

VALENTYNA
BASAN



Vera the Mistress

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Валентина Басан

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Аннотация

What are we most afraid of? Death? Cheating? Treachery? Young and provincial Vera became what she never wanted to be in her life, someone's mistress. Having become the mistress of a very rich man, she will now face all her fears, as well as death and infidelity. You, dear readers, will judge her, sympathize with her, and even sometimes hate her. You will walk this dangerous road with Mistress Vera. And after you find out what happened to the main character and each of you will honestly answer the question to yourself: can treason be the price of a human life?

Содержит нецензурную брань.

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Валентина Басан

Vera the Mistress

Chapter 1

Vera enjoyed the joyride racing her brand-new car. Red Lexus from the Car Dealers, happy and elated, she sang along to the radio while her rather fast driving. The radio played a song performed by some Russian pop star: "To hell with love". The phone pinged. Vera left it on the next seat without attention, since a brand-new car is not supposed to be scratched at least in the first month. Oleg, as promised, presented her with a long-awaited New Year gift having organized the excursion for Vera to the car sales salon for a vehicle.

Right at the moment he was in Thailand with his family. All his attention was paid to his baby-daughter under a year old. His wife was determined to visit the countries with warm or even hot climate conditions.

Verochka didn't like Thai very much, it was too hot, too authentic, and there were too many animals. Despite all her dislike towards Asia, she often flew there with friends or with Oleg, and by the way, with him she had a great vacation. He had his own Villa in Phuket and the silent servants were equally happy to see either his wife or mistress.

But Vera preferred to travel to Europe, she liked Italy, Spain, Montenegro. Now she would like to go to Courchevel, or Courch as she liked to casually call it, winter mountain air, snow, skiing, lifts, lots of acquaintances, mulled wine in the evenings and making love on the floor by the fireplace.

Well, it doesn't matter, tonight Oleg arrives in Moscow, and at midnight he is seeing me, telling tales to his wife about important and complicated business affairs. We will be together for a couple of days, then I will persuade him to go somewhere on skis, maybe to the Alps, – Vera went on dreaming, – and maybe he will soon leave his wife and ...

Vera was deeply in her thoughts at the traffic light and did not notice the light going green. A siren wailed from behind as a black jeep honked like a war elephant blaring with its trunk. The impatient ones went around Vera's car some of them poked their middle finger through the car window. At the next traffic light, the jeep overtook her and cut off her trajectory, then apparently determining to punish her for the ten seconds time loss because of Vera's traffic light dreaming, curtly pulled up in front of her. The girl's foot instantly pushed the brake and the seat belt bit into her ample round chest. The pain spread over her breasts, even though the operation was a few weeks ago, but still, her bosom was still heaving, and the scars were a little sore and itchy.

– This is Moscow, baby! – she muttered and turned into her private drive.

When she parked, she picked up her phone and looked at the

display there was a text from Oleg.

"Honey, I'm not going to Moscow in the following two weeks. Having a great sunbathe here. Don't be bored. If you need money, contact Igor, he is going to transfer some money in any case."

The good mood was immediately spoiled. Slamming the door of the Lexus with such a force that the pigeons were scared and flew away from the chestnut tree nearby, Vera came in the entrance and pushed the button of the elevator. The button didn't light up.

Tamara, her elderly neighbor, was wearily descending the stairs.

- Verochka, good afternoon. The elevator doesn't work. This is the third time I've been down going shopping. Sclerosis.

- Good afternoon, Tamara, I see, let me help you. What do you need to buy in the store?

- Oh, don't worry about it. I'll go to Lyuba on the first floor. She's waiting for me. God grant you a good bridegroom. Thank you, dear.

Tamara always used to wish Vera a good bridegroom, the girl laughed cheerfully, thanked the old lady, and hurried away on her business.

But today's mentioning about a bridegroom was particularly painful to hear.

Without any answering, she quickly ran up the stairs wearing high heels. On the second floor her eyes went wet and having reached the fifth floor she opened the door and entered the

apartment, the tears were pouring down her make-up face. Apparently, that was the last straw. First there were bad words and rudeness of drivers at the traffic light, then Oleg, the elevator and finally the groom wishing neighbor. Vera took off her high-heeled boots and went straight to the kitchen for an open bottle of wine from the refrigerator without putting off her exclusively sewn coat. Having taken a big gulp of curing white wine, Vera leaned back against the wall and closed her eyes.

