroked your head and fussed over you while mine was always looking for imperfections in me.'

'How do you know that my mum was as exactly the same as you told?' Gregory smiled mysteriously and squinted. At that moment Victoria understood that she had shot off her mouth. Suddenly she became worrying and felt like a cat on hot bricks.

'I... Just.... It seems like that.'

'You're right! All my life my mum got easy on me. You know how deep it was madding! But she was my mum and I couldn't afford to be rude and insult her.'

Victoria couldn't help smiling when she got that Gregory wasn't a stickler for detail out of the office as she had thought before. It was pleasure and interesting to speak with him.

'What do you mean by imperfections?' he asked her.

'Well... it's a long story. You know it's generation gap which can never be solved.'

'Your mum pushed her weight around and you resisted?'

'Something like that. It's like a tug-of-war game.'

'Where do you live, Victoria? I mean where did you go from your mum?'

'I live with my man,' the girl went off with relief, being happy in the depth that her answer would stop any half-formed intentions from him.

Gregory could not think of any reply to what he heard. Having heard about the man he unnoticeably smirked a little bit sadly lowered his look at the plates. Suddenly Victoria understood that the silence problem wasn't because Gregory had nothing to say but because he was choosing what to say.

'So, do you manage it? I mean... you work recently...'

Having frowned Vic was listening to her boss without understanding what was happening to him: always self-confident, handsome and having a respectful tone man suddenly looked like a confused school leaver.

‘What’s the matter?’ the girl said.

‘I’m sorry... A sudden headache. Oh, shit, I gotta go... I’ve got a meeting. Victoria, I gotta go. May I drive you?’

‘Thank you but it’ll be faster by the metro and I don’t want make you wait. Don’t worry, Mr. Dogmanov, and you should go, ok? You shouldn’t be late.’

‘Victoria,’ the man rose up, ‘I’ve been glad you had lunch with me. I hope we have lunch again.’

‘As you wish. It’s been really interesting to be with you today.’

‘Just today?’ he winked at her.

‘You made me free from work and yes, it’s been very interesting.’

Gregory came up to her and kindness and warmth were streaming from him that made the girl feel uncomfortable.

‘See you on Monday, Victoria. I’ve paid the bill.’

Her boss went to the exit putting on his coat. Victoria watched him leaving with mysteriously squinty eyes. Hardly had she immersed into after-lunch-thoughts as she remembered to go to Kharon.

With the smile on her lips she ran to Kuznetskiy Most metro station, looking forward to meeting.

Vic left the train and immediately, streamline with the mad crowd, headed to the centre of the station, raving about seeing the demon. She smiled wildly. Nobody was waiting for her.

Victoria convulsively looked around: there was nobody. From one hand someone pushed her, from another – she was called. The step in right and she stepped on a foot, a step in left and someone winged her with a big bag. And the gentle, warm hands covered her eyes and a perfect feeling of defence appeared behind. Nobody more could neither punch nor step on, there was only peacefulness and cosiness. There was like a glass cylinder around her like incubator, constantly protected her from external influence and impact of the environment. It was something unnatural and scaring but so close and romantic.

‘My love...’ Vic said quiet, touching his hands.

She would recognize his warmth and touches out of millions of others.

‘I wanted to surprise you.’ He answered, embracing her with his arm and still covering her eyes with the second hand. ‘You’re so penetrating. I wish you didn’t pretend to have any idea who was standing behind you.’

‘I clearly know that it’s you and no one else. I don’t want anyone else but only you.’

While Kharon was hiding all around with his hand he perfectly could feel her thoughts running through his nerve impulses, eating in his mind and his joy and complacency awaking because of the thoughts content. He almost got used to the girl’s feelings and to the fact that he was like a god for her. With each passing second, he liked it more and more.

He turned the girl to his face and kissed her lips, silently whispering about love. More captivating he liked the taste of kissing that woman.

‘People are looking at us.’ Victoria drew a little away from the squeaky man. ‘It’s not good. You do know it.’

‘I do. But I can do nothing to control myself. I can hear you what you’re thinking. I can see what your lips and body desire for. Do you really think they care about people? This is your head to care about people, but they... your lips... your fingers... your arms and the warmth between your legs none of that know what people mean. They don’t care and I agree with them...’

The demon began kissing her again with fresh fire and wild passion, embracing because of which the ground and the sky got mixed up under her feet into a hydrogenous gruel of unknown consistence. Victoria was pressed against the column. She was slowly losing her mind and morality.

‘Kharon,’ she shushed him fighting against not only him but herself and her desires.

‘I see. I see, dear. At first it was romanticism in your way, now it’s people. Do you always have anything in your way? I know that when people are ok, there’s gonna be something else in your way, isn’t it, dear?’

Kharon looked up at her gravely absolutely with no understanding why people were arranged as they were that if they had nothing in their ways to do what they want then they created some sticking points in their ways. Was it funnier? More interesting?

‘It’s not the problem...’

‘No, it is, and you know it.’ The demon interrupted her. ‘I won’t touch anymore when we’re not at home, will I? Do I understand you right?’

‘No,’ Victoria shook her head anxiously, grabbing his hand.

The demon smiled not hiding the slight mockery in his eyes.

‘No, no, no,’ the girl pressed his hand to his cheek, ‘you can’t deprive me of your arms and touches.’

‘Look, you are the person who deprives you of it by speaking about people who don’t care about our kisses. They just pass by, look at us like an attribute of the station, a piece of exposition. Do you really think these people care about you? Do they think of you? You must be kidding. Just have what you want... I’m speaking not only about hands.’

Kharon carefully not to draw attention, kissed the girl again. This time the kiss was fast, usual and bleak, deprived of passion.

She followed him, held his hand, getting through the crowd, headed to the exit.

Then they were on the moving stair. She liked so much the moments of idyll when she could enjoy them fully.

‘Why are we at Kuznetsky Most?’ Kharon asked, stroking her gentle wrist.

‘I don’t know why, I just wanted to go to a bookshop. Would you mind?’ Victoria looked at him with so much enthusiasm with kindness in the eyes and hope in her voice. She was waiting for him to answer.

‘Hum... A big book. It’s about art. Of course, what else about it could be.’

‘You’ve seen it, haven’t you?’

‘Entirely by accident.’

‘So, what do you think?’

‘How can I say no to you?’

Victoria stopped trying not to smile. The man walking near her, left her no choice. She liked all about him. He had no imperfections. No disadvantages. He was ideal.

‘For a long time that man was trying to get rid of the desire to kiss your lovely lips... Would you let him do it?’

‘No.’

‘Why?’

‘I don’t love him.’

‘To love is an obligatory for kissing?’

‘Of course! How can you kiss a person whom you don’t love? I can’t even imagine someone’s mouth touching mine! Ugh! I have you to kiss.’

‘So, you mean when people date, they don’t kiss with others?’ Kharon asked, having finally understood why Vasilisa had been constantly telling about their joint bad moves.

The demon started understanding that people preferred monogamy. At least in the beginning and in reality they did. Victoria stopped and turned to pensive Kharon and looked at his eyes.

‘Is there a definition of adultery in hell?’

‘No.’

‘No?’

‘No. What does it mean for you, people?’ he kept on walking, being thoughtful about his moves.

‘If you discover any adultery it means the end. If you don’t then it means nothing. As a rule, the end means breaking up. It’s painful for both. Someone can forgive. More precisely someone is able to say that they forgive but the thing that a beloved person did is gonna be with that couple for entire life.’

‘Would you forgive?’ the demon silly asked.

‘I’d kill.’ Victoria answered with all her seriousness. ‘I’d kill her. I wouldn’t be able to kill you but her...’

‘You’re too cruel!’ Kharon opened the door of the bookshop.

‘Thank you.’ Vic gave a seductive smile to the powerful demon and jumped into the shop under his hand, holding the door open.

‘Any adultery is always a betrayal. Betrayal is miserable and loathsome, and it hurts. All human creatures are too much twisted between each other and it goes that a thing can’t be without another one. If you don’t know what love is, you will never know what adultery is.’

Kharon was behind the girl, with the emptiness in his eyes he watched her looking through the books of the same type, seeking for the needed one. He realized that he had made a great mistake in the very beginning when his unhuman mind had had opinion of people. He hadn’t taken the people could be able to feel into account. He didn’t understand most of all what to do, how to pretend that he was able to feel also.

‘Ok, let’s go.’ Vic said sadly but fast, having put the book back at the shelf.

‘Aren’t you going to buy it?’ The demon was surprised, taking back the book. ‘You’ve been dreaming about it for a month already. What’s the matter?’

Victoria looked around. He knew already that feeling.

‘Confusion? Yes, it’s confusion. Why, dear?’

‘No, no, it’s ok. There’s no confusion...’

‘It’s a lie.’ The demon stopped smiling.

Victoria knew what it meant. In a second she turned to be in his arms and his hand carefully stroked her head. From an outsiders’ viewpoint they looked like lovers giving to each other a little of unobtrusive tenderness. But Victoria perfectly knew that the demon like a black widow was lying the threads between his hand and the human mind. In a second the spider threads turned into the most powerful wires which Kharon freakily needed when he stopped understanding the girl’s speech.

In her mind Vic pleaded the man to stop and not to get into her mind. She couldn’t stop him in reality as Kharon was too sweaty fumbling in her mind.

‘The book... is a dream,’ the demon whispered, having closed the eyes. ‘Number. Big number. The number again. The 5th of November. What’s gonna be on the 5th of Number? Vic? Come on, dear, think about it, I must understand what’s going on... The 5th of November... The 5th. Here it is – your payment day. The number is 5996 roubles... The number is on the book. This is the cost.’

The demon opened his eyes and looked at her face definitely. She was excited. Her eyes were lowered, she had rose cheeks of childhood.

‘This book is too expensive and you’re not ready to spend that kind of money but you’re waiting for your payment and you’re gonna come here again. Have I collected right your incoherent ideas?’ he asked giving the book to the girl.

She couldn’t look at his eyes. She was ashamed. She was greatly ashamed because being well-paid she all the same couldn’t spend easily almost 6000 roubles.

‘Have I understood you right, dear?’ the demon repeated his question again, gently touching her chin, trying to catch her ashamed eyes.

She silently nodded and her eyes were dim with tears. She didn’t want Kharon to see her crying again.

‘Can I buy it for you?’ he asked, without letting the girl turn away.

He was important to look at her eyes to understand how her emotions were shown. He needed her real emotions. The demon recognized, however, rather rapidly that without reading minds he could just look at the eyes and get all the necessary information out of there.

‘No, Kharon, it’s too expensive. As all the other art books. I’ll get paid and...’

‘I’ve put it in a wrong way,’ the man interrupted her, taking back the massive book, ‘I’ll buy it. No objections can be accepted.’

He turned away and went to the checkout lane. Victoria was open-mouthed staying near the bookshelves, understanding nothing how that could happen.

‘I can hear your pulse accelerating,’ Kharon said in a low voice with the smile on his lips when Victoria came up to him in the queue.

‘Kharon...’

‘I know the reason. You’re waiting for this book! You’re glad! These are emotions of happiness and joy. I’ve rather well known these because they are the brightest, strongest and purest you can ever have.’

‘Thank you!’ Vic put her head on his shoulder, hiding her the most pleased smile.

‘What for? We’re still in the queue.’

‘For what’s gonna happen in two minutes.’

As the book was bought Vic was happy. She had tried to buy it when she was a student, she graduated and even when she got a job. She madly wanted it but every time something prevented her from buying.

They were walking down the street from Kuznetsky most metro station. Kharon was carrying the massive book packed for all of life’s emergencies. Victoria’s arm linked in his and she didn’t even try to hide her happiness and smiling like a brewer’s horse. What could go wrong but she suddenly felt woozy. A waltz. A villainous loathful waltz. There were no things static before. The building started floating down like escaped from surrealistical pictures. Concrete, brick and iron objects turned into a ductile elastic band who knows who starched it. In a flash the sky and the earth switched places. Vic sorted out the darkened cumulus and the stars awaking in the distance. The earth sprinkled with the pellets of dirty from above, the asphalt threw back lumps in people. Upside down the raced giving its light to all around, blinding the eyes. The eyes what they did! Cars like sturdy immortal bacteria divided like cells. Vic saw right before her eyes the world gathered its double-ganger and they both were so disgusting! They were too damned painful look! It was possible. With its diploid abnormality it drove the girl crazy. Her eyes couldn’t focus on. They didn’t belong to her. Everything was at sixes and seven!

Victoria couldn’t take a step forward. She just didn’t understand what was going on, where the asphalt was, where to put step. She was like an astronaut tirelessly worked on the ISS, having completely forgotten what gravity and Newtonian constant of gravitation were. There was no coordination. It absented. There was confusion and surging up fear.

The girl tried to say something, to ask the standing near demon in catatonic way for help. He only heard her like as a lonely cow in the field of thistles weakly bellowing.

Her heart was beating faster and faster. It was getting scarier and scarier. The half of the body was getting heavier as if came off and flew into the abyss. No, it didn’t hurt. It scared. The body was getting covered with a layer of something soft and disgusting, something that made you remember the true belonging of the body and didn’t allow to feel more and more.

The face. It wasn’t a face it was a mask. A cold, rubbery mask made of her own skin... muscles. Repulsive. And it scared again. Victoria fell and Kharon hardly had time to catch the girl not to let her fall. He held her, the book and got through everything inside that Victoria felt.

‘What’s it, dear?’ coming aside from people, Kharon tried to find out what was going on.

The girl mumbled something unclear and incomprehensible in return. Suddenly a smell of illness clogged his nostrils. Why? Why did that young girl, who absolutely had been healthy until now, had an illness? If it had a smell it meant something serious not just ARVI...

'I feel ache in my heart... Pain and fear. What am I supposed to do? Vic!' Kharon called the girl. 'Don't close your eyes, can you hear me? It's too dangerous! Don't close your eyes!'

People turned, stared, were curious, someone disapproved, others had pity and wanted to help but hesitated, some just looked away.

Kharon fell on the nearest bench, holding the sick girl. The book fell near on the dirty and trampled road. Victoria couldn't say a single word, the man was sitting near, understood nothing and what he had to do. But he clearly understood that it shouldn't have been what was going on to Victoria. That wasn't neither her illness nor her disease.

Her head was lying on his knees. Her eyes were closed. No moves. The breathing was quiet. The inner pain kept on its attacking. The man was stroking over her cheek, looking at her face, at her red hair awry over his knees. Her quiet but heavy sighs sounded like moans of a drug addict who was getting through terrible withdrawals. He didn't know what to do that he could call an ambulance, to find a doctor. He didn't know. He was just sitting and trying to calm down and taking pity on the girl.

More than an hour had passed. Then Victoria went silent. The moans suddenly ceased. The attempts to move were gone. Silence. The sepulchral silence. Something gave a shiver in the chest of the demon, it pricked in his heart more likely. It was unpleasantly and unexpectedly. The thing that had pricked him in the heart made the man bended over her face to understand if actually she breathed and her heart beat.

Hardly had he bended over her as Vic opened her eyes. Her eyes were wide-opened. She had a scared and understanding nothing stare. She didn't still move. The demon looked at her eyes, but Victoria seemed not to see him. She just gazed at the sky covered with the black veil.

'Hey, dear?' Kharon called her quiet.

The silence was the answer. Victoria didn't hear his voice. She could hear nothing at all. She just gazed at the sky. There was the same silence but more ominous. These eyes of olive colour scared him more than when they had been closed. Then she started speaking. It was as sudden as she seemed to have been numb and speechless before.

'It's been a sort of horror...' she whispered getting up from the knees of the demon who understood nothing.

He was confused. Kharon had clearly felt the smell of some incurable malady. That was Victoria who smelled of it and no one else. He had heard her heart lose the beat, running down, by whisper counting the last beats and speeding up with scream "I won't give up". He had heard her breath come faster but weak and hopeless. But now the absolutely healthy girl, active and strong, was sitting near him. No malady threatened her now.

'What's going on? What's it with me, Kharon?' she asked the man, carefully studying his face.

'You won't believe, dear, but I was about to ask you the same question.'

The girl turned away and stared at the puddle, at the dirty reflection of the evening clear sky. She was thinking. She did it so aloud that the demon could hear her for several minutes and that's why he didn't stop her, hopping that Victoria would be describing in her mind what an attack had happened to her. Maybe she had some malady which nobody knew of... But it couldn't be like that. The demon started to bring himself over. He was able to expose any disease faster than any doctor with the best instruments in the world.