Chapter 2

Vera Klimova was born in an average Soviet family of factory workers. Her parents saved some money and sold their country house on the picturesque riverbank for their daughter to move and study in Moscow. They believed their daughter would be an excellent student with her knowledge thirst and talent for the visual arts. The Headmaster of the school where Vera studied, made patronage to one of the Moscow Universities of design and architecture and also helped with the student hostel. The Klimovs could not hold their tears while packing Vera's bags before her leaving for Moscow. On the one hand, they were desperately going to miss their only child, and on the other, the only job opportunity in a small town was a post-Soviet factory, a miniature of the whole Soviet and post-Soviet inefficient and failed command economic system. It certainly wasn't a right place for smart and talented Vera, the winner of all high school educational competitions and Olympics in drawing, graphics, and design. Another additional incentive to send their daughter to the capital city of Russia was Dima, her boyfriend from a family of conventional alcoholics. He worked at the factory and put away a lot of booze on weekends, so for Vera's parents, Dima's future without higher education, studies and career growth was transparent and clear as a rock crystal. In the future they didn't want to see Vera wearing a washed-out dressing gown, with

hungry children and hard drunk husband.

After graduating from high school with ease and honors, Vera quickly found a job in a company that produced designer furniture and decor. Oleg was the second client who ordered an interior solution for his country house.

Tall, statuesque, wearing an expensive suit and shoes so much cleaned and shiny, that you could use them as a couple of rear-view mirrors while autumn rainy driving. Oleg could not help impressing and fascinating a young twenty-three-year-old girl at a first sight. In comparison with Dima presenting her with a chocolate bar and field daisies plucked nearby the factory, Oleg did not just seem, but really was a kind of a celestial for Vera.

She stayed with him right after their first date. Vera had neither intention nor desire to say "No".

And now the order was ready, furniture and decor for a country house were designed, manufactured and delivered on time. Vera understood that she might not see Oleg again and was afraid of the foregoing final conversation.

The conversation did take place, but not the one she had expected.

"Babe, I'm married. I like you very much, I'm crazy about you, but I won't leave my wife," he took a sip of water and called for the waiter.

Late autumn drizzled outside, but Vera's jacket was wet with cold sweat, and she felt as if there was a puddle under her chair, it seemed she was melting like a snowman by the fireplace, she

stood up and looked around.

The waiter came over and helped her to sit down, while her lover looked through the menu with no attention.

"I'll have Caesar and duck in cranberry sauce." Dear, what would you like? Oleg asked solicitously.

Vera shook her head, nausea rising in her throat:

"I'll have some water and lemon, please."

When the waiter left, Oleg continued calmly.

"Don't worry, sugar. I really want to date you. Really. I want to spend my time with you. I rented an apartment for you in Sadovy Blvd it's in the center. I'm more comfortable there, near my office. And your job is nearby. Here are the keys and the apartment number. My assistant Igor will send the money on your card so you can go there right away. Everything is as it should be. I will see you there after you move to your new place. We will celebrate. If anything happens, call Igor, he will help you order movers or whatever. I'll be out of touch for a few days, flying away on business. Don't be bored. Take care of your new home. Bye. Stay here and feel free to order something else. Tell them to add your order on me".

He was such a handsome and statuesque as on the first day of the meeting. He went to the exit, talked on the phone, the driver hurried to open the door of an executive class car. Vera followed Oleg with her eyes until his car disappeared into the traffic. The waiter interrupted her thoughts:

"Anything else?" Do you want the menu?

Vera curled her icy fingers into fists under the table.

"Yes, red wine, please." Bottle.

– Just a moment. It will be served.

Two years have passed since then. And now Vera was also clutching a bottle of dry red wine in the kitchen with her icy fingers. She was still in her memories.

Chapter 3

Vera moved to a new apartment in Sadovy Blvd, rented by Oleg, as they say, without any present and clear problems. She didn't need any help from the movers, just called a taxi and went down to the first floor with two wheeled suitcases.

– Which airport are we going to? – taxi driver took his device to turn on the navigator.

– First, Tsvetnoy Blvd, please, – the girl closed her eyes and leaned her head back on the passenger seat.

Moving from one rented apartment to another is a good thing, but sad. On the one hand, you change the environment, streets, shops, make new neighbors and acquaintances, explore nearby attractions. On the other hand, you feel like an eternal wanderer, who moves from one guest to another with the feeling that it is still not your home.

Parents, when they heard the news of the move on the phone, were as happy as children. Mom, judging by the sobs, was crying with joy, and dad kept repeating what a good girl his daughter was. Saying she had received a promotion at work, Vera reassured her parents she would not have to pay more for housing, that there was a corporate apartment and she would live there for the time being, she sighed while she holds this position. She immediately transferred to her parents' card forty thousand rubles, which she had to pay for a month to the owner of the

previous home and told them to buy a new washing machine, because the old one almost broke did not work properly.

Vera very quickly put her things inside the closet, arranged her shoes in the hall, and took her cosmetics to the bathroom. A couple of favorite books were already on the shelf by the sofa.

The window faced the park and the view must be beautiful in spring, she thought as she was wrapping herself with a warm housecoat. The rain beat on the windows with anger and fury and the wind tore off the last, most persistent yellow-brown leaves.

Vera dialed Oleg in the late afternoon.

– Honey, hi. My love, I moved. Yes, the apartment is beautiful. I liked the view very much. Yes, good. What time? Of course, I'm looking forward.

Oleg arrived exactly an hour later than promised. Vera went mad with joy and happiness. She laughed and kissed such dear and beloved lips, eyes, hands, inhaled the smell of his skin and hair, admired his profile. Even when he left the room, closing the door, Vera had a little ache in the back of her head and somewhere in the area of her heart, but she quickly drove the pain and fear deep beyond the limits of her boundless love.

Now she knew why he often left the room when he received an incoming call. Previously, she thought that he was talking about business issues and just did not want Vera to hear about money or partners, but now she knew who he was talking to. It was She, he was talking to. He probably calms her down, tells her that there is a traffic jam, a lot of papers to read and sign at work, a meeting

with a partner who has flown in from a different time zone.

– Babe, why are you so sad?

Vera sat there thinking, fighting the pain and fear that had crept up her throat again like two huge snakes, and she didn't notice him come back into the room.

"It's all right. Oh, how was your trip?"

– You know, great, held two meetings, signed one pre-contract for the opening of a representative office in Milan, and even managed to go shopping.

Oleg set the glass on a low glass table and opened a leather travel bag.

– Honey, I'm coming to you straight from the airport, so after 40-45 minutes I'm leaving. I must show myself at home. So I won't stay with you long, but tomorrow, I think I will. But I'll check the time. This is a gift for you from Milan.

In a blink of a eye she held on the palm of her hand the most recognizable box of the most recognizable turquoise-azure color in the world. With trembling hands, the girl opened the package, light splashed into her eyes. Vera picked up the chain on which hung a diamond pendant in the form of a heart and sparkled as if it was a real star in the frame. She put on the necklace and stroked the heart with her hand as if trying to warm a cold, lifeless stone.

"Like it?"

"Of course, my love! Thanks! Thanks! Thanks!"

Vera threw herself on Oleg, embracing his muscular body, he had no time to respond her emotions and let the bag fall on the

floor.

Vera's two snakes raised their heads and hissed, pulling out their hideous stings. The bag lay open and Vera clearly saw the similar box of the similar size, brand and the most recognizable color in the world. She was ready to bet that the box contained the similar diamond heart that glittered on her cleavage with the fire of a star.

Oleg calmly closed the bag, put it on the floor, and drew his mistress to him.

Chapter 4

It had been a long time since Vera had seen the second Tiffany gift box in his bag.

She decided to teach her lover a lesson how to be more attentive and did not pick up the phone for several days. But it turned out that she tortured herself, sobbed and relieved the pain with wine. On the third day, Oleg rang the doorbell and picked up the emaciated, half-fainting, and drunk Vera in his arms. She was barely breathing, and the pulse in her neck was visible next to the blue vein through the tissue paper of her skin. There was almost no blood in the pallid face, Oleg grabbed his mistress in his arms and called the doctor.