'I'm freaky fed up with all this bullshit!' Vic exclaimed, raising up from the bench. 'Let's go to a pub?'

'Couples of questions.' Kharon slowly got up as if he was afraid of something and came up to the girl. 'What is it you're fed up with? What a pub? Do you think you're alright?'

‘Kharon,’ Vic smiled, ‘I’m sure it’s doing of damned spirits! They periodically show me their experiences making me experience it with them again... Oh, my God, I’m speaking about it to you... Now you’re gonna think that I’m crazy. Well what can I do then? Sooner or later you’d know about it.’

Victoria got carried away. She didn’t want to tell the demon about her still existed visions, but her tongue didn’t obey her. It wanted to tell everything. It’d been tried to hide and be silent! It wanted to cry out about all those horrors which had happened to the girl.

‘It’s ok. You see I’m of good cheer and feel well. It was just another spirit... The problem is that I’m fed up with them. Terribly fed up! Maybe do you know any medicine for them? What can I do that they stop coming to me? I can’t bear to see them all, their empty eyes and mouths with moving lips. I’m fed up with feeling their emotions, crying with them, getting rid of the lost feeling, looking at their life memories which I don’t know nothing about! I’m not into it! I don’t want to!’

The girl sank back on the bench and started crying, having put her face into her hands. The demon said nothing pretending to be sad, looking at the building in front of him.

‘What about a pub?’ Vic continued, sobbing. ‘there’s a pub not far from here. It’ll help me to distract myself and forget my problems. I just wanna drink! Do you drink? About if I’m ok – actually, I’m not sure. That’s why I need to get to a pub.’

‘Do I drink?’ Kharon distracted, having looked at the sky. ‘What am I supposed to drink? Coffee? I like coffee.’

‘No, my love,’ Victoria jumped up from the bench. ‘I’m speaking about alcohol!’

‘Alcohol?’ the man asked looking at the puzzled face of the girl. ‘Ok then. Let’s go to a pub. What does pub mean?’

‘This is the place which has no difference with a café. Have you never been in pubs? Are you kidding?’

‘Maybe I have. I rarely look at the titles.’

‘Well, what about bars? Clubs?’

‘I’ve been in a bar.’

‘Perfect. So, there’s nothing new about pubs for you then. Let’s go!’ Victoria took his hand and went ahead.

Kharon followed her. He had still a slight misunderstanding. It could happen to demons that managed to get involved with witches. Ten minutes before the girl, confidently and cheerfully marched before him, pulling him along strongly, had been lying on the bench and Kharon could bet that he had heard her heart stop beating. Now she was rushing forward like a locomotive with unbelievable traction. She looked like she hadn’t had any disease attack and it had just seemed to the demon to have happened.

The faded light was in a crowded place enveloped with unobtrusive music. They hardly managed to find a free table. Fortunately, the reservation was cancelled at the same second when Kharon asked about free tables.

The man looked around and yes, definitely he had been in such kind of places. What the hell difference was how to name it pubs or bars if people did the same things there especially on Fridays and weekends.

Kharon noticed people in Moscow liked having relax on Friday evenings. People got kinder, more smiled, more friendly for a while. Some fights happened at nights and some of them the demon had watched, having fun or being bored.

Despite the traditional vivacity over Moscow Kharon liked being in public places. He had always been into publicity. He was glad that Victoria changed her rules and principles to spend cosy Friday at home, saying that she needed no one and nothing else.

‘What’s your choice?’ Vic asked.

‘I don’t know. There are so many titles which I wanna try. Here is this one – “Bloody Mary”. Why’s she bloody? Why is it Mary? Who’s she?’

‘Are you ready to order?’ a waitress appeared near the table with an old worksheet and tiredness on her face.

‘Bloody Mary,’ Vic smiled at the demon, ‘Pina colada, fried potatoes and chicken barbeque. You aren’t hungry, are you?’

Kharon shook his head. He wasn’t really hungry as he had a perfect lunch with Vasilisa. The demon, who saw Victoria have not less perfect lunch with her boss, was amazed with her appetite especially because the girl hadn’t been noticed to be voracious before.

‘Your Bloody Mary’ the waitress appeared again with a small tray. ‘Pina colada is for you. The hot dishes are later, ok?’

‘Sure, thank you, Anne.’ Kharon intently looked at the reddish drink before his nose and through it at Victoria’s distorted face.

The girl greedily got the plastic tube, swallowing the cold drink, rich with coconut taste. But her eyes fixed at the waitress with a foxy gaze Vic was looking for the name tag all over her clothes but there was no the one. She shifted her gaze at Kharon. The corners of his mouth dimpled in the beginnings of a smile and he answered her with a genial look. Then he felt inside a feeling that people usually had for their other halves.

‘Why?’ he asked, twisted the glass.

‘Drink.’ Her commanding tone confused the demon a bit, but he decided not to play this game.

Kharon pulled a long face and Vic worried a little because of it. The mood was sharply changing to dark and some external factors became a reason for it. At that moment Vic understood that she was the reason of her beloved man’s mood was changing.

Kharon lifted up the glass and emptied it at one gulp with no wince. He continued looking cloudy at the girl.

‘Why?’ he repeated his question.

‘I don’t understand what you’re speaking about.’ Victoria cast down her eyes and touched his hand. ‘You always ask something in a mysterious way...’

‘Why are you jealous?’

‘I’m not.’

‘And now you’re lying...’ Kharon smiled ironically and at once, right out of the blue, grabbed the girl passing by. ‘Anne, may I ask you to bring two more Bloody Mary?’

He held her hand, his beautiful eyes heavily burned into her. The waitress, mouth agape, looked at the hypnotizer’s eyes. With her right hand she potted around her apron pocket looking for the worksheet and the pen.

‘Sure... Anything else?’ she asked quiet hardly audibly because of loud music.

‘That’s all now.’ The demon burned her with his eyes, reading her mind which was separated to be for and against that was happening.

The man let her hand and started studying Victoria. Anger was rising inside her and that was visible with the naked eye.

‘You’re not jealous now, are you?’ he asked spitefully. ‘Come on, dear, lie to me again and I’ll demonstrate your lie for you.’

Vic turned away. The damn waitress. Vic was annoyed with the rival’s presence and her own inabilities to control her feelings. Anne came back in 5 minutes with two cocktails. She instinctively gave the man a smiling look. That lasted for a second and probably dragged by the head and ear, but it was, and Vic saw it clearly.

Anne put the cocktails in front of the demon, took away the empty glass from Victoria and went to get the second Pina Colada.

‘Hope you blind now!’ Vic said in rage after the walking away girl.

The demon screwed up his eyes after he had heard the terrible wish and, in several minutes, a sharp scream was heard. Anne, the same waitress ran out of the kitchen, holding her hands over her

face howling. All people gazed at her being in shock with no understanding what was going on. The girl kept on howling and a kitchen boy was running around her, saying sorry and justifying himself that he hadn't seen her come up to him. The pan full of boiling oil occasioned to fall right on her face...

'My eyes!' the poor girl was crying.

Victoria's heart sank as she understood the horror of happening. Kharon was serious and studying Victoria and her reaction. Her hatred vanished into thin air. But there was pity and hatred for herself. A contempt for herself.

'It can't be...' Kharon heard Vic's whisper through the deafening Anne's screams.

Kharon was silent. He had nothing to say. He knew the secret which he had been told to keep silence of. Besides he had just seen for himself the witch work

'Kharon, please, tell me that it's not true,' Vic sobbed again, dried her mouth with the back of her hand.

'What exactly?' the demon had nothing to do but to act innocent.

'That wasn't me? That's not my telling?' Vic looked for his support.

'What are you speaking about, love?'

'About the thing I've told her... and now she's waiting for ambulance with scalds over her face...'

'Ah,' Kharon glanced at the bar where Anne and her colleagues had just been. 'No, I don't think so. It's coincidence. Just it is. But anyway, you have to be careful with what you say.'

Victoria's eyes, still filled with tears, fixed at the demon. She felt confoundedly bad and ashamed. The feeling of guilt had a personal beef against the already bedevilled flesh.

'Actually, all people must think before they speak. You don't want still to understand that some of your wishes can come true. Be afraid of your wishes.'

He smiled mysteriously, having flung an ominous glance at the girl. Somewhere inside of the depth of her body and soul she realized what Kharon was speaking about but neither her mind nor her heart was doing to accept the harsh truth which she didn't want to believe in.

'Why did you say it to her?' Kharon put the third empty glass.

'I don't know.' Vic drooped head on breast and closed her face with her hands. 'The way she looked at you... The way you held her hand, you spoke her name... Yes, Kharon, it's called definitely a jealousy and I'm jealous of you! That's no big surprise! I love you and I'm jealous of you. I wanted her to die but something stopped me.'

'It's funny.' The demon narrowed his eyes. 'When you're angry I can hear your thoughts. They are screaming about death, demanding of realization. I heard it. But honestly, I hoped they weren't your thoughts. Until now I've known you as the kindest and the most sympathetic person whom I've ever met. What's wrong with you? How do you connect "I love you" and mad blindly jealousy? Answer me!'

Victoria was nervous, emptying her glass. Her hands were constantly touching something, eyes were looking for something to be fixed at. She could just sit with no move. Anxiety, that had captured her body, confused her, depriving of courage.

'I'm listening.' Kharon remind her of himself and his question.

'It's so noisy here... It's Friday. I can't hear my own thoughts...'

'Vic!' the demon interrupted her. 'I'll help you.'

With a repulsive smile he rose up from his chair and, having took couple of steps, turned to be near the girl. He sat too close to her on the leather sofa after he clasped the nervous girl tightly.

His fingers running through her hair, suddenly stopped and like pincers started getting into her occipital region of head. Victoria tried to throw back her head to press the man's hand. With the second hand the man moved weakly resisting girl to him closer and kissed. He had already noticed that during a voluptuous kiss her stopping power and blockade of the thoughts were getting weaker and he had little difficulty to get what Vic was thinking of.

The demon kept on mind-blowingly kissing the girl, depriving her of air and mind. All around was becoming dark and more intimate, the light was fading away, stroking burning passionate couple with its rays.

There was no one around but romantic music. There was a shining sphere under the ceiling and the kiss eternally lasted. It was so important for Vic making her heart flutter like a butterfly under the pressure of his warm and sweet lips. His embraces, so strong, passionate and warm, were important for her.

‘I’m still listening to you,’ for a second the incubus pulled back from Victoria’s lips.

She needed that fleeting second to grasp the air into her lungs and come back to the ocean of the passion to give herself fully to it.

‘Will you say it, or shall I say?’ Kharon whispered his question, more and gently and tighter slapping her waist.

She had already forgot about the waitress, her words and horrible coincidence. She had forgotten about her jealousy as Kharon belonged only to her at that moment. She felt and accept it with pleasure.

‘I see, dear,’ his hot lips fell down over her neck a little below the earlap. ‘I’ll tell... myself.’

Victoria threw back head and fell into illusive pleasure. Kharon’s arms were still embracing her quaggy body playing like a conductor of human contumelious thoughts.

‘You’re selfish,’ the man whispered with a smile on his lips. ‘Selfishness. This word is on the top of your tongue. I’m your property, aren’t I? That’s how you treat me... Like a property.’

‘No, no.’

‘Ohm, I hear other things,’ the demon stopped his mind-blowing kisses. ‘You’ve even forgotten about people’s presence and that they’re looking at us.’

Victoria opened her eyes. The demon was right, the Friday party people were still in the pub, drinking without being ashamed they looked at the incubus passion. The girl adjusted her jacket, hair and turned away from obstinate eyes.

‘Not property.’ She concluded.

‘I’ve already heard everything I need. I’m supposed to belong only to you as you love me. That’s an interesting logic. Do you want me to share my point of view?’

Vic silently nodded, hiding under her hair the red colour of shame on her cheeks. She still felt awkwardly because she had been out of line having let the demon almost make love with her in the middle of the pub.

‘I’ve been with people on earth for two months already. I don’t sit at home and wait for you to come back like your dog. I’m working on my understanding of human life psychology. I’ve read more than dozens of male and female thoughts and drawn the conclusion that many women make equal of their lovers and their properties. You do the same. In this case for some reason people deprive each other of soul, implementing the value of materialism. This is not the question of trust. You can trust but “it’s mine” isn’t gonna gone. You are selfish. You wanna be the only woman in the world who I’m allowed to touch and look at.’

‘I can’t control this feeling. You’re probably right. I really wanna be the only one in your life. But my mind understands that it’s impossible. It remembers what I had to sacrifice to be with you now. But my heart, Kharon, like a heart of any person is organized more difficult than you used to believe – four chambers of flesh. My heart will never agree with my mind. They have absolutely different ways of thinking, so different that my mind will never arrive at the conclusion which my heart does. Communicating so close to people...to me you have to take this fact into account. Because when you eavesdrop my inner fight and dialogs you have to be ready to listen to my heart testimony not to my mind. What place does jealousy take in hell?’

The man looked at the girl in bewilderment.

‘Jealousy? In hell? I wouldn’t say we’re too jealousy. We have no problems with jealousy. Our population is perfectly aware of whose property is it and nobody applies for it. It’s useless. Everything that a demon has, remains with him if he wants it to have. When he has no need of it then he gets rid of it. Others don’t usually pick up the things of naught. It’s beneath their dignity.’

‘So, you don’t really have any idea what an adultery can mean, do you?’

‘Oh, dear, you’re so funny!’ Kharon smiled. ‘Victoria, you can’t make me be jealous, you can’t change me. I don’t know what it is.’

‘Well that’s unfortunate. But I’ll try to prove that human feelings are unique and if you started feeling your life would never be the same.’

Kharon silently looked at her olive eyes, returning to life fire in them, the flame of which hoped to set a fire of universe size. Those eyes were full of selflessness and love and at the same time there was no limits for their selfishness.

Her wavy red hair, accurate cut in line with the lower line of her shoulder blade, seemed to be changing its colour. It was getting full of inauspicious colour letting it through itself, being covered with unbelievable shine, glow luminescence. Thoroughly spread flecks of sunlight made her face seem to be more exquisite and elegant, bitchy and made the demon have fun.

Yes, hell, you couldn’t say kind about the girl’s face. Before nice red hair, that had provoked Lucifer to produce two drops of sentimentalism, was like an indicator of danger at that time, like bright spots of steppe spider. Now Kharon saw clearly that her mind wasn’t aware as usual, but her heart seemed to have guessed the presence of impure, massive power inside her body, the potentials of which hadn’t been discovered and recognized by anyone yet.

‘You’re very beautiful...’ the demon was serious.

He didn’t want to charm Victoria. He well knew that she was already charmed by him. He just wanted to say it to her. He wanted to hear his opinion changed. In the very beginning of the summer she had seemed to him to be a nice-looking little fool.

‘Me?’ Vic grinned.

Her cheeks glowed like fire, her eyes twinkling. She wanted so much to hide under some shell and keep on speaking out of there.

‘It’s amazing really,’ the man whispered touching her cheek covered with red. ‘I’ve seen your body with no single thread of these stupid clothes. I’ve been inside you in every way. I’ve kissed you all, every inch of your body... And you’re still blushing.’

After said Vic got more blushed feeling her memories crawl into her mind.

‘But you’ve never told me that I’m beautiful...’

‘Ah, that’s the point.’ The demon smiled. ‘I’ll fix that.’

Victoria was startled and handed into her bag. Her phone was ringing off the hook. The girl didn’t need to look at the display. She just knew who was calling.

‘Yes, mum.’ She answered with a smile.

‘I’m at the hospital. Grandma had a blood-stroke.’

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November 2013 (Tuesday)

It was morning. The alarm clock went off. Victoria needed to get ready for work. She was lying in bed with arms round each other, be happy with every inhale. She didn’t want completely to get out of the warm bed, she didn’t want his arms to let her go.

‘Leaving so soon?’ the demon asked half asleep, squeezing Vic in his arms, pressing her to himself.

‘I have to.’

‘Why? I’ve got everything you need. Quit this job.’

Victoria smiled. Kharon made an attractive offer she could hardly refuse.

'I love my job. Plus, in some time you're gonna leave me and I have nothing: neither job nor money. It's no good look. But I really don't wanna leave your gentle arms... I'd take them along.'

'No problem!'

Kharon pulled off the blanket, jumped out of the bed and came up to the girl very close. There was a mad smile shining on his face, cutting through the quiet whisper.

'See you in the evening, love!'

There was silence then. There were many black and grey halls and corridors. She had blind spot about what was happening. There was fear again but not so powerful as Vic thought that she knew what happening. Certainly, she didn't like to be between two worlds but what could she do?