– Oleg, who is this?

His friend and simultaneously family doctor was looking at his classmate's scared face.

– Today, this is a friend, uh, a good friend of mine, – Oleg paused, he did not know what else to say. This was the first time he found himself in such a situation. Wincing at the unnecessary difficulties and problems, the man feverishly thought about how to get rid of these painful relationships, which have acquired a completely different turn from what he had expected.

The previous Larisa, he called her Lala, had been lived his mistress for three happy and love years, she parted with Oleg easily and quietly with no emotions and it took them one day.

Lala was a tall, slender brunette with a sense of humor and a great mind. She understood that she could use Oleg's connections to the maximum, so giving him her body and experience in bed, Lala at the same time received a credit line for her own beauty salon without collateral and at a minimum interest rate. He still congratulated her with happy birthday for old times' sake, and she jokingly sent him photos of her bare breasts and butts. Deeply in his heart, Oleg missed Lala and her easy virtue, but then when he met Vera, he completely forgot about the sexy cougar. Vera was an elegant, thin and fragile girl. Those who did not know her origin and simple roots took her for a lady of high society, a girl of noble blood.

Oleg at first was so carried away with their relationship that he moved her to the apartment that he had rented for Lala...

But fainting, starvation, and unconsciousness were not part of his plan.

"Man, I don't want to spoil your mood, but your friend is pregnant.

Oleg's temples throbbed.

"Tolik, what do you mean?"!

Are you sure she is pregnant

"Are you kidding me?" You don't know how to get pregnant?

– No, you're kidding! Maybe you are wrong with your diagnosis?

– Oh, shit! You bring to me an unconscious girl with signs of alcohol poisoning, starvation, dehydration, and a nine-week

period and yell at me. My shift ended three hours ago, at exactly 21: 00. Can I go home, and the nurse will write a referral for tests and registration?

– Stop! Roofing! What are you doing? WTF? Registration?! Sorry! Sorry, friend, – Oleg began to stutter and drawl words, – I can't register it, Arina is not going to find out, I'm done, Arina and I are done.

The doctor took off his robe and sat on the leather sofa in the office. He rubbed his tired eyes for a long time, then sighed and asked:

– Oleg, what do you want meto do?

The Oleg hesitated only for a moment then said quickly:

"Give her the pill." The term is small. It's okay, she won't notice. I can't. I don't love her. She is just a young fresh body. A good woman, especially after Lala got married, – Oleg sighed, thinking about something on his own.

– So, good-bye, Oleg.

– Stop, please! Help me, save me. It's for me and Ara.

The doctor weighed it for a few seconds and said wearily:

"Don't involve me in crime. I will not spare anyone from anything. Tell her. She will decide what to do. This is her body and her life.

– If she wants to give birth? That's from me. Ara will not forgive me, she barely forgave me Lala. The man grabbed the doctor's hands there were tears in his eyes.

– My friend, now she is under a drip with vitamins and

saline, I leave her here at night, I need to saturate the body with liquid and trace elements and wash the alcohol. You should talk to her. If you want, convince her that you don't need a child, especially since Ara is infertile. Discuss it and decide together. What happens between you is your own business. This does not concern me if it does not pose a threat to life or physical discomfort.

Oleg entered the room, wiping his sweaty palms on his suit. At the creak of the door opening, the girl opened her eyes and tried to smile faintly.

– Oleg, hi, my love...

"There, there baby. Don't worry, everything is fine. You're with me, you're safe. Everything will be fine.

– I love you darling – She held out her little white hand to the man.

– And I you, honey, listen, the doctor said, that you are pregnant...

"I – I wanted to tell you, but later, later," she said, her eyes filled with the bitter tears of a hurt girl.

"Babe, you have to do an abortion. No objection. You and I have just started our relationship. You've moved into a nice place, you've got a career, you're not even twenty-five. Besides, I don't need children. I'm dating you to love you with benefits, and you're giving me these tricks.

Vera lay there, silently swallowing her tears. She crumpled the sheet that covered her with icy hands.