'Kharon!' she called.

Sound of her voice surprised her more than the situation did in whole. She felt like her mouth was full of soap bubbles and the sound was in the line with it. Certainly, the demon couldn't hear her.

The darkness was coming closer, the girl was perturbed intently gurgled the demon's name.

No surprised that Kharon couldn't hear her. He was smiling at Gregory sitting in his office. He was very intimate with Abrael who had shared his knowledge how to seduce men. It was very easy. Being in Victoria's body Kharon had doubts for a second. Were the responsibilities separated correctly between demons of lust? Kharon didn't see any difficulties in flirting and playing with men to seduce them that made him sum up that succubi had been very lucky. Incubi had to do their best to seduce a woman. But what could Kharon know about injustice? Nothing. Lucifer couldn't be unjust if he had ordered like that then it had to be like that.

Kharon took his Lord orders implicitly. He was an incubus and happy with it. He could have missed the possibilities to have fun with a human.

No matter how he tried to find out Gregory couldn't understand what was going on with her. Instead of modest, shy girl with blush on her cheeks, at least the queen was sitting in front of him. She was powerful and narcissistic, knowing her own worth. You couldn't say that her subordinate's changes weren't to Gregory's liking, but he already got used to modest Vic.

True Victoria was walking among the shadows, kept on intently calling for the demon, subconsciously demanding from him of getting back her body. Kharon didn't still hear her. He didn't want to hear her. He was having fun and as other demons, he liked filths and mischiefs.

Vic stopped frozen. All her body was covered with the goose bumps. There was a black fog in that middle world. It lay over her skin, pinching her, enveloping her eyes. Dampness. Dankness. Chill.

The girl was knocking about to find that very thread which would connect her with the demon or someone else alive. Suddenly she stopped and closed her eyes. She stretched out her hand with the palm up. Her point and middle fingers were oblong and strained in such way like if there were some loads hanging on. The big finger was aside. The ring and little fingers bent in hook-like shape. There was something hot, burning forming on her palm. Her hands were shivering because of the power they discharged. Her lips whispered:

'Spiritus inferior, loco, protinus. Spiritus inferior, loco, momentaneus. Spiritus inferior fatis huc te poscentibus affers'

Victoria repeated many times the small text demanding of something. In some time a small sickly spirit appeared. It was dark with scared eyes in a shape of half bald dog. It looked asides. Victoria kept her eyes still closed but she stopped saying the spell. She was smiling. The witch knew better than the spirit that it was there, and it came for her calling. The spirit was silent, numbly looked down.

'I need my body!' Vic said straight.

'There's a demon inside...'

'I know.' Vic interrupted him.

'He's more powerful and his position is higher.'

'I need my body!' Victoria repeated. 'Now. Arrange it!'

The spirit didn't dare contradict the getting angry witch and just disappeared. Victoria opened her eyes and all her self-confidence was gone. But this time she clearly remembered saying the spell in a different language which she knew nothing of, appearing of the essence in the shape of a dog which she could see through the closed eyes and she remembered the fact that the creature hadn't disputed with her but just disappeared to carry out her order, emitting fear.

Bright light. Warmth. It was her waited-for-long body. Victoria found herself in the mirror in the lift coming down. She touched the surface and very quickly understood that she was behind the mirror and the woman in the lift cabin was her body with the incubus inside.

'Kharon,' she whispered.

The demon turned and saw the lost soul behind the mirror.

'Just a second, love...'

Warmer. Hot. Cosy and comfortable. It was her habitual body. Vic opened her eyes. Yes, it was her body definitely. The demon released it. Kharon stood near her. The girl looked at the watch – it was soon after 6 pm.

'Jesus, Kharon...' she was terrified. 'You've been performing in my body the whole day! What've you done then?'

'Nothing special, love. You wanted to take me along. I agreed to this risky venture.'

'Risky venture?' Vic got surprised.

'You know how it's difficult to be in a different body and not to eat out its energy?'

'You're gonna say you haven't devoured not a single particle of my energy?' Victoria looked suspiciously at the man and grinned, seeing his slyly eyes.

'Just a single. Maybe a little bit more.'

'I'd like you to get it by means of other way.'

'What an audacious invitation! I'm accepting it with pleasure! But at first, we're gonna visit your granny, right, love?'

'How did you... Ah, yes, you've been in my body the whole day. By the way about it. I've got couple of questions!' Vic frowned.

'I'm not surprised.'

'I didn't mean to surprise you. I,' she started stuttering, 'when I was... well... when you threw me out of my body.'

'Threw you out?' Kharon couldn't help but smile.

'Just wait a second, don't interrupt!' Vic squeaked.

'Sure, Sunshine.'

'In shorts, when I was there where I'm not supposed to be, between my world in yours, I did something.'

'What?' The man raised his brows. 'How to understand you?'

'I spoke an unknown language.'

'Do you remember it?' it was Kharon's turn to frown.

'Shouldn't I?'

'What else was there?' the demon changed the subject.

'I know for sure I called a spirit to help me to get rid of you... to throw you out of my body. And... I know, it sounds funny, but it's true! The spirit came out! And it numbly went to charge my order. Don't laugh at me, Kharon! I'm not crazy.'

'I won't,' he said softly, 'I won't. So, you think you called for spirit to help you?'

'Yes!' Victoria was serious.

Kharon was serious too as he had never been before, but he tried to pretend to be ok. Of course, he was confused a bit with that Vic managed to keep her memories about her activities and in thoughts he was getting ready to answer the girl because pull of questions was going to happen.

‘It was a dream. Maybe an oblivion,’ the demon blurted out more understanding why Victoria had appeared in the mirror.

‘What a dream, Kharon?!’ the girl was shocked. ‘Do you really suppose me to be insane? Do you really think that I’m incapable of distinguishing reality and dream?’

‘No, love. You too often put on the mask of a mentally deficient person. It doesn’t suit you. Stop it. The second, human child, I’d like you to show more respect for me. I remind you that you had deal with Lucifer and that’s why I’m here. I have no intensions to listen to your ungrounded claims. Actually, to file claims to a demon is a nonsense. I’m telling you that your state for that moment was just a dream. As far as I know people can call not only for spirits in unknown language in their dreams. I understand and accept your nervous state but, please, take the fact into account who you’re speaking with.’

Victoria felt fear which she had long since forgotten. For a long time Kharon hadn’t changed his intonation towards her, he had been always kind and polite as well as delicate and tolerant. Generally, he was like a gentleman. The girl had had time even to forget that he was a demon. Whatever had come over him during the dialog that the sound of his voice got covered with dryness and darkness, that his look got gloomy and his hands became cold. Vic didn’t understand.

‘Kharon, I...’ Vic took a step back, ‘I’m sorry I didn’t really mean to insult you...’

‘Insult?’ the demon smirked. ‘To insult a demon? Do you know, love, what I like about you most of all? No one can be angry with you for a long time. Even if he or she wants to, you’ll fix it!’

‘I’m sorry,’ the girl glanced down. ‘I do really believe that it wasn’t dream! How can it be explained then?’

‘Impossible!’ Kharon grabbed the girl. ‘I’ll prove that we’re speaking about oblivion!’

‘How?’

‘Confirm these: the spirit, help, language? Is that right?’

‘Yes, that is.’

‘You remember it as you remember yourself all your life?’

‘Yes.’

‘Ok then. Call the spirit now.’ Kharon folded his arms. ‘Come on, love, say the spell and make it come out. Now.’

Victoria was silent. Suddenly she became ashamed and awkward feeling caught her. If Kharon was right then how stupid and awkwardly she would look like after she said the spell, waiting for someone to appear.

The girl shook her head. Kharon started slowly calming down as he understood that he sounded more convincing than her.

‘Why do you refuse? It’s the best way to check if it was a dream. Say the spell.’ The demon’s voice insisted.

‘*Spiritus inferior*,’ Victoria whispered.

‘Keep on’ the demon said.

‘*Loco, protinus*.’ Vic looked at his amber eyes. ‘*Spiritus inferior, loco, momentaneus. Spiritus inferior fatis huc te poscentibus affers.*’

‘Where’s the spirit?’ Kharon asked the girl who wasn’t so confident.

‘I... I don’t know.’ Vic looked asides seeking for the creature.

‘Doesn’t it prove that you were in oblivion?’ the demon finally smiled, holding the girl tighter. None of them noticed the old dog behind them.

With a heavy heart Victoria came into the ward. It was silent. The smell of medicine. The support with the dropping-bottle. A woman lay with closed eyes, the mouth was half-opened. There was no move.

Vic sat on the edge of the bed. The grandma hardly could move her fingers. One leg was totally paralyzed, the second moved somehow. The granny was silent: she couldn't speak anymore. A half of her face stopped obeying to the brain orders.

Kharon stayed in the doorframe. He was idly interested in looking at what would happen. Victoria's confusion of feelings and experiences were transferred to him like through some wires. It was just a flurry, the heavy, surprising one of emotions.

Vic said nothing but kept on sitting. She looked at the paralyzed old woman and didn't understand why it had happened to her. She was thinking over it for a long time but didn't find any answer. It often happened what happened, no one was insured, no one had delays. It just happened for some reasons and unexpectedly. No one was ready to be ill.

The demon was still in the door looking up at the girl and chewed gum. He had no thoughts. He didn't know and face such grief. He wasn't neither a sympathizer nor pitiful. Actually, he didn't care. Despite his power of passion and lust, love mortification he was thick skin.

Victoria touched her granny's hand and got pierced like by lightning. The girl felt the same feelings and emotions she had had when something had paralyzed her after she had left the bookshop... Then she realized and drew the parallel between what happened and her own feelings. Of course! She might have known it!

'Kharon!' the girl ran up to him and took him by the hand. 'Let's go!'

'Is that all? We're leaving?' the demon understood nothing, following the girl with fast steps.

'I've got it!'

'What?' he shouted after her. 'What've you got? I wanna get it too! Vic!'

She ran to the coatroom. Vic quickly put on seeing no one around.

'Hey, hey,' Kharon had caught the girl before she left. 'Wait. Stop. I've got 2 questions. The first one is where you're running. The second: what did you get?'

'I felt the thing happening to my granny! Remember? When we were at the bookshop? Then my mum called. Do you remember? I felt the same what my granny felt! But I didn't understand then...'

'What idiotic ideas come into your head, Victoria! Why don't you believe in coincidence?'

'Kharon!' Vic frowned. 'Why are you so sceptical? You're the brightest representative of what doesn't exist for people! How can you know anything about scepticism definition?'

'It's not scepticism, love, it's realism. How did you get it and what made you think like this?'

'When I touched her hand, I understood it. Everything I was getting through after the bookshop, came back to my mind in the shape of recollections.'

Kharon kept cool-headed apparently. But inside he didn't know what to do. Vic was obviously suspicious of her secret gift and the task for the demon was to remove all her suspicions.

'Come with me, I'll show you something that does exist really.'

'Where?'

'Give me your hand.'

'Where're we going, Kharon?'

'You told me once that you trust me... Give me your hand!' Kharon insisted, embracing her tightly. 'Come closer. You do know why you have to do it, love?' the man smiled. 'Close your eyes.'

The girl was overwhelmed with prelibation and looking for. In his mind Kharon was torn between worlds and illusions, being sure that he would be capable of distracting Vic from her thoughts. And he found that certain place.

'You can open your eyes.' He said quiet.

Victoria was in no hurry to obey the man's asking. She listened to the silence. It was terrible and horrible. That was the silence which followed Lucifer's appearance. Having been afraid of wicked recollections Vic opened her eyes.

There was no one around but Kharon. It was an unusual place: there were big trees with green leaves, curled into a conical shape. The leaves weren't just green but superdeep and pulsing. Her

eyes liked watching it and very quickly got tired of the colour. The foliage stormed full of life and inspiration. But everything around was paralyzed. There was no wind. The air was heavy, massive but you could get a lungful of fresh air. The sky was coloured with bright red with the tinctures and stripes of yellow, transferring into orange and lilac-velvet lines. It was a sunset as silent as everything was around. There was not a single bird in the sky, no one sang beautiful songs. The ears were hurt absorbing that silence.

Grass was under her feet. Her feet were bared. The grass was soft, green and ideally even, not a grass-blade out of place. Nature couldn't create such perfection. It was impossible. Everything was too perfect. But it was pleasant to walk over the grass. There was just grass around. It was warm. You could say it was good, but you needed some wind blowing.

Kharon was nearby, cast down his head. He was waiting for something. Most likely for reaction. He wanted to understand what Victoria felt at that unusual place. But she kept silence and looked around.

There was a house behind her. It was grey with brick tincture. Three-storeyed. It was a big, log house... with a roof made of like skin. The huge columns on the porch had carved figures of cernuous creatures. Everything was made of wood. It was unusual. Victoria had never seen anything like that before. Log construction was softly sharpened, covered with lacquer or something like that, but there were no circle lines on it instead they were long and expressional. In whole the house was repulsive. Victoria didn't want to come in.

Vic turned to Kharon again. At least the grasshoppers had to chirp! But no, it was silence. The girl was wheeled round to find any sounds with no comprehension of herself and her own attitude towards surroundings.

She got the feeling that she was in an incubator... or in an aquarium where artificial life bloomed where life seemed to be on the palm but indeed there was no any.

'Where're we?' Vic asked, getting surprised with her own voice sound.

There was no echo, no habitual sound in her head. Even her own voice was unfamiliar. Every uncomprehensive thing made Vic feel more fear.

There was a part of a planet on the horizon. Even with no being educated as an astronomer, Victoria realized that wasn't the Moon. It was a huge and too close located luminary. It was so unbelievable like in those films about space or in that Photo-shop-made pictures of universe type.

Horrible.

Looking at the big ball on the horizon her heart sank. The planet seemed to be rushing straight to the place which everyone used to call home. One minute or two and then apocalyptic collision was going to happen, the blast wave of which would pull all to quantum particles.

Formidable beauty that was it when Victoria realized not new oxymoron. The eyes want to look, they were interested but the body stopped breathing because of fear.

'This is my home, Victoria,' Kharon looked at her.

'Your home?' her voice sounded so quiet that you could hardly hear it, but the high notes tried to get out anyway. 'Am I in hell?'

Vic was scared. The fright fettered her body even worse than when the hellish moon had appeared in the silent sky.

'It's just my home...'

Kharon finally started feeling the girl. Being in his territory her own strengths were leaving her. Again, he perfectly heard her thought as he used to, all her panic and anxiety screaming in her head, demanding for returning to the earth. He felt her genuine feelings. He knew that the girl was totally confused. She knew nothing, understood nothing, everything was wild and terrible for her. She had neither strength nor desire to deal with that impossible excessive emotions.

Kharon understood that the girl was sceptical of the place where the demon had lived not the first thousand years.

‘Are we in hell?’ Victoria asked again having turned to the man.

‘If you’re easier then yes, we are.’

‘Why?’ there were tears again. ‘Why are we here?’

‘Why are you crying?’

‘Because I wanna go home! To the earth!’ the girl cried. ‘Are we able to come back home, Kharon? Tell that we can, please! I don’t wanna stay here! I’m scared and I don’t understand why I’m here!’

Kharon had to embrace Victoria as she cried more and more, and she was getting more scared.

‘We’re here for no reason. I just wanted to show my home...’ Kharon felt dejectedly.

‘So, you’re not gonna burn me on a frying-pan?’

‘What?’ no limits were for the demon’s surprised. ‘Burn on a frying-pan?’

‘Stick pitchfork into me and torture my body eternally...?’ Vic added, shacking with only one thought of her being in hell.

‘Come,’ Kharon took her hand and went his home.

He missed so much his home ground, the smell he could never feel on the earth. The thing like home existed not only on the earth. Everyone had habit and love for surroundings.

He ran his hand over the marble walls. The black colour of the stone was as nasty as you could ever imagine, and it delighted the demon eyes.

Coolness and inanimate reflected from the black marble walls, nice essences for Kharon and scared Victoria.

In the hall of the incubus’s house Vic felt like in a tomb. She was scared a bit but the smell she felt was so pleasant and sweet that it and the house couldn’t be identified.

The hall was long. The wall outside of log, inside of stone, seemed to be in size of infinity. There was nothing else in the desolate place. There were no pictures and photos. There were just bare walls. Empty. There was nothing but black, repulsive colour. That design wasn’t for the faint of heart.

Kharon let the girl go first. Fearing everything in the world, Victoria took a step forward. Her hand instinctively touched the cold stone wall. Vic immediately withdrew her hand: she had never felt such scorching cold in her life. It was like the fingertips immersed in liquid nitrogen for unhappy millisecond and that was enough.

‘Cold...’ Vic said turning to the demon.

‘For a human – yes, they are.’

‘How do you feel these walls?’ she asked.

‘Like a warmth of my home.’

‘Warmth of your home?’ the girl shifted the gaze at the walls, but she didn’t want to touch them again. She slowly went ahead suddenly understanding that the entrance door was closing by its own, hiding the particles of artificial light behind.

‘Hey!’ she exclaimed stood in the full darkness. ‘Kharon!’ her voice shook, the heart fluttered. The darkness in that oppressive house seemed to be more unbearable and blacker. ‘Give me your hand... I’m begging you, my love,’ Victoria whispered stretching out her hand into the black vacuum.

There were seconds of terrible and paralyzed silence and then the strong hand, full of habitual warmth squeezed her fingers shacking with fear.

‘How much you’re frightened, child,’ the voice sounded in her ear.

Vic gave a shrug, screwing up her eyes to try to see Kharon.

A small luminary appeared somewhere above them in shape of usual galaxy. That was as unusual light unfamiliar for people. It was alive, moveable like if somewhere tongues of fire were connected, carefully burning something dry away. But the light was dim and there was no its source seen. It seemed that a clot of charged energy, that produced the light, appeared under the ceiling. Victoria had no doubts the luminary was alive absolutely. They were walking through the hall and the light was slowly following them under their heads.

Slight and sudden move of Kharon stopped the girl in the middle of the infinite hall. Then the black marble wall began to move apart.

A huge living room with high ceiling was showed. There was the most complex architecture under its vaults outside of human control. The room was in the form of strict square. It was furnished flawless and in good taste. There were tables with carvings on its legs and chairs and its legs took root in the floor and almost on the floor already swollen buds were about to bloom.

Windows that finally appeared showed a picturesque view of the nearby forest. It was thick and dark with unknown species of trees, the leaves of which were so different in shapes but had nothing in common with the trees on the earth where Vic used to live.

There was a huge mirror on one of the walls, the size of almost a half of the room. It reflected everything expect Victoria. It just ignored her presence there.

There were no modern gadgets in the living room. No books, no glass figures on dusty shelves. There was nothing that could be familiar to human eyes. The table was there indeed. It was huge, massive and empty. No tablecloths, no napkins, no saltcellar, no flowers. There was nothing.

The décor was very poor by human standards. The intricate carvings were wherever possible to be. It was beautiful and diverse and seemingly appropriate.

‘The living room...as you call it.’ Kharon told, having taken her by the hand.

He tried to understand what Victoria felt, if she liked it or not. Most of all he didn’t understand why he was so important to know her opinion. As Victoria still couldn’t identify her own feeling and emotions, she couldn’t say anything clever to Kharon. The girl silently looked at the man.

‘Your audacious invitation...that’s why we’re here. I feel you still not understanding your presence in my home.’

‘Invitation?’

‘Yes. That you said so bravely to the demon of lust. Let’s go.’

Victoria followed Kharon with no certain understanding what he was speaking about. She still was afraid for her life, but her blind, feeble and stupid trust was with her. The trust the demon. Victoria trusted Kharon so deep and strong that she had not a single thought asking herself if I was so stupid to trust the demon.

They went up the spiral staircase. The coldness of the marble stairs annealed her bare feet. She literally flew up the stairs holding the man’s hand. He walked first trying not to rush. His movements were slowly and detached like if he was on his way on the scaffold.

Under the ceiling the clot of illuminative energy was blithely floating. Victoria almost got used to that phenomenon. At least from all that was happening the strange glow confused her the least.

Another wall opened before them and Vic turned to be in a bedroom.

‘This is the place I wanted to show you... not frying-pans...’ Kharon whispered behind her.

His hands clasped her paralyzed body. She was studying the huge bed that was in size of a half of the room, covered with the same black colour. Victoria almost accepted the gloomy colour deprived of life. Actually, she had reasons for the black colour in the demon’s house. Her confusion was understandable also: Victoria had never seen so much black at once.

‘Take a step forward, love,’ Kharon picked her up and slowly moved ahead. ‘Don’t be afraid, nothing threatens you here... Nothing.’

His lips went down on her shoulder barely touched her skin. Vic said nothing. Probably it was the first time when she couldn’t be relaxed in the demon-seducer’s hands.

‘You’re so defenceless here,’ Kharon smiled, baring his teeth, took her up in his arms.

A second then another and Victoria felt unbelievably soft bed under her body. It was so soft that at the first second the girl thought that she was still falling down. The demon hanged over her, and his miraculous kisses distracted her from thinking of falling.

‘It’s so unusual to embrace the woman who manages to think of something else expect me...’

'My love,' Victoria said quietly, 'I'm in the bed, made of the black feather bed, the softest one I have ever felt in my entire life. There's a man above me, the most handsome and exquisite whom I have ever met. The man, whom I felt the most beautiful and even painful feeling called love. This man is a demon. Now I'm in the place which I have never believed to exist, I refused it and mocked those who tried just to give a hint about it. And I think it's ok that I'm not really ready to be relaxed and think of only you.'

With light smile on his lips, silently with no interrupting Kharon was listening to another confession of the girl and at first, he realized that he needed to answer something. His answer had to be something that Victoria had never heard and would never hear in her life.

'I'll tell you the truth, love, I don't feel hesitation when I'm in unfamiliar places...'

'I don't dou...'

'Wait,' he gave the girl a short kiss to interrupt her speech. 'I have something to tell you.'

He ran his finger over his shirt, and it unbuttoned itself. Vic tried not to look at what Kharon was doing not to convince herself again that she had a common sense. Her chest heaved and all the same her nervous stretched too thin. In addition, the demon's touches made her yield to the temptation.

'Once I heard a thought in our mind, more precisely it was a desire to be the only one...' the demon undid the button of her jeans.

She numbly looked at what Kharon was doing. She could close her eyes and switch off her mind as she did before as she was scared a bit. The man pulled off the shirt burning the girl with the flames of his eyes.

'I'm not a virgin, no.' He tore the jeans off her. 'But thanks to you I realized that not only virgins can have the only one.'

'Kharon...'

'You're so absolutely irredeemable listener. Stop interrupting, will you?'

Victoria silently looked at the demonic creature's eyes and a pleasant shiver ran over her body, taking out the excitement of her depth of the subconsciousness.

'You're the only one woman for my entire existence who dared to give her soul to Lucifer to be with me, having known that your chances are critically small to have what you want.'

Here Victoria started forgetting where she was. Her own location wasn't an interesting issue especially when Kharon was doing magic over her body with his lips, hands and words.

'You're the only one human woman whom I shared my sexual skills with in reality and having experienced it I feel more power in thousand times. You're the only one who is so close to me and still alive. You're the only one who became the only one...'

For a second the demon stopped speaking and with a mystery on his face studied the girl, the surprise and joy ripping out of her heart.

'You're the only one woman... a human who's lying in this bed...'

Kharon kissed her neck...

For several seconds before falling into the mutual feelings giving Victoria thought that she saw a lower part of the wing... as black as ink, shone and trying to embrace her.

Having realized her energies and getting back a mad enjoyment Vic was sleeping with no moves in bed. The demon in unbuttoned shirt was staying and thinking nearby the window. He had a serious reason to think.

'Good morning, Kharon!' A low black creature appeared behind him with legs of some hoofed animal, with human head and body but with lion tail and cow horns.

The demon didn't even turn. He'd been waiting for that person.

'The Lord's waiting for you... At his apartment!' the creature told, stamped with its hoof and disappeared.

Kharon took a sigh and went away from the window. Very quietly he came into the room where Victoria was sleeping. He sat on the edge of the bed, combed the ginger tips of her hair behind her

ears that chaotically ran down her face. Vic was lying on her stomach, hands were under the pillow, and the blanket covered her legs.

‘I hope you’re worth of it...’ Kharon whispered, snapped his fingers and disappeared.

Lucifer was sitting in his arm-chair at his unusual table. His hand held a feather writing something with impudent move, filling paper with mind-blowing burgundy colour. His countenance seemed to be neutral. He saw nothing but wrote something intently.

‘Lucifer!’ Kharon let his Lord know about his presence.

The Falling Angel stopped his fast writing and looked up at the guest. Then he jumped up, threw the feather on the table and then, looking at his Lord’s face Kharon assured himself again that when deuces came on behalf of Lucifer meant really bad news.

‘Did you take leave of senses?!’ Lucifer asked in an ominous low voice having come up to Kharon.

The demon was silent head bowed, looked down. So, what could he say?

‘You’d better not!’ Strong waning came. ‘Don’t even think you can pretend to be a fool with no understanding what I’m speaking about!’

‘Lucifer...’ the demon glanced at his friend.

He was angry and it was to put it mildly. Having known his Lord and friend for so many years Kharon guessed the reason of his indignation.

‘I’m waiting for the answer!’ Lucifer turned away from the demon, fixed his eyes upon the landscape behind the window.

‘I wanted to show my home and the place where we live.’

‘Kharon. My friend.’ Lucifer beseeched flew up to the demon again. ‘How did you ever get the absurd idea to bring the witch in hell? I’d not have told anything if she were a human! But the witch, Kharon... You’ve almost made a fatal mistake!’

‘Why?’ Kharon worried. ‘You told she’s not a threat.’

‘On the earth.’ The Lord’s voice sank almost to an ominous whisper. ‘On the earth no witch is threat for us. On the earth.’ Lucifer rolled his eyes, deeply inhaled and exhaled, having stared at Kharon’s scared face.

‘What’s the threat from her being here?’ Kharon asked almost in his mind.

‘First, your blindness with her in bed.’ Lucifer intently looked at the demon’s eyes. ‘Come on, turn on your logic, my friend. What usually happens? You take all energies from a woman. Totally. Do you? Do I recall right?’

‘Yes, you do.’

‘How are you feeling now?’ Lucifer frowned and glanced at Kharon being in puzzle.

‘At least strange.’ Kharon told the truth more than ever.

‘What strange?’

‘I am not feeling that strength which I usually get from Vic in bed...’

‘So,’ for a moment The Lord’s face was distorted with a slight smile.

‘I think I’m tired.’

‘You know why?’

‘No.’

‘Victoria can’t give away her energy at our home.’ Lucifer sat to the table, nervously touching the glass. ‘She’s alive. Do you understand? She’s not a demon neither a spirit not a deuce! She’s a human! Her energy stays with her. This alone wouldn’t have been a problem, if only she weren’t a witch. Witches have a great ability to accumulate. Do you know what it means?’

Kharon shook his head realizing all sudden interest and perfectly reasonable anger of his Lord.

‘Witches accumulate energies. Being with you in your bed where she emitted a colossal amount of energy, that was she who devoured it, not you!’

A zap broke through Kharon.

‘So,’ he quickly came up to Lucifer, ‘you wanna say that she kept her energy and took mine?!’

‘I don’t wanna say I’m already saying it!’ The Lord clasped him hard around the shoulder and grinned. ‘And now she’s much more powerful. Here is my bad too I must have told you and interfered, done anything but instead I silently watched... Inexcusable error!’

‘The witch with demonic energy...’ Kharon whispered.

‘Yes, my friend, it even sounds terrible! It’s an obvious fact but I’d better say it: in the morning Victoria won’t be paralyzed and lifeless as you used to see her; with your energy she has so much power that it will be enough for a long time.’

‘I’m sorry, Lucifer.’

‘Don’t be. My bad is much more than yours. Accept my advice for future – don’t bring every Dick and Jane to home, especially when it goes about witches. If I were you, I would go home and try to use up all the energy she has now.’

‘But,’ Kharon took a step.

‘Go, my friend, and I hope your own energy doesn’t harm you!’

‘Lucifer! You have to answer me!’

‘Later.’ The lord, tired, gave the air.

‘No. Not then and later.’ Kharon careful grabbed his Lord’s wrist and with the entreaty in his eyes looked at him. ‘Now. Answer me now.’

Lucifer silently looked at his friend with soulful eyes. He seemed to understand that Kharon was right and he had no need to delay the answering not to let the situation happen again.

‘What’s your question, please,’ The Lord turned to Kharon. ‘I can’t understand exactly what question you want to be answered. You have a jumble of question in your head.’

‘How does the witch harm me?’

‘Actually, as I told you before she can’t do anything serious, but she can take all your energy. She can devastate you completely.’

‘Are you serious now?’

‘Absolutely I am. I didn’t want to tell you I just couldn’t imagine that you would have been so foolish to bring the witch in hell...’

‘I wonder... Can I make up for the loss if something goes wrong?’

‘Of course, you can! But not at once. And it’s not a good idea to lie paralyzed... Get a second thought before you’re gonna do anything.’

‘I’ve got it, Lucifer. I’ve got it. The only thing I can’t understand is how I can make up for the loss if I were with no moves? To get my energy back I have to move!’

Lucifer smiled, in depth being happy that his friend was still able to think.

‘It’s sixty-four-thousand-dollar question. I have got couples of ways to play. The best one is if I knew about your misfortune or someone of our friends would take you up and your task would be to ask them in your thought to send me to you. The worst one is if people found you in such a state. I have no door number three. By the way, with your energy disappearance the witch can bare your genuine countenance, having seriously destroyed your beautiful mask.’

Kharon was listening to his Lord and Lucifer seemed to him to be mocking more and more.’

‘Lucifer,’ Kharon said to him, ‘if I ever put you into a rage then tell me when and how, because I don’t really understand why this karma dumped on me.’

Lucifer longed in the chair, pursed his lips and lowered his eyes. Recent days he had felt tired and wanted to have a rest and he was bothered with questions. He ran his hand across his forehead and, squinted, looked at his friend.

‘You make me find excuses,’ he told having took a sigh, ‘I didn’t mean all this happen. You see, future is not subservient to anyone, neither me nor my father. I wanted you to have fun, have a rest from millinery drab existence. If I wanted to penalize you, you’d have been crawling like a maggot

without eyes in some dungeon, having fun with only echoes of your memories. But just to throw a woman under the bus wasn't too much humanely, was it?"

Kharon smiled bitterly. He was confused with no realizing what was going on in his head.

'Lucifer, can I ask you as my friend not as The Lord?'

'Sure.'

'If you ever decide that I'm bored or my life suddenly becomes unbearable for me and out of your kindness you want to shake it up with something, please, run your ideas by me first, ok? Probably it's just seeming or something like that. Don't jump in feet first. Doubtlessly I appreciate your care and many-sided help but now I'm in full panic mode. Forgive my plainness.'

'Ok, my friend, I'll take your wishes into account. Now go.'

Lucifer rose up, embraced his friend and Kharon disappeared.

13

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November 2013 (Wednesday)

Kharon appeared in the flat when there was no one. The man fatefully leaned against the wall in the hall, out of the corner of his eye looked at the note on the table.

Victoria had left for work in a perfect mood. Certainly, when she opened her eyes, she was ready to be paralyzed and she was so surprised when having opened the eyes at the sound of the alarm clock Vic understood that she could move not only the limbs.

Being a little bit shocked and happy simultaneously she rushed to the kitchen to make delicious breakfast for her beloved, but she didn't find anyone in the bed.

Victoria called Kharon but an automatic female voice said that the subscriber was unavailable. Being sure that Kharon stayed at his own home, Vic cooked bacon and eggs, thinking of why she was full of energy and power this time. In some time, she found an explanation for this phenomenon. They had sex at the demon's territory in artificial place where Victoria hadn't been able to relax completely and that's why she didn't give all her energy. Her subconsciousness took care if she had needed to run or even worse fight. She had to keep power at any price. That was the only one rational explanation which Victoria could provide for her unusual activity.

Kharon pulled off his shoes and came up to the table, carefully took the two-fold piece of paper.

"Chéri,

I couldn't call up for you, so I've decided to leave the note. I hope your mood is as in the groove as mine. I don't know what happened but I'm full of strength! It scares me and it's wonderful simultaneously. Your breakfast is on the oven, juice is in the fridge. Coffee is near the oven. See you in the evening. Madly love you.

Thank you for the night and expressed trust."

The demon was sitting at the table and drinking coffee studying the note, imagining what a mess the girl had in her head now.

Victoria was on the train in the metro, leaned against the doors. She was in a really good mood. Without hiding the smile, she examined the dejected countenance of passengers, remembering the night.