– Babe, if you want to be with me there isn't time for a child, – the last words Oleg spat out with such anger in the face of his mistress that she stopped crying, and just nodded.

In the morning, Vera went to the doctor and asked for a referral to a gynecologist to sign up for an abortion.

"Vera, are you sure?" Are you sure you've weighed everything? the doctor asked the question softly, but it hurt her ears.

"Doctor, yes, thank you," the girl murmured uncertainly.

– Vera, you are young, strong, the fact that you drank wine and weakened will not affect the child in any way. I can assure you are worried about it. A child is formed by many factors, the main of which is heredity and the absence of genetic diseases, and not a glass of wine at an early stage.

"No, that's not why I'm here. Oleg just said that he would leave me...

"Do you want a baby?"

– I love and want Oleg, if he leaves, I have no reason to live.

The doctor gave her a long, searching look.

– It is your body, your life, and your decision to make. If that's what you want, I can't stop you.

She breathed a sigh of relief and even smiled.

– Thank you, Yes. I'll have an abortion at your clinic. Where do I go now to get tested and sign up?

Oleg was so happy about the abortion that he decided not to

leave Vera yet. He treated her with care and attention, and when she recovered, he took her on a two-week trip to Europe. They skied, drank mulled wine, and made love in front of the fireplace, where the wood crackled. The girl was so in love that she never thought about those terrible days before the hospital and after.

The relationship more or less took a stable character, she saw Oleg almost every day during his breaks, they had lunch, sometimes managed to stay in her flat, sometimes just chatted in the restaurant. A couple of times a week he stayed overnight and these were the happiest days and nights in the whole world.

Vera looked at the sleeping lover with tenderness and reverence. She stroked his hands and hair, hugged him and touched his skin. Trying not to look at the wedding ring on her right hand, she looked at her hand, at her empty ring finger, and dreamed, dreamed, dreamed...

– Hello, Vera. Hello, can you hear me?

Vera froze holding the phone at the kitchen window. She knew that voice; she would have recognized it from hundred thousand of voices. She had heard that voice from his phone for almost nine months, when she made him coffee, when she vacationed with him abroad, when she lay in bed with him, and each time two snakes somewhere deep inside raised their heads and hissed furiously.

There was no point in hanging up; Vera knew it was Her.

– Yes. Hello, I can hear you.

– This is Arina, Oleg's wife. Can we meet and talk?

Chapter 5

Vera was sitting at a table in a restaurant and nervously surfing her page in Instagram. She caught herself thinking she could not concentrate at celebs' lives, pop idols, gossips and similar kind of social network rubbish plus particularly today she was more than average annoyed with pictures of the ugly off-springs from her not less irritating overweight classmates. Her photo from Courchevel received a huge number of likes and positive comments. At first she was pleased, even flattered that so many acquaintances from her town were jealous of her luxurious and posh life, but it didn't bring any relief. The tormented soul was suffering the great stress down the night before the conversation with His wife.

"Good afternoon, Vera. My name is Arina. I'm sure you know.

She was beautiful woman in her mid-thirties, a striking brunette sitting at the other side of the table. She was really beautiful, the features of her face were regular and black bob of hair accentuated high cheekbones and almond-shaped eyes while pear-shaped diamonds glittered on long fingers. Arina represented wealth and luxury. The white blouse revealed a chic cleavage that was barely contained by lace and sexy as hell bra.

Vera had never felt so pathetic in her life. She did not understand why Oleg started dating her. She was totally outclassed by His wife.

– Good day, Vera! Nice to meet you! – Arina's so sincere and radiant smile dashed Vera a bit. In other situation, she would have admired the woman and tried to win her trust. But it wasn't the case.

Suddenly Vera felt acute pain in her lower belly it hurt so much that she thought about her period. Ah, no, it was a week ago, there were no problems after the abortion, and the tests were excellent. But a twinge of pain cuffed Vera.

"Is there something wrong?" Arina raised an eyebrow, feigning sympathy.

– No... Vera, barely breathing, got up from the table and hobbled to the toilet with her legs half-bent.