At one of the stations Victoria noticed something unusual. In the middle of the carriage something came in. Her heart began beating with fear while she was looking at the creature coming into the carriage. Victoria didn't understand what exactly drew her attention to it. It looked like a human. The man was of middle aged and at his face genuine indifference was to everything froze. But something wrong was with that man, something that usual people didn't have. He was completely different... But only Victoria saw it.

Having come into the carriage the man stayed nearby the doors but then he shifted his gaze purposefully at Victoria. When their eyes met Victoria understood that he wasn't just a human. He was looking at her straight and a cynical and presumptuous smile crawled his lips.

For counted seconds, like the 25th frame for a second, the man turned into a black figure 2 meters and a half in high, humpbacked, bent head under the ceiling. He had wide-spread wings like wings of a bat but blacker and thicker. He had horns on his head like a Caucasian goat had. His face was mutilated but Victoria couldn't understand with what. It looked like his skin was eaten by severe erosions and mischievous sores. There were scars, cuts, repulsive and disgusting. His teeth resembled a predator's ones. It was huge, long fangs, jutting out in a mess in his mouth, imposing a great horror. His skin was black like that creature had come out of a burnt building.

It was big and massive. Victoria saw the monster only for several seconds and then it turned back into a usual man.

He smiled again at the scared and understanding nothing girl and headed to her.

Vic got nervous with no ideas where she should run as she saw the creature coming up to her, while in its human shape some ugly unhuman freak burst in its human shape and scared her.

The man came up to the girl. He was nearby her about 50 centimetres. Victoria felt stinky smell and instead of a human there was a smiling picture of something incomprehensible over-tall deuce or demon or something else. The human shape disappeared at all and didn't even try to appear again.

Victoria said nothing and studied with fear in her eyes something from the infernal regions. The girl had no doubts that the creature was exactly from those regions. She heard her own heart beating in her temples, giving way to panic. Her breath was becoming heavier and fear was coming closer.

The girl heard a voice and it scared her more. The creature was silent, but Vic just knew that the voice belonged to it... Its inner voice.

'You see me...'

The whisper was horrible and ominous, stuck between irony and fun.

Vic was looking at his black eyes. There were no neither pupils nor white but just black holes as like its eye sockets were hollow. As the girl couldn't understand what was going on, she was feeling worse.

'I know you see me true.'

That was the same whisper in her head, gripping her temples in a vice.

'Abkhor! At your service!' The creature bent its head and left the train the next station.

Victoria followed the unusual passenger understanding nothing. The only question tortured her – what was it?

The girl almost got over the diagnose of a mentally deficient and she didn't want to whisper herself about another madness attack. She was tired of it. That's why she thought over that had happened and tried to forget, mopping the sweat from her brow.

Having got to work Victoria stole into her office with no one saw her, that was located near Gregory's one, and settled to her project.

She couldn't work that day. She wasn't just able to focus on her project. The memories of unusual nights, unusual place and the morning meeting with a monster were getting into her head.

The girl called Kharon again and two tones she heard quiet and deep voice.

'Yeap, love,' the man smiled, and Victoria clearly saw his smile.

'Is everything ok?' she asked, having settled back in her chair and thrown back her head to look at the ceiling.

'Yes, it is. Why are you asking?'

'No reasons. There's nothing confuses you, is there?' the girl examined the ceiling.

'Are you about the way you're feeling?'

'Yes. It's unusual, right?'

‘It’s ok...’ Kharon came up to the window. ‘It happens when you’re in a different dimension. The body starts working different.’

‘It was an astonishing night and the dimension, indeed. You’re fantastic, Kharon!’ Vic said in a low voice.

‘I’m glad you have an ocean of genuine positive emotions and that I’m the reason of it flutters me doubtlessly.’

Her cheeks turned red and eyes closed. The girl still felt ashamed and confusion being with the demon, listening to his speech, feeling his hands.

‘The breakfast you’ve made today consists of more thanks and deification than usual, by the way. I take it for granted, sorry for it. I’ve been eating with gusto, looking back at the pictures of the depicted morning past where you were cooking breakfast, putting your soul in.’

Vic was red in the face and with an imbecilic smile on her lips. She liked the demon’s words, praise and recognition so much. She was ready to make any sacrifice to listen to them again and again.

‘You can answer me nothing,’ Kharon kept on with a smile, ‘I know all that’s going with you now and what feelings are overwhelming you. I can feel them at distance. They’re beautiful, Victoria. I’m waiting for you in the evening.’

The girl listened to the phone hanged up, finally feeling the redness go away from her face and shame weakened its clutch. From one side it was so great that Kharon was unobtrusive in comparison with other human men. But from another side Victoria needed some more intense.

Vic drew herself up and was almost about to jump in the chair because of unexpectedness after she had seen Gregory in the office.

‘Oh my God...’ she sighed out, smoothed her hair, lowering her eyes. ‘Good morning, Mr. Dogmanov. You as usual scared me.’

‘Good morning, Vic.’ The man answered.

‘Have you been here a long?’ the girl asked carefully, raising up from the chair, trying to find out what her boss could have heard.

‘Pretty enough.’ Gregory answered stiffly and went into the office, closing the door behind.

Vic was looking at him and feeling a raising shiver inside. She didn’t know what was going on with her and her emotions. It was just scared, and she didn’t feel quite herself. Gregory was slowly coming up to her, closer and closer, glancing at her worried face then at the table consistence, then at the floor.

‘Mr. Dogmanov?’ she called him quietly, trying to meet his eyes. ‘Are you ok?’

‘Victoria,’ the man stood next to her and confused the girl with it.

She wanted to go down the tube not to hear neither his voice nor his words, not to see his perplexed face and eyes which were like a tick that transmitted tick-borne encephalitis, clutched into her face.

‘This can’t be waiting anymore.’

‘Wait, Mr. Dogmanov,’ Vic interrupted, stepping back. ‘We have no scheduled meeting for today! My project isn’t done yet. Not all gaps have been corrected. Let’s leave it for Friday as we agreed.’

Gregory frowned and took a step closer to Victoria.

‘It’s not about your project, Vic. It’s not about work actually.’

‘Then what’s it about? I don’t understand.’ Vic lowered the eyes, nervously cringing her fingers. She had no place to step back, there was a big window to the floor and the wall to the side.

The man stood at her and looked at her eyes, watching her ludicrous attempts to hide. He was in doubt silently berated himself for abortive decisions.

Victoria remained obstinately mute and waited for what would happen next. She understood well what Gregory want to speak about and that wouldn’t be a problem if she hadn’t need to answer him. She had no answers.

Before her eyes the pictures were like speedlights: Gregory and she were naked in bed. Victoria didn't know whose room was it, but it wasn't hers absolutely! Another picture showed Gregory stroked her thigh, kissing her hard, the light was fading away. The genital areas were smudgy as if they were censored. The third picture depicted their sex. The image was more smudgy than the previous one, but Victoria understood that there was a love-making itself. It was so dull and doleful... After she had seen the picture Vic realized that all of those weren't her thoughts and fantasies. It was Gregory's impure thoughts, doomed to fail, getting through into her head.

'About what, Mr. Dogmanov?' Victoria looked sideways at the silent man.

'You.' He sighed and met her eyes.

'Me?' the girl stared, at first from surprise. 'What's wrong about me?'

'It's not the point that there's something wrong about you. The point is that... ' Gregory took her hand, '...I just wanted to congratulate you that your probationary period is over successfully! Congratulations!'

The man shook her hand and went away with rapid steps. Victoria stared after him in bewilderment and he stare fixed at the woman's phantom.

'Leave my son alone!' Victoria heard a threatened whisper from another world.

'Far be it from me to be with him!' the girl snapped back. 'If you need then you look after your son! I don't care a damn about him!'

Vic was storming. Weren't people really able to distinguish truth and lie? Was another world imperfect?

While the girl was grumbling at the ghost, she didn't even notice a living person, not a ghost, staying in the doorway.

'Delivery's for you... on the first ground.' The colleague said, having glanced at the girl curiously, and left the office, 'Completely demented...'

Victoria heard the colleague call her demented and at the first time probably she realized difference between when you call yourself a psycho and when someone else did it.

The girl went down and met a bearded man's eyes who looked antisocial. Her instinct told her that of all the people crowded in the lobby of the building this unattractive man was a courier.

'Good afternoon. Are you Victoria Drache?' he asked.

'Yes.'

'Delivery's for you.'

'But I've ordered nothing.'

'I know. This is the gift from... just a second,' the man got in the inside pocket, 'it's from Mr. Kharon... Unfortunately, he didn't say his surname.'

Finally, a smile appeared on her confused face. A warm wave ran over her body. Vic could feel them one by one, running over the red-hot muscles and vessels. She felt slight shiver, poignant her nervous, fascinated the girl.

Vic took the package stretched to her and suddenly she understood that the man delivered nothing on the earth.

'Have a good day,' the man said having looked at the girl mysteriously, smiled and melt in the crowd.

Vic came back to her office, put the package on the table and stared at it. Having no ideas how but Vic already knew that there was a small box, the consist of which she could see unclearly. It was something globe-shaped, small and full of red colour. It wasn't a ring.

The girl smiled and finally opened the package. Yes. It was a box of turquoise colour. It was an ecrin. There was usually jewellery in the same. Despite its light weight Victoria understood this small thing was a great value.

'Open it now!' she ordered and opened the box.

There was an ideally cut crystal of red-burgundy colour, in size of a thumb nail. There was a real kaleidoscope of red tinctures in the middle of the mineral. The beauty and the unusualness of the gem stone consumed the girl's perception and mind. She fascinatedly gazed at the stone glamping, as its light seemed to pull down, consume the viewer's perception. A phone call broke Victoria's careful gazing at the stone.

'...I can see it, Love,' Victoria heard the voice belonged to her beloved man. 'It's on your palm and you think that the parts of your skin that the stone touches are getting more and more alive, don't you? I can see its unusual colour reflect in your eyes, the colour of the ripe pomegranate... It really does for your eyes.'

Her chest raised more often, her pulse was beyond the limits, established by WHO.

'What's it, Kharon?' she whispered.

'Painith.'

'Pa... what?'

'Pa-i-nith as people call it on the earth. Do you like it?'

'I do! It's really beautiful. I can't tear myself away from it...'

'I can understand you.' Kharon smiled. 'It's one of the most beautiful stones of Lucifer's collection.'

'Is this Lucifer's stone?' Vic gave a shiver after she had heard the Lord of Hell's name.

'Well, no. Lucifer has similar and thinks it to be one of the most beautiful ones on the earth. I agree with him.'

'Yea... ' Victoria mysteriously looked at the stone. 'So do I.'

'In two minutes a hopelessly in love with you man comes to you who this morning wanted to make you his obtrusive declaration of love... But he was in a blue funk.'

'Jesus,' Vic got upset having heard the demon's prediction and being doomed, she sank into the chair, firmly holding the gift in her fist.

'No, it's not him,' Kharon answered coldly. 'I'm waiting for you at home.'

The man hanged up the phone and frowned at the cell in his hand. He felt bad: his body, organized in a different way, had a lack of energy. He needed to eat. He had given too much to the girl having nothing in return. He needed to get power...

He unceremoniously got into someone's dream. Having seen the most beautiful nature of the Alps and not less beautiful girl skiing, the demon couldn't help hiding victorious smile. The girl was alone in this wild empty place...

At a magic wand wave Kharon was at her, wearing ski suit and sunglasses, hiding the most part of his face. He held ski poles and his feet were fixed in skis.

Then the stranger looked at him, trying to see his face through the mask, dreaming about the man to take off the mask. The man, after he had read her low and brute thoughts, was slowly taking off the mask with no embarrassment. The rays of the fading away sun were lighting up his white-snow smile. His smile was so languishing, charming and confident in its own perfection.

A second later the girl contemplates his amber eyes at which the light falls so elegantly, making them more attractive. Despite the demon's face was lighted up by the many thousand years luminary his pupils were still dilated like as if he were in the darkness.

The girl couldn't tear herself away from the man's eyes, asked him to touch her. Without a second thought Kharon put the ski poles and in the twinkling of an eye the girl turned out to be in his severe but gentle arms... The demon of lust didn't need too much to make his victim lose her mind.

He was quiet asking her for permission to get into her soul, promising to give something that she would never be able to forget and, oh, stupid, hyper excited girl was whispering him sacramental yes.

In a second the location was changed. The snow-white and cold Alps faded away, falling like walls and curtains in the theatre, on the horizon. The next unplanned location was moving towards them.

It was a fireplace, blazing with bright fire, pleasantly crackling over the dry branches. The high pile carpet, covered the floor at the fireplace, was so fluffy and soft. It was as white as snow covered a mountaintop.

The ebony floor reflected everything like a mirror...was faceless and empty. The girl was on the pile carpet, hands stretched out. Her eyes were closed, a smile jumped over her lips. A blissful sigh was provoked by the demon's lips touched beneath her stomach, carefully pulling her panties with his hands...

Suddenly the girl just disappeared leaving the arms empty as if she had never been in. He clinched his fists, the anger captured him. A growl. A wrathful one. Then a powerful hit in the floor and the man turned out to be in reality in his Moscow flat. Kharon understood clearly what had happened and doubtlessly he was mad with it. It sometimes happened... when suddenly a victim woke up due to some external factors.

Kharon was sitting at the table. The grimace of anger and fury froze on his face. He had wasted his energy again and enjoyed the benefits of none.

The man took a deep sigh and was about to immerse into someone else's dream, but he remembered about Victoria's friend – Vasilisa. Many times she had sent him different messages. The demon dialled her and in couples of the longest beeps the girl answered the phone.

With no problems they agreed to meet... not far from Vasilisa's home as the demon knew better than the girl, that in hour there would be no one at home and her mother's big bed would be in their possession.

Only an obstacle was left and Kharon was thinking over how to resolve it and which one of the running through his head ideas was the best one.

With the graceful carriage the girl, wrapped in a scarf around her face, was walking towards him. Only her pearl grey eyes were looking at him. It was cold. There was no snow yet, but the weather was chilly and if there had been a possibility people would wrap themselves in blankets entirely and wander along the streets like resurgent mummies.

The girl's eyes were burning with bright-yellow fire and passion and they didn't just burn out but burnt to hell. Though Kharon couldn't see her face but only her eyes he clearly knew the girl to be smiling and he knew the reason why she was smiling. As the demon could see all her dreams through as well as her vulgar thoughts and was ready to make them all come true... and it would cost her a pretty penny.

Vasilisa came up to the man. The distance between them was no more than fifty centimetres. They were silently looking into each other's eyes. Kharon was glad that there was such a moment when people had no need to say and explain anything, they just knew for what reason they gathered at a certain place.

Kharon took Vasilisa's hand, hidden in the mitten, made of Angora wool and pulled the girl to him.

'I'm glad to see you... So much.' He said and carefully kissed her temple, the only place where there was no scarf.

'You're the most mutual person in my life,' Vasilisa answered him with a slight smile, hidden behind the cloth.

'I know.' He squeezed a little her hand and slyly looked at her.

'How can you?'

'The only organ is opened for the world, incapable of lying. It's your eyes. To the great fortune I can read human eyes perfectly...'

'You've not changed since we met last time.'

'What does it mean?'

'No behavioural problems have been diminished about you.' Vasilisa smiled again.

Kharon's paces slackened then he stopped finally, blocking the girl's way. Vasilisa gave a shiver in front of a sudden obstacle appeared on her way. She confusedly winked her eyes, raised up her head a little, studying the demon's serious face. Kharon was quite close to her, cutting the distance to barely existing. His hand slowly crawled through the air up and in a second with the finger he pulled off the scarf from Vasilisa's face, showing her pale pink lips to the stepping over Moscow winter. In the twinkling of an eye the girl felt the man's lips taste and warmth on hers, whose passion tore her apart. She kissed him back having thrown away the last picture of Victoria...

'There's nobody at home... Would you like to come?' Vasya asked through the wild desire.

Kharon had been waiting for this certain question to pretend to be thinking for a while and then to agree random. It went to plan, to his plan. In ten minutes they were at the flat. Vasilisa was looking for keys jerkily, Kharon was behind her, embracing tenderly and pressing her to him.

The key clicked, the door was opened let the voluptuousness come in. Being in the hall Kharon quickly got rid of the clothes that prevented him from getting her body, and chaotically threw it on the floor. With no hurry he put away his own cover, provocatively undoing his small buttons, unlatching the trousers belt.

'If I asked you what you would be ready to sacrifice to let me continue now, what would you answer?' Kharon asked suddenly, gently kissing her neck.

'I'd sacrifice my life... as I wouldn't be able to bear such torture...' the girl whispered with the closed eyes, digging her fingers into the demon's back.

The man smiled and fell for her body that pulled him with for her whit her fragile but tenacious fingers. With the help of his skilful warmth, hands, tongues and the words he exorcised the arousal giving the long-awaited satisfaction instead.

He got everything he wanted to store his energy supplies but not less than fully. He needed one more maybe two women to get his best well-being.

'What've we done...?' he heard Vasilisa silently whisper.

The girl was lying curled up in bed. She felt the best in the world in a physically. She had never had such a perfect balance in her life. With every step of the second hand on the clock face made her soul be getting worse and worse. It was abominable. She was sick of herself.

'Why?' Kharon asked with obvious indifference. He looked at Vasilisa's face and confused. She looked at nowhere, didn't move, sighed quietly, a tear ran down her nose. 'Why are you crying?' the demon asked. 'I don't think you felt ill...'

'No, it's the other thing. The thing that was between us the best one has ever happened to me for my entire life... But we've betrayed Vic.'

The demon cocked his head to the left, recognizing the appearing mercy on the girl's face. Being deprived of feelings, without knowing human emotions Kharon didn't understand what he was blame for.

'If you think we betrayed her then why did you let it happen? Why didn't you think of her when you answered my call?'

'I...' Vasilisa was confused. 'I...'

'You wanted to get what your heart and mind desired for. You cared about nothing but your own yearning. Not a single second you were thinking of Victoria. So, drop it now. It's adulteration of your feelings and mercy. You don't believe none of them, trying to justify your so-called misstep. You're saying so many ridiculous arguments which can't be named arguments indeed. You're crying. You're crying because of your resentment against yourself as you're not able to justify yourself. Then don't do it! Nevertheless, people always surprise me. You are always in an attempt to destroy everything that can bring pleasure for you. You're so stupid and ridiculous.'

Being unable to move Vasilisa silently listened to Kharon. Her tears dried having left flat traces after.

'You,' she whispered, 'you literally took out my most ashamed thoughts. How did you get it?'

‘Coincidence.’ Suddenly Kharon realized that he had overdone with his guesses and forgotten completely that Vasilisa didn’t know about his demonic being.

‘I’ll never believe in it in my life!’ Vasya closed her eyes, dreaming to get under the blanket. Some nervousness and fear were penetrating under her skin. Anxiety was a pain in the neck. Kharon set the teeth and lowered his head. ‘What are you?’ she almost silently asked, looked at his eyes apprehensively. His eyes became burgundy colour ringed round the pupils which were getting blacker. They seemed to be pulsing, tearing the eye-balls apart, surrounded them with the flame of imperfection.

‘What a question!’ he pretended to be surprised, rubbing his forehead.

Vasilisa was silent. She felt afraid while she was looking at metamorphoses on the demon’s beautiful face. Suddenly it was like a cold wind. The sepulchral one. The cadaverous wind. Slowly it was chaining the girl, paralyzing and making her be stumped.

‘What am I?’ Kharon said quietly, stooping closer to the girl’s face. ‘I am the one who saw the earth be born. The one who saw you appear in his own likeness. I saw you spawn. I am the one who held Lucifer when he shook himself free from the wrath of his father. I am the one who with Lucifer raised the goblet of the absolute power. I am the watcher who knows no rest. I am the Sovereign Legionary Demon, the Lord of Lust, the Handler of Passion.’

‘You’re insane...’ the girl stammered when she understood finally her fears was for some reason in particular. Without noticing Vic tried to get up from the bed in vain as she didn’t understand that her body was paralyzed having given all its energy to the demon. She wanted to run away as far as it was possible. She had to run without turning back and begged her heart not to jump out of the chest because of fear. It had to give a little more, give her a life, a possibility to hide and escape.

‘You’re scared of me now...’ the demon grabbed Vasilisa with a slight, almost lightning-quick move of his arm, looking intently at her eyes. ‘Is madness a synonym of what for you? Ah? Oh, you’re afraid of speaking but I can hear what you’re thinking. You’re thinking about a psychopath. A serial killer. No one has ever thought about me in this way... especially women. Don’t be afraid. I’m not gonna hurt you. You are the ones who hurt yourselves. Besides you’re not just a pawn in my arms...’

Vasilisa looked at his moving lips, listened to his dizzying voice and tried to lie to herself saying that everything wasn’t real but unreal.

‘Now, Vasilisa,’ Kharon looked up at her, ‘you’ll forget this conversation as this information isn’t the one you need to know. Look at me.’

The girl lifted up her glassy stare at Kharon, being in horror she realized that nothing in the world would be able to make her forget what had happened in her flat. By looking in the demon’s calm eyes Vasilisa didn’t know her recollections were being got out of her mind by parts and shattered then with no chance to be recovered. In a few minutes of silence and hypnotized looks Vasilisa realized that several seconds ago she had had the best sex with the most handsome man in her life. She also understood that she was smothered with envy Victoria. Vasilisa was preoccupied with the only one question why was Vic with him?

Kharon unnoticeably smiled, having read little cocky ideas that he had put into Vasilisa’s mind. He liked them more than a crying lady, immorally hiding behind suddenly appeared conscience to be more deserving in the man’s eyes because she was still irresistible in her own ones.

Victoria was drawing sketches. She tried. She had to finish a sketch of advertising product but every sketch of hers was ended with appearance of a man’s picture, who held a woman. The crazy strokes, you could say absolute absurd, drew the silhouettes on white sheet. They were sharp and self-confident. She didn’t even need to erase them a bit! Yes, they were a bit chaotic, sometimes you would hardly understand where the beginning and the end were. But every stroke was in its right place. They were muddled apart, but the picture was almost finished.

Vic didn’t understand what was with her head and hands. How was that possible? She told herself to draw a square and the pencil drew proportional bodies of a man and a woman instead of

a geometrical figure. Her hand drew them like if it had been sure for its life that any square looked exactly like this.

Victoria drew and drew until she realized that rebellious limb was about to fall off due to tiredness. The girl looked up the pile of drawn papers. The only thing she knew for sure was that the man she had depicted was Kharon. Victoria had no doubt it for a second. Victoria couldn't understand who the depicted woman was. She didn't find herself in it.

'Well, what's up?' The door was adjusted a bit. Gregory came to her for the fourth time that day.

'It's ok.' She answered and quickly and easily smiled, studying the manager's face. He looked the freckle face of the red-haired girl with such kind and friendly look as if he was up to something. Then he lowered his eyes at the working table of the girl that was covered with pieces of paper drawn in pencil strokes. Vic was enveloped with a wave of confusion. The desk was full of pictures of some overs who made love with lust and lasciviousness.

'Damn it... ' Vic swore barely audibly and burst herself to order papers.

'What's wrong with you?' Gregory was surprised and quickly came up to the table, having taken pieces of sheet.

The girl's heart was about to jump out as she was nervous. She pursed her lips and looked at the man as she was horrified to guess what her boss would think of her. But Gregory kept silence and frowned at the picture.

'What's it?' he asked finally and stared at the girl.

'Mr. Dogmanov, let me say,' Victoria whispered in a low and squeezed voice, coughing. 'It's... How to put it mildly to make you understand right... I... I like graphic arts and... bodies... Yes, human bodies. Well you understand humans are organized very beautiful...'

'Vic,' the mad interrupted her excuses. His stare was already changed. It became kinder and softer. There was a hint at a smile on his lips.

'Yes?' Victoria lowered her eyes. She felt hurt so much that she wanted to cry. She sniffled trying to hold tears. She felt like a teenager boy whom mother had caught him while he was masturbating.

'I have nothing against graphical arts and human bodies... You shouldn't worry about it as if you had pictured something immoral. It's a pile of drafting strokes.'

'A pile of drafting strokes?!' the girl exclaimed being unable to believe her ears. She glanced at the sketches and sank down into her chair because of the suddenness. All the papers were stroked in different directions. There were just strokes. They meant nothing and looked like nothing. There were pictures of psychopath.

'I didn't mind insulting you... ' Gregory apologized with surprise in his eyes looked at Victoria's face and mad worry on it, who was pottering in drawn pieces of paper.

'Are you ok, Vic?' he asked mysteriously handing the paper in her hands. 'You look strange.'

'Do I?' she asked.

Her voice was almost hysterical. Something played bad tricks on her. Was it her consciousness or imagination? Victoria was fed up with looking like a fool who was incapable of controlling herself. She got used to everything... But every time something could happen that threw her off her stride. She clearly saw the drawn couple making love and now she had a pile of drawn in pencil paper.

'Wait,' Gregory took hold of her trembling hands trying to calm nervous tremor, trying to calm the girl down. 'Don't litter sheets of paper. Calm down, Vic. Calm down! It's ok. It's ok.'

He stroked her hands and the girl who could hardly hold tears back. He looked at her eyes as he wanted to understand if she was calm.

'Damn it,' Victoria whispered again and sobbed.

'Come with me,' Gregory opened the door and gave a peremptory nod toward the doorway. 'Come.'

He walked ahead carefully listening to the steps behind him. Victoria walked quickly after him, being a little bit distracted from her work of art. Gregory took the girl in some ordinary but cosy café, sat her in an arm-chair and ordered two fresh drinks.

‘Tell me what’s happening to you.’ The man sat before her with a sigh, doing up his trousers. He did not take his eyes off the sad girl.

‘I don’t know,’ she answered and covered her face with her hands. ‘I just don’t know.’

‘Hey,’ he carefully took off her hands from her face. ‘It’s ok. You shouldn’t be nervous. You can be yourself with me... We’re here not to speak about work...’

‘I think I’m going crazy...’ Vic looked up at her boss.

‘Why? What’s wrong? Can I help you?’ Gregory made a shower of questions.

‘No, no, it’s ok. It’s just little weakness.’

‘Are you sure? In your office you seemed to have been about to go crazy...’

‘No, I’m fine.’ Victoria smiled, ‘I don’t wanna you think that a psycho or idiot working for your company.’

Gregory grinned.

‘You know every man has his hobby-horse and bad mental thoughts. You’re not an exception. I just wanted to tell that if you need any help, moral or financial, you can always come to me at once. I’m your friend.’

Victoria silently listened to the sentences about friendship, pretended to be smiling. But there were still pictures that she had drawn before her eyes. She felt tired. All that mess of hell representatives drove her mad. Victoria was sure that it should have been enough to give Lucifer her soul and then rejoice at free life with Kharon. She didn’t expect Lucifer’s mark to have provoked issues with her body and mind.

‘I remember that day when I saw you for the first time ever.’ Gregory dreamily closed his eyes. ‘I was on my way to my office and you were with marketing managers, smiling and twittering about something. Then I thought: “What a cheerful girl!”. It was some time ago. Then something started happening to you. You were darkening, growing dim and the smile more seldom came to you. I’m speaking about your genuine smile but not about the one which you cover yourself with, saying that you’re ok. I don’t believe you, Victoria. You’re not that girl who you were before. You’re worrying about something and no matter how you try to hide from people, it’s still obvious.’

‘Humph, it seems that I have no chance to hide anything from you.’ The girl sighed.

‘I know that I have no sort of rights to ask you such things. Business custom and so one... But I took you here on purpose to help you relax and distract from everyday care. Here is no place for business custom and style.’

‘Do you care of all the employees of the company in such way?’ Vic glanced at the manager.

Gregory was silent. Unexpected question confused him a bit despite that he, at his position on in the company, had heard more terrible questions, and he had always slyly answered them.

‘No, actually.’ He was honest.

‘Why did I deserve such respect?’

‘Victoria,’ Gregory grinned, realizing that Victoria was trying to drive him into a corner. ‘You’re treating the situation in a wrong way.’

‘Why?’ All her shyness and bashfulness disappeared. Vic was fed up with that that she couldn’t understand. ‘Mr. Dogmanov, I just wanna sort out and get why you are so tender with me. You’ve come to me this morning... What did you want to speak about? Don’t lie please. My probationary period has nothing to do with what you wanted to say, did it?’

The man was serious. His Adam’s apple nervously spasmodic moves and that was the only part of his body which moved in any way.

‘Your sudden changes sometimes throw me off my stride. Honestly. A half an hour ago you were about to cry but now here is a cocky and fearless girl. You surprise me.’

Victoria cast down the eyes. She gave a little time to herself to calm down. Due to the fact, that she didn't understand herself, aggression appeared which Vic forgot to control completely. Why the hell did she decide that the country manager had to answer to her?

'I'm sorry.'

'Oh no, don't be! This is not what I wanted to hear.'

'Really, I'm sorry. It's true something happens to me sometimes and I become unbearable.'

'Victoria, please...'

'We should go, Mr. Dogmanov. We both have to be at work. I'd like to finish my sketches... actually, to start them. And... Forgive my provocative behaviour. I must learn to control my emotions.'

The girl rose up, Gregory jumped up at once. He didn't want to finish the conversation, but he couldn't make her. Doubtlessly he was glad that Victoria came to herself finally. Gregory didn't have any ideas that Vic had some intentions to blub with him but the meticulous spirit of his mother, demanding to leave her son alone, annoyed her totally.

Victoria liked speaking with Gregory indeed. What was special about it? He was an intelligent and clever man, who was always good-looking and smelled cool. He was sometimes unobtrusive and even a little bit shy. His speech was good and grammatically right. Victoria didn't miss any minus while she spoke to him but only the one. That exact morning Gregory came into her office and started talking incoherent nonsense, Vic suspected that their friendship wasn't the topic of the conversation. But what could she do? To dismiss? She didn't like it. She decided not to think about it and put the things into her head when they came. Until Gregory annoyed her, she could say that all of it was about friendship.

Victoria was walking with lowered eyes, being afraid of seeing something unusual and strange. She didn't want to see anything like this. She hated all the mysterious and mystical, that had attracted her before. Sometimes it was unbearable. But she still kept on considering Kharon to be from another world was the best and the strangest that could have ever happened to her. That wouldn't be a problem if now Victoria admitted that the attendant circumstances were really complicated.

Vic was on her way to the metro, pressing the red package firmly in her hand. It seemed to her to be radiating the warmth of her beloved man and she could feel him at whole. She thought about nothing but walked aloofly to the entrance to the tube.

People went towards her whom Vic tried not to see. Obviously, people didn't want to see her neither and in several seconds someone pushed the girl. Victoria in her fright jumped away and stared at the offender indignantly.

'It's a really small world.' She said in surprise looking at the man.

'Vic?' he smiled. 'What a meeting! How on earth did you get here?'

'Hi, Daniel. I work here. What're you doing here?'

'Business.' He answered modestly, carefully studying the girl.

The dark-olive eyes were looking at his face and the recollections of the time Daniel and she had spent together were streaming through her memories. It was a great time! Victoria lifted up the corner of her lips, feeling her memory digging the past, bringing in sentiments. Smiles. Laugh. Night walks. The first love confession. His love and cares. Worry. Tears of happiness and grief. Meeting with parents. Confusion and shame. The first sexual experience. Suspiciousness. Victoria stopped smiling. Remembering her bed scenes with Daniel she understood those two years had been so dull and languid. She remembered Daniel being awkwardly selfish in bed. He was just pathetic.

The breeze, coolly, touched and made a mess with her hair, without caring the girl's attempts to order the curls. She screwed up her nose, twisted around trying to catch the direction the wind was blowing in. She pursed her lips and narrowed the eyes but kept on staring at Daniel.

'Why are you looking at me like this?' Vic asked, hooded the head.

'It's been a half of the year passed, hasn't it? You've been changed so much since I saw you last time, like it'd been past several years...'

'How can you say like this?' Vic smiled.

'How?' the young man smiled back. 'I got used to see you to be so... modest, perhaps shy and now I see a very self-confident girl. Ambitious and cocky...and beautiful.'

Daniel got confused not understanding why he spoke all those things, but he was telling the truth.

'Well, that's a good change,' Vic took a sigh, 'Ok then, Daniel, it's nice to meet you but I'd like to go home. I'm tired a bit.'

'I wish you hadn't been in a hurry,' Daniel said sorrowfully and took the girl by the hand.

The darkness hit Vic's eyes, making them close and her hand instinctively squeezed the man's one. The smell of alcohol, spirit. Cigarette smoke. Tears. Terrible male tears. Desperation. Self-reproach. A woman. Another one. Some unfamiliar faces. Fuss and fuss around. Work record was at home in dust. Hopelessness. All the faces were tuned away. They were laughing. The car was sold. His mother. Her warm hands and invaluable help...

'You've been dismissed!' Victoria whispered hypnotizingly still holding the young man's hand.