Down below there was dark and cool air. The concept of light on the walls made the lighting near the toilet mysterious, even mystical. Vera vomited the tomato juice and vodka and took a deep breath. Her heart was pounding. After flushing the water, she went to wash basin and turned on the tap. The water running down the wash basin turned red. For a split second her face, hands and body were covered with blood

– Ahhh! Vera yelled, stepped back and leaned against the wall. Empty bathroom answered with an echo. There was nobody to help around.

The girl went back to the basin, the pain in the lower abdomen did not subside, there was a fire as if someone had impaled the uterus and fried all its sides.

She rubbed her eyes and made sure that the water was not

crimson tide color. The girl had been washing her face with cold water for a long time, and then raised her head towards the mirror. Instead of her face, a three-month-old fetus with no visible organs or body parts stared back at her, as if a medicine atlas image had been placed in her head. The embryo nodded at her and seemed to shake something that had a relative semblance of ahead.

Vera woke up in a familiar clinic. The drawing of the white walls would not be confused with any drawing in the world. The doctor opened the familiar door and said Hello.

– Well, Vera, how are you feeling?

– Good day, doctor! What happened?

"Should I ask you why you've been brought unconscious for the second time?"

"I, I don't know.

– Fortunately, Arina called me and we saved you in time.

When mentioned the name of Oleg's wife, Vera had had a painful spasm in the lower abdomen and fainted again. Her mind played games with her showing a delirium movie about a tall and devilishly beautiful brunette with a bob caressing the doctor, passionately hugging, kissing him and hurrying to take off his medical robe.

Chapter 6

Arina was the only and favorite daughter to the head (King) of the largest Gypsy clan.

Perst, that was his real gypsy name, but people other than gypsies called him Peter. He accepted and acknowledged the only child as his. The most beautiful and beloved wife Dana gave a birth to that girl.

Perst was afraid of Dana's mother, a hereditary witch, so in front of the entire tribe he announced that Dana was his only wife, and the daughter that Dana gave birth to in the first year, Ara was the only heir.

Perst was a real gypsy of the hottest blood. Already at ten, he slaughtered a young man (in the Soviet and post-Soviet criminal world criminals like Perst called such people “friars”) in the market place.

When he was sixteen went to collect his tribe, in other words, organized a criminal group in the South of Moscow City. Perst was about fifty (although no one knew how old he really was) when he took the eighteen-year-old Dana, who was his last and favorite wife.

As soon as Ara was born, Perst proclaimed her to be the only recognized and legitimate daughter to receive all movable and immovable property after his death.

The times were dashing, and there were many young and

zealous candidates for his throne. Traitors were punished by the King, who himself sentenced them to death, and the sentence was immediately carried out. But in their place came new leaders who demanded a greater share in the drugs selling and decentralizing the influence over the Moscow beggars who, in their turn, brought a lot of cash in the common fund. The new heads of his armies tried to create their own brothels for the clients who came from all over the world.

The King feared every day that he would die, leaving little Ara alone to be devoured and torn to pieces by the hungry wolves of the pack. He could trust to only one person, his Deputy, Sul Kaisarov, the leader of the Gypsy mafia who instructed him to take her abroad to the United States.

"Sul, you are responsible for Ara with your head, and if something happens to her, none of your family is going to stay alive. You know me.

– Yes, my King, I understand – Sul was always stingy with words, so he only adjusted his holster with a gun.

"The documents are ready. According to them, you are the father of Ara, she is only five, but she knows everything and understands why I am sending her overseas.

– Yes, Master.

"I'll let you know when things quiet down here." But for the next ten years you are not going to come back here. It will be rather hot here.

Sul sniffed. He left his sworn father and boss at such a

difficult time to babysit a girl in a distant country, which he saw only in pictures. Everything was ready Ara's coming to the US: citizenship, house, medical insurance and a place in a private school. Sul was supposed to control the American branch of the King's people.

At parting Perst embraced Sul, whom he loved as his own son. For a long time he looked into Arina's night-black eyes, stroked the raven hair, and called her Dana.

"Daddy, I'm Ara.

"I know, my flower, I know, I know, my soul. Your mother always looks at you from heaven. She died when giving birth to you. She is your angel-guardian who always keeps you safe. I will always keep you safe.