'How did you get it?' Daniel shouted in his fright and pulled his hand.

'What?' Vitoria came back to reality from her uncontrolled state.

'The last time you were telling me about the woman who I saw almost for the first time in my life. Now you're telling me about my work which you're not supposed to have known about!'

'I gotta go, really!' the girl quickly took steps forward, having realized that she had made a mistake again.

'Vic!' Daniel called.

But the girl intently rushed forward having no wish to speak with anyone. She heard her name for several times, but she didn't turn to him.

Being on the moving stair Victoria, lost in the crowd, desired for getting home quickly, unexpectedly found herself in a man's arms. She felt a relief when she understood her be in Kharon's ones.

'It's been a horrible day,' she sighed with a smile on her lips, pressing herself to the man. 'What're you doing here? We agreed to meet at home, didn't we?'

'Aren't you happy to see me now?'

'You know the answer.'

'I do, that's why I'm really surprised why I see astonishment and even the touch of rebuke, as you get used to speak, instead of enjoyment?' he smiled, taking the girl aside. 'I'm here because I've been worrying that I would see you not as soon as I want.'

'Why?' Vic was surprised again.

'Well you've had meetings with your worshippers the whole day. The blonde guy, your ex-lover, who has realized only today the loss of you. Your man whom you always go to cafes with and who's always sticking in your office and he has barely beaten off his tongue, begging himself not to kiss you.'

'I know nothing about it.'

'I do.'

Vic looked at him. There was a smiling face covered with a malignant mask. His eyes were empty and overwhelmed with indifference. The girl took a sigh when she understood that the demon still had no feelings. He did his work in a cold-mind way.

'You're squeezing the stone so strong. Can't you really hear it screaming with pain? I didn't think you're so heartless!'

'What's screaming? The stone?' Vic asked and unclenched her fist.

There was a red, cut stone on her palm and nothing more. It was just a stone and the carats were the only thing that made it different form others.

'Yes,' the demon nodded and took the mineral with two fingers and put it on his palm. 'It's hurt.'

'It's a stone! How can it be hurt?'

'People can't feel and hear any pain but their own. This is what Lucifer tried to prove to his father. And then his father told: "I've created them in my own likeness and if they are not able to behold pain of other then give them more time, my son". Has enough time passed, Victoria?'

The girl looked nowhere still trying to realize and believe that stones could feel. The man touched her gentle cheek mysteriously studying her eyes. He smiled so mean and foully but at the same time his smile was unbelievably beautiful... the smile of the angel, muddled with black.

'Hey, love?' he asked, 'why are you silent? You still can't hear, can you?'

Vic shook her head. She didn't still hear. She didn't believe! Stones couldn't cry!

'You're so hopeless!' Kharon accused. 'And I like it. He doesn't, but I do!'

He pressed his lips against her greedily, immersing them into silence and peacefulness. The destroying bee noise was gone. People groaning from life were gone. The world went on its fascinated life but without dully surrounding. Kharon's touches were what Victoria had been waiting for. So had Kharon...

The sun. The warm, gouache yellow sun was in the clear azure sky. The noise of water. The songs of Paradise birds, which to be honest couldn't sing at all. The breeze. The smell of the sea water. The sand under the feet. It was heated by the glaring sun and its farsighted rays. It was so pleasant.

Victoria knew exactly that she was on a beach. It was deserted and free completely. There was just a unique music of nature and Kharon. He was massaging her hand. Pleasure... He pressed some trigger areas that brought more pleasure. He stroked her hands and didn't stop massaging her thumb base. Victoria looked up at the sly and naughty smile wandered her face.

'What a perfect illusion!' Vic whispered and closed the eyes.

They were too hurt to look at the azure sky lightened by the sun. Besides Kharon worked wanders more and more. She just wanted to close the eyes.

'Come with me,' Kharon whispered and took the girl into his arms.

He was coming into the water, tendering him with its foam. Victoria, arms extended, was on his arms and enjoyed the moment. In such a quiet, bohemian place with the man of her dream Victoria forgot about her worldly experiences and worries. Fuck Gregory. Fuck the ghosts and their desires and threats. She didn't care about anything. Vic just wanted that moment to be never ended.

Kharon gently put the girl into the water. It immediately took possession of her docile body, enveloping it with the warm waves. Impudent fishes curled around her feet, tickling skin with its fins. The water as clear as glass. The soft sand on the bottom let the feet immerse in, covered them with its small grains of sand. The girl smiled and looked up at Kharon. He examined her face, perceiving her reaction. Victoria stood up on her toes and kissed the man. His hand, alien to the earth and water but so cognatus already, embraced the girl not giving her a chance to escape.

While they were melting in passion kiss none of them notice a playful wave coming from behind. A few seconds later the wave covered the two of them who were so irresponsibly thought of nature power. Sea salty taste was on the lips, slightly pinched micro wounds that had been given by the coming frost in Moscow. They want to erase the water and they like that solitude with nature. Kharon came to rescue with kisses.

Slowly almost without moves he drugged them both under the water.

'I can't...' The girl tried to refuse.

'It doesn't matter...relax.'

Water covered their heads and the sea calmed down, having come back to breeze. Under the water surface, still hugging they both plunged not just into the depth of the sea, they plunged into each other again and again studying what a chain of trust between a man and a woman meant. What was the price of this trust? Kharon wasn't preoccupied with questions. He perfectly knew the price of his every step, breath, movements that he made on the Earth, in the human world. Having dove into a tremendous storm of emotions and feelings, having tasted what ordinary people would never

taste, Victoria opened the eyes: she was in the hall at Kharon's flat. He was behind and hugged her, pressing out the rest of the energy.

'Hum,' the girl grinned, stroking Kharon's hands. 'I'm on my feet again after sex with you! It can't be... It means we had no sex and you just sent us into a beautifully fictitious country.'

The man let her go and with a smile began to undress. He slowly put off the coat, shoes, Victoria watched him with the greatest gratitude on her face and respect in her soul. Following his example, she undressed too and went to the room.

'I'm so tired!' Vic said and fell on the bed.

Kharon smiled wider feeling the rise of energy in his body.

'I have to change,' Vic said with no desire, getting up from the bed. 'I'm hungry by the way. Let's order pizza, my love?'

The girl smilingly looked at Kharon and pulled out the jacket. The small grains of white sand spilled out from under her bra. Victoria frowned and looked at her body. There was beach sand on her belly and the stone of divine beauty was on her neck.

'Kharon!' Vic exclaimed, having realized that all of that meant.

The demon only smiled slyly in reply and left the room.

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December 2013 (Tuesday)

The snowflakes were falling down over Moscow. Kharon was sleeping, lying snug in his bed. he had already started understanding that it was so great to be a human who did nothing. He could find pros for to be a human but instead of comprehending them he fell into misunderstanding more and more. Why did people often say that life is dull and monotonous? Even when they face changed, they forgot about it very quickly. They were afraid. Confused. They thought how changes could have influence on their future.

The demon didn't understand what people could want to get from each other if they already had everything. Why could amplitudinous catastrophes happen? He understood that a human was able to feel but he didn't understand why many emotions were ignored. Why did someone feel only positive emotions while others felt nothing but negative ones?

Kharon wanted to know what to be in love meant. For some reason he was sure that to make love being in love was more interesting and pleasant. He considered sex to be his work. He liked it but now he was tired of it. He couldn't stop doing it: the demon ate only passionate and sexual energies. Everyone needed feed, nothing could survive without material.

He had fun with women. In reality. He was fed up doing it in dreams. It was now dull and even stupid to create a page for ladies with piles of illusionary things. People did build illusions in their reality, worried about them, broke their hearts and heads. Before Kharon hadn't knew that a human dream was just a continuation of reality.

Kharon realized all the beauty of tactical feelings with women in human world and he didn't know what could make him go back to dream world.

Women died. None of them could stay alive after deathly coitus with the king of sexual delights. They, like in dreams, unquestionably agreed to have a deal and they paid for it. Kharon wasn't a lawyer and he never explained what consequences were going to happen after. He was a demon. Bloodthirsty, selfish, cocky and ambitious. He needed to get yes, and he got it. He had to bring new falling souls into Lucifer's kingdom at any price.

He was surprised with human trust... especially when it was about female part. They believed nobody harmed them that the deal suggested was just a stupid joke and their arousal was at the limit and they could resist. They seemed to be about to lose their minds... and finally they agreed.

Some died while they were having a rest after the demon invasion, with the closed eyes. Heart couldn't bear the load and slowed down deceitfully and then it stopped at all. It got frozen in chest being tried, exhausted and lifeless.

Others' hearts, less weak and more stupid, refused to pump blood while their owners were making love. It wanted nothing more but peace. And it got it.

Those ladies, whose hearts were stronger and managed to survive coitus with hell and the all terror of body deep stillness after, were going to meet with Obliterator himself. The spirit or the demon, following hell adherents, picked up the rebellious souls. He checked if there was someone left alive by the demon. Those who managed to survive the night with the demon there would be much worse for them. Obliterator came himself. He would never put on a nice mask for people. He appeared in his genuine shape.

As a rule, Obliterator was the last which people saw in their lives. Hell knew no stories when a human survived after meeting with this spirit. His body was like a human one, he had two legs and two arms, at least. The spirit moved with the help of his legs and arms simultaneously. He looked like a spider but much more disgusting and at the first sight he seemed to be clumsy absolutely. It was a defective impression. In a broken and strange position Obliterator ran too fast! Like a crab.

He was white with muddy grey long stripes over his body and resembled the colour of tree trunk. His head was more oval and correct than a human one. He had an intangible line of a nose, but you could hardly be able to see it. There was a thin line instead of a mouth. It looked like there had never been any cavitas oris before but there was a taut skin like a drum. And then someone made a cut and a mouth appeared with no lips. There were long fangs hidden in his mouth look like gluttons' claws in shape and long. Due to this unusual form of his teeth the lower part of his face was correct down. There were big black smoggy circles instead of eyes, like they were drawn in pencil and then someone tried to erase them with a very bad eraser. They were smeared and terrible because there were two points twinkling like two-piece coals of light-yellow colour in the middle of the dirty-black abyss.

He had no hair. All his body was just skin, rough and mortally malodorous. As Obliterator fed on raw and fresh human flesh who had a deal with anyone, the process of digestion and purification came up inside of the spirit. Everything that fell into Obliterator's body, passed into nothingness. Every chemist and physical scientist would envy him as the demon's body was capable of digesting even quantum particles. So, while he was digesting, and it took him about a week, Obliterator sent malodour which human would hardly be able to bear. Even Kharon, having a meeting with Obliterator, wrinkled his nose at the smell. Taking into account the fact the spirit fed all the time there was no break between his malodour.

Once Kharon met Obliterator at one place, being stricken unbelievable malodour, asked Lucifer why he made the spirit to be so malodorous? In his turn Lucifer with his usual smile asked to be more respectful of Obliterator as it was, he who cleaned all the screw-ups left by other demons. And who ever heard of such a thing that scavenger and cleaners smelled like a chamomiles and thyme? Moreover, fortunately for those who met this spirit he was untalkative. He preferred to keep silence. But if he started speaking then even his co-brothers-demons couldn't help wrinkling their nose at the smell. The most nauseating, impossible, vomit-inducing, disgusting smell that could ever happen in the world, came out of Obliterator's mouth. Maybe that's why the spirit was so taciturn not to harm anyone with his malodour. He was also uncomfortable because of it. This demon was lonely that made him have sad thoughts.

He killed in two ways. The first one was when he appeared usually at night and because of his big entrance people fainted and never came back. The second way was a game when a human had iron nerves and he could bear the demon's appearance. It was Obliterator's malodour. There was nothing left to breathe with as frequent and hoarse breath of Obliterator foully infected the air with spores of poison that venomated the human body.

After the human was dead Obliterator came into the body while it was warm and ate away inside.

Those who agreed for a deal with a demon had no chance to survive. Except two persons: it was Victoria who had paid for having Kharon with her soul and... Vasilisa.

Lucifer, Kharon and Obliterator had a very long conversation when the incubus asked Lucifer for the permission not to pay off Vasilisa and not to involve Obliterator as Kharon regarded the girl as always available energy source at hand and if he needed, he could make her come with the help of his thought power.

Lucifer had listened to the demon's arguments for a long time and after he decided to let Vasilisa live at no charge... for a while. The fact that the girl had signed her own death-warrant was well-known for everyone expect her friend and herself, that was obviously.

Lucifer perfectly understood that his friend had a difficult game part and the incubus tried to think it out. If the witch got into a wax and decided to draw teeth Kharon he had to have a stand-by energy scarce.

None of the girls guessed which performance they both took parts in... fortunately for them. To play so easily with human lives and people didn't know about was a favourite hobby in hell. While people were sure that they played indeed they were played.

Kharon met with Vasilisa once in a week, warming up interest in her, devouring her energy. Bit by bit he realized that women were different not only in bed but in life.

Victoria always cooked delicious dinners, had time to bake fabulous pies and cookies. She prepared juices and coffee with some syrups. She was at the oven with no tiredness and every time outdid herself in culinary art. The demon didn't refuse that all that Victoria did was really delicious and whetted his appetites every time.

Vasilisa preferred to go to cafés and restaurants, tasting the most expensive dishes in the menu. She had no hesitation to say to Kharon that she was ready for dinner at his own expense.

Victoria guarded the house clean. Despite her personality of a designer even her table was left clean. Kharon very seldom could see her expensive pencils lying over the table. In the contrary they were put in a big box, sorted by their colour, gently coming from one into another colour.

Vasilisa had nothing to make a mess of. Having been in her room not once Kharon couldn't understand if the girl had any hobbies. Her room was too empty but all the same there was a mess. Vasilisa's ambiguity reflected firmly on her personality and behaviour.

Victoria constantly said him pleasant words of love which Kharon used to listen to and considered them to be a normal state of things. Vic never forgot mentioning about her love for the man and every time thanked someone for the fact that things went in their own way she liked.

Vasilisa never told anything like that. She felt nothing like that. In thoughts she wouldn't be against if Kharon fell in love with her. To be with such a man was a rarity. Sometimes their relationships made the demon be shocked with the way the girl thought. Without stopping she made up reasons why Kharon was with her. She chose only one – Kharon was, of course, in love with her! Feeling the make-believe love of the man who was actually incapable of loving anyone, Vasilisa tried to turn him around her finger and didn't understand why none of her tricks worked.

Victoria ironed his shirts and trousers and Vasilisa rumbled them. Vic looked in his eyes and said how much she loved him. Vasilisa looked in his eyes and asked to love her.

Every time when Kharon stayed with Victoria's friend, the witch saw the bedroom scenes between a man a woman without faces. She got used to see them as she did about the spirits which talked to her, about visions of the past and intuitive predictions of future.

She couldn't even think that her friend, the only one, bedded with her beloved man. Honestly Victoria almost forgot about Vasilisa. She didn't call and text her as she was consumed with Kharon. Vasilisa was scared with only one thought that Victoria would call her and ask to meet as it had been

before. Vasya couldn't imagine in what way she was supposed to look in her friend's eyes and smiling to tell different nonsense not to make her be suspicious.

Indeed, Victoria was blind totally! Because of love. She didn't want to believe and see anything. She loved and yearned for being love trying to awake and cultivate the feeling in the demonic creature.

Victoria took Kharon at Hamlet performance in the theatre. That was the place where people rose in applause after Hamlet's monolog and Kharon smiled listening to people and actors' minds: so, few of them thought about what they had just seen, others thought of intermission and champagne. Victoria proved that theatrical art was very complicated. Kharon smiled again: people found things difficult which chemical composition consisted of only two molecules in fact. People didn't like when things were simple. Kharon was surprised with the miracle feature of humans to have eternal tendency to complicate the primitive processes and their lives. The shining example of a person who just didn't want to live without complicating everything, was Victoria.

The girl took Kharon to orchestral and opera performances. Kharon was silent there, frowned and Vic couldn't understand neither a single thought nor his mood he could be in. Kharon didn't get what his hair stood on and small round bubbles so-called goosebumps could mean.

They always went to the cinema but only the Titanic was kept in the demon's mind. The incubus perceived modern films in a bad way, not trusting actors as far as he could throw them. He was sure he would have been able to play better and more convincing. Despite it he liked going to the cinema more than to theatres.

They walked more seldom as it was getting colder. The ground was being covered with snow.

Victoria looked at the falling snowflakes thoughtfully, Kharon looked at her pupils and eyelashes surreptitiously, where the snow was reflected. It'd been a long since he heard her inner voice last time! At those moments when Victoria immersed into her thoughts, silently and sadly pierced with the eyes into something, he could hear a weak whisper, counting down time.