A terrible and cruel bandit who punished by killing and gave orders to take young girls as prostitutes, collected tribute from young children beggars, cried bitterly for the second time in his life. The first, when his beloved Dana died in childbirth.

And all the guards, even the heartless Sul had tears in their eyes.

Arina returned to Moscow exactly twenty years later.

On the threshold of his death, Perst was saying goodbye to his beautiful daughter, who was sitting at the head of the bed in one of the most expensive clinics in Moscow. Next to him stood strict and untouched by the years Sul.

"Daddy, maybe try Switzerland medicine services?" Ara

uttered the words with emphasis and with a trembling voice.

"My flower, I am going to my beloved. Don't stop me. Before I die, look through all the property documents at the place of Sul's wife. I have money in my Swiss account that will be inherited by you, lawyer Jorik Rosenberg manages all my finances, you heard of him. He settled all the problems without telling you when you lived in America. The documents for the Restaurants here and abroad have already been drawn to your name. But you know that. Come closer to me. Sul, wait outside the door.

When they were alone in the room, Perst took his daughter's hand and finally said:

"Your grandmother Vada was a witch. The entire tribe knew and feared the power of her curses. It could destroy the fruit, send a pestilence, or kill a whole herd of horses from a neighboring tribe. I also turned to her for help more than once, she gave me a long life, but with the condition that I had to give something in return. But I didn't know then that the dark forces would take my Dana, my heart and soul. Vada, having lost her daughter in childbirth, cursed all her gods and asked them to take away all the dark forces from her. But our gods were merciful and returned dark strengths to you... I kept the secret of Vada for a long time, but when you turned eighteen, Sul mentioned that he felt strange aura around you, that you could read minds and get into heads. He also said that the Professor who taught you history jumped out of the window...

"Daddy, it wasn't me he did it himself... he just pestered me

after lectures.... – Arina was on her knees near her dying father and wept...

– Light of my eyes, I don't blame you, you are my soul. Forgive me.

"For what, daddy?"

"Before she died, Vada said that in exchange for your gift, which the gods returned to you, they would take the most precious from you. You will always be barren.

"What?" Dad? Daddy?! Ohhh!!! Nooo!!!

Sul ran into the room to the screams, disheveled, tearful, and barefooted Ara tried to shout to the helpless old man.

Only for a moment did the Perst open eyes that had once been black, now transparent with age.

– Dad!

– Dana, my Life, I have been coming to you for so long...

After a lavish funeral of the criminal business legend, Ara received an inheritance and lived the life of a rich, fashionable lady. She wasn't interested in drugs, prostitution or begging business.

Having appointed Sul their right-hand man, they hired a staff of the best lawyers to open new, absolutely legal businesses in the field of IT. Arina graduated from the US University with a degree in modern computer programs and websites, so after the research of Russian market, she invested part of her inheritance in IT development.

"Dad would be laughing at me right now if he knew that robots

bring me money.

Sul silently smiled in the next seat and adjusted his holster out of habit.

– Mila, who's next? Arina asked her Secretary over the phone.

– Oleg Bryantsev, a post-graduate student from Moscow State University with the project "the Future of computer technologies".

Chapter 7

Vera regained her consciousness in the clinic room. The aching head was heavy and splitting. Her eyelids didn't open. She fumbled for the nurse's call button.

A few minutes later, the doctor entered the room.

– Doc, what's wrong with me? Why I'm here. Can I have some water?

"Yes, sure Vera. The nurse will bring you some water and dinner.

"Dinner?" Is it evening?

"You've been here more than a day. Another surgical intervention was necessary.

"What? What happened? Doctor, I felt very well. I had excellent tests. It's been so many months, what's the problem?

– Dear Vera, I am very sorry to inform you that you can no longer have children. Inflammatory processes in the uterus caused fever and dizziness. You passed out in the restaurant bathroom. You were discovered by Oleg's wife Arina. She was the one who brought you in her car. You should be grateful to her now and then. I don't know how it would have ended if she didn't take you here...

Vera couldn't believe her ears. The tears were streaming down her cheeks. Nightmare. Nightmare. She pinched herself painfully, and her vision went dark.

"I don't understand, I don't remember..."

"That's a normal state at a high temperature