He understood that he had to feel something about her, something that would grip his heart in a vice and tear well up. That was what people called a mercy. But no. He didn't move a muscle. The girl had been warned that the union of an earth woman and a demon was doomed to fail! Sometimes you should trust a speaker.

Kharon liked so much her eyes changing its colour when they looked at snow. They beamed. They lived and rose up half alive hope from its knees, reanimating it again.

The demon often embraced the girl when they were both at the window and looked at falling snow. He nuzzled her red hair, closed the eyes and holding her tighter, realizing that it was great to be loved.

Every day Victoria came closer to know herself. The seed of suspicion and doubt rooted deep. "What's wrong with me?" wasn't on the table anymore but "What exactly wrong?" consumed her mind almost totally. The girl annoyed her blessed with question answers for which he didn't want to say.

Why he needed to say that Abkhor was a demon of fear and horror who was in witches service and worked like a curse. A witch put a curse to pester the life out of someone, called for Abkhor to help. The demon did his job great. He harked after him or her, frightened them in the darkness, put self-destroying thoughts in their minds that led to commit of a suicide. If a witch cursed someone with the help of Abkhor then there was nothing in the world that could help to ward off the demon from the poor. Abkhor would be harking the victim until he or she was dead. Within several generations the demon would be holding the relatives and posterity of the victim.

What way would Kharon explain it in to Vitoria? Moreover, he would be forced to explain why Abkhor proffered his services to Victoria without even opening his mouth. And she understood him silent!

Of course, Kharon lied. How could he know who Abkhor was? Why was he supposed to know him? Besides, it seemed to her and that's all. She shouldn't think of it, certainly. Victoria trusted him. Kharon laughed in his heart. An amazing human feature was to believe everything else. Without

question. The main point was to speak conclusively while you were lying. Especially when it was about women who believed everything they heard. Especially when it was about the ones who were in love. It was not necessary to speak anything to a woman who was in love. You could just bend your head, gave her a charming gaze, showing her in every way your own superiority simultaneously with that fact that she was so beautiful. You could say couple of nice words. Preferably unusual ones. A woman had to understand that she was dealing with a cocky man not just a usual street trash but a charming, intelligent man with a sense of humour, mixed with cynicism and light sarcasm! Delicacy and mannerism were always welcome.

Victoria worked. She loved her job, but she was tired of her boss's pressure. She was too used to him and he didn't seem to her to be so repulsive and meticulous. But she didn't still have any feelings for him. Only one thought that he would touch her as her lover made her sick. Vic never considered her flirting with Gregory. Yes, he was so nice merry fellow and humourist. He knew what to sympathize meant and always tried to help. He knew no refusal and always smiled. His doors were always opened. He liked chattering and he was a great listener. He was a perfect man... friend. Victoria was preoccupied with a fact that he was a perfect man full of excellent qualities only for her. He could come only into her office being sure that he was waited and wanted to speak. He wore masks for others. Victoria had already seen his wardrobe of masks. To put it mildly colleagues weren't very fond of Victoria. She was given so many privileges and honours and it'd been done for 4 working months! There were people in the company who had been working for many years and they deserved only a quick, estranged smile in their directions.

Certainly, rumours began to ooze out. In the beginning Victoria protested it, trying to prove to the whole world that she jumped steady and even in her thoughts she wasn't ready for any adultery. Then she gave up... Gregory advised her to give up. He was sure that people needed to gossip about something at work. Let them speak about themes that related to work somehow. And if it wasn't Victoria, it would someone else. With a grin Gregory remembered when they had imputed him love affairs if he was polite and respectful to any woman. Of course, it wasn't pleasant when you were scowled by colleagues and you couldn't understand if they were jealous or hated you. In time Victoria learnt to ignore them all. The only thing she had to wait for Gregory to learn to ignore her. That was more complicated.

Kharon had fun in his heart looking at the face full of sadness in Vic's memories, making himself sure again that a human was very stupid creature when he or she was in love. The demon asked the question he had no answer for, and a half of humans asked the same question.

Here was Victoria, in love head over heels with a creature that was different from a machine just because he was warm. The girl cherished hopes for mutual love and every hour she prayed to feel Kharon's love.

Here was Gregory, in love with Victoria and burnt with passion. Both loves were unanswered. Why?

Why couldn't they love each other? What was a singular chain that people liked creating, falling in love with wrong persons? The demon didn't understand that complication.

Bit by bit he calmed down seeing that energies that he had given Victoria by accident, slowly but still was leaving the fragile body of the girl. Slowly she gave it back that the demon was desperate. The witch seemed to know that she had to save it and not to lose valuable possessions.

Their sexual life gathered speed. By any ways the demon tried to get back his energies and he would have managed to do it if Victoria had been just a human. To take away from a witch something that belonged to her and her instincts didn't want to give it back was hardly possible. The only way was indeed to kill her. Kharon couldn't do it. The deal. He turned into a sexual magician, exhausting the girl more and more.

Victoria more and more immersed into the sexual details of passion. She knew her body completely on the other hand the existence of which she had never thought of before. She learnt what

voluptuousness meant. She knew what to satisfy passion meant while having a rest, giving the body a chance to gain strengths.

Victoria realized what heaven delight was while she was on the earth. Each of her receptor of nerve-endings was fully given to the body. Any touch to the body caused a crowd of feelings which you couldn't feel all being conscious within. Every millimetre of her skin was so keen that Victoria couldn't hold back a sigh of pleasure.

Kharon did really like the girl's sincere behaviour in bed. The incubus got used and he could satisfy. But he absolutely was unknown with when he was answered with pleasure in return. He knew what to give meant and Victoria taught him to accept. Her lips touched his body so many times! They seemed to be so hot! So many times her gentle lips, warm and soft, fell lower and lower over his body, causing unusual cramps. Her hot breath and gentle tongue had never been tired. The demon let himself close the eyes while the woman in love was fussing him. Yes, he just couldn't help relaxing in her arms and with her touches. Being with Victoria he knew and realized that women were able to give back. He was flattered with it and he used the funny love and desire to please in everything.

Here December already had come. It was luxurious plump December. Moscow was in race: Christmas trees, gifts, cans, discounts, empty shops, food. People were crazy, their eyes were insane, everyone ran, in a hurry, seeing nothing. Kharon came out more often realizing that in December Russia something unreal was on plan. Little by little the city became sparkling brighter. It was all wrapped in wires on which flickering lights were. Darkness quickly fell over the metropolis and electric lights immediately switched on, lighting the centre of the city as if it were in daytime.

Onlookers idly wandered the streets, having raised their heads to look at shimmering illusion of wires stretched above the heads. They were delighted! It was so beautiful! Incredible and incomparable! Kharon couldn't find any beauty of it. It was just flickering light and nothing more. With the same result you could speak about beauty of the lampposts.

But the demon liked wandering along the winter centre of Moscow in the evening to observe the long preparation for only moment.

Victoria was at work, turning away from her laptop. She was in her armchair facing to the window and looked and the snowflakes tumbling from the sky. The girl intently thought of everything that had happened to her for recently. And it was like a lightning flashed before her eyes. Sergey!

The girl turned back to the laptop and started e-mailing.

Victoria: *"Hi, Sergey. I hope you remember me. We met in summer to exchange books. I know it's been a long time since that, but I have no one to ask... I'm waiting for you to help."*

Send and the message with the appeal into matrix codes space. Now she had to wait. The second hand stopped at once and changed with hour-hand. Time stopped.

So much time Victoria had been sure that she was insane, incapable of talking with anyone about her sticky situation. How she could forget about another psycho who she knew, whom she could speak with about things that healthy person would have never thought of. But the question was if he agreed to speak to her about anything? She was really preoccupied with it.

In lightning speed the girl drew templates, corrected the previous ones, trying thinking of nothing and not to predict events.

Gregory was on his business trip to America and Vic had time to breathe. She had no need to close the door and wait with horror when the door was opened, and Gregory came in.

The door did be opened. Vic saw nothing but felt someone be in her office. She looked up. There was a woman in the doorframes. Actually, a girl. Vic's colleague. Victoria couldn't remember the guest's name. Before when Vic had worked in open space that girl had been not far from her and seemed to be friendly. What was her name? Alla? Anne? No. Victoria couldn't remember.

The girls mysteriously gazed at each other and kept silence until the guest started uttering some sounds formed into speech finally.

'It's not a social visit.' She said, came into the office and closed the door.

Victoria began feeling uneasy. Her heart sank. She didn't want any visits especially not social. And, of course, the intended to conflict girl made her be nervous. In addition, Victoria understood that she was weak to protect herself in a physical and moral ways.

'Ok then what?' she asked with no desire, intently followed the girl with the eyes.

Anastasia! That's right! Her name was Anastasia! Vic remembered the opponent's name.

'You know, there are rumours about Gregory and you over the company.'

'What do I care?' Vic tried to be natural, not showing her anxiety. 'Just rumours. You should not believe everything you hear.'

Anastasia stared at Victoria, then at the red-burgundy stone on her neck. How unnaturally long she was staring at the jewel and she was difficult to take herself away from the pain. Victoria intuitively raised up the hand. She cupped her hand and covered Kharon's gift.

'Tell me the truth, do you fuck with him?' Anastasia asked straight forward.

'What a question!' Vic protested having glanced back the girl.

The glance wasn't shy and silent but aggressive and unusual for Vic absolutely. Besides she felt her rage and something else awaken. Something unfamiliar, unordinary as like an alien had come into her body.

'Just a question.' Anastasia said mockingly smiling. 'Why then did you get your own office after just two working months? Gregory seems to live here with you. Wanna say it's all out of kindness?'

'I'm not gonna speak with you at all. Why should I explain anything to you?'

'You should, Vic, actually as the colleagues can't stomach you it's all about female part. All the men consider you to be a whore, ready for making nicey-nicey to your master for all his kindness.'

'I've got a man!' Vic snapped out. 'I'm true to him. I don't need anyone but him.'

With no ideas why Victoria started justifying herself. She knew colleagues not to consider her to be a saint but when someone came and told to face "you're a whore" she felt like a fish out of water.

'So, you mean you've got someone else at home?' Anastasia grinned. 'Does he know you fuck with your boss?'

'I don't...'

'Oh, come on! You can't have it all just for free, can you? Have the balls to confirm you're a whore!'

Anastasia almost syllabified the last word. She felt her superiority and capability to have pressure on Vic. She liked mocking her. Being in shock Victoria looked so funny! Up to a certain time.

Suddenly there was a black veil before Victoria's eyes. The girl smiled. Rose up.

'8 years ago... maybe 10,' Victoria whispered, closing the eyes. 'A park. There is so much foliage, summer is all bluster and life intents on spreading... It's a big park. The title The Botanic Garden is not finished on the map...'

'What are you speaking about?' Anastasia tried to interrupt Vic with no ideas what Victoria was speaking about.

'I'm sad... offended. My parents don't understand me, they refuse to understand. But I'm so clever. I've been living enough to have my own opinion about life and future.'

'Are you insane indeed?' Anastasia looked worrying.

'Rustles. Bushes. The nearest to me. I'm scared. A man with no trousers? He's in the bushes, his trousers half down below the knees, his hands don't know tiredness... I wanna scream... I'm scared...and interested. I'm turning to him...'

'Hey!' Anastasia hissed. 'Shut up, will you?'

'Oh, yes... I wanna leave but curiosity is holding me tightly. The man asks not to leave. I'm staying. He asks to get on my knees and make a blow job. There's money in his hand. I take his money it's not much. I'm shocked but not scared yet. The man reminds me that I have to touch him, there's another note in his hand. I need money... I take the note and do what he wants me to do. It's hot and pulsative in my hands...'

‘You idiot!’ Anastasia hissed. ‘Shut up now!’

‘It’s not disgusting for me. I’m still interested... and it’s pleasant now. Why not try? It seems to be ugh, but I like it... There’s another note is his hand.’

Victoria opened the eyes and with naughty smile stared at her colleague in whose past she’d been crawling tight now shamelessly.

‘Do you still think that the person whose behaviour is supposed to be obscene is me in this room?’

The poison was juicing out of her lips, enveloped the words with its venom, hurting Anastasia. Of course, she remembered that story. Perfectly remembered. For a while she had thought that she was nobody, but she found strengths to reassure herself about it. Besides she was definitely sure that nobody would ever know about her part-time work.

‘I can see the similar case in your life and not the only one...’ Victoria said, ‘and it wasn’t the last one... Huh... Whore!’

‘How did you know it?’ Anastasia screamed and ran out of the office, having slammed the door.

The smile disappeared at once from Victoria’s face like if the slammed door exorcised an evil spirit out of her. By no means Victoria didn’t mean to mock and much less humiliate Anastasia. She didn’t understand what had come over her. She didn’t recognize herself. Victoria drew in breath, covered her face with her hands and sat down into her armchair.

There was an envelope on the dim screen. With no desire Victoria touched the mouse.

Unknown Person: *“Well, look who decided to show up... I’m glad that people remember of me when they’re in troubles. Trying to help you. What’s it now? Whom you’re gonna call for? Lucifer again?”*

Victoria: *“Your sarcasm is out of place. I’ve got a severe problem with my head”*

Victoria furiously typing the message.

Unknown Person: *“I’ve already noticed it. What happened?”*

Vic was looking at the screen, squeezing and cracking her fingers. She felt uncomfortable because of a thought what was going to happen next. What would Sergey think of her after she told him about her imaginary friends? What if he decided that she was crazy? Vic couldn’t bear it.

Victoria: *“When can you call a person crazy?”*

For a long time Victoria was waiting for an answer, looking at the empty screen and being afraid that she plunged the man into a shock.

Unknown Person: *“Two answers. The first is you can call a person a crazy in any way, as we don’t know what insanity is indeed. We can just assume that if someone behaves in a strange way he or she means to be out of wreck. The second is bad one. All are crazy who burn their lives, wasting time on empty things”*

Victoria: *“So you mean people who hallucinate can’t be called psychos?”*

Unknown Person: *“What way do they hallucinate in? Distorting walls after having eaten *Psilocybe cubensis* or phantom of a dead friend?”*

Having read the answer Victoria gave a shiver. Phantoms. Sergey also spoke about them. There were either two people with the same symptoms or coincidence. But Victoria stopped trusting in coincidence. She didn’t know yet what it meant. There was nothing by accident in her life. And if there was it just seemed to be by accident and Vic couldn’t get the source of what happened.

Victoria: *“I can get the *Psilocybe cubensis* effect. People who see phantoms... Why can they see them?”*

There was silence again hanging for several minutes, echoing in hundreds of hours. The nerves were shivering and waiting for the answers anticipating events. Victoria forgot about it. she was interested in only Sergey’s answer. And he did.

Unknown Person: *“Mediums. Witches. Magicians. Psychics and herbalists and all their derivate. This is the category of psychos who can see other people among people. They can see them*

because for some people they are lying psychos and for others: they have a gift and we don't know where it came from"

Victoria: *"How to understand that it's a phantom not a hallucination?"*

Unknown Person: *"Why're you asking, Vic? Let's be honest"*

Victoria got stuck in a holding mood. Actually, she was afraid of answering anything to Sergey. What if he made fun of her and then call her a crazy fool?

The girl put away the laptop and stared at the wall sadly. There was a fight *pro* and *contra* inside. And in 5 minutes *pro* won having made the girl text the answer.

Victoria: *"I think I'm going crazy. I can see people whom nobody can see. I can hear voices silent to others. I can feel touches of disembodied things in comparison to people. I can see things which can't be described. There are fragments of lives that I didn't get through. I can be thrown in a time storm and I don't know how to stop it. Am I crazy? Shall I see mental specialist?"*

Victoria sent the message and smiled so doomy, getting ready for a negative answer. To live with craziness was easier when you confirmed its presence. It meant you were aware of your actions and thoughts. And if there were consciousness and awareness so there was a chance that insanity is false.

A half and an hour had passed before Sergey answered. Victoria expected to see a big text with many questions, distrust and accusations, mick and sarcasm. But there was only one sentence in his replay.

Unknown Person: *"Were there magician, witches or psychics in your family?"*

Vic frowned. Did he decide to play along? Or did he pretend to be a psycho?

Victoria: *"What magicians and psychics, dude? I mean it! My family is a depository of intellectuals and materialist by blood. They were always like this. There are no witches"*

Unknown Person: *"Well, congratulations, dear, you're the first in your family"*

Victoria: *"I've asked to be serious, Sergey"*

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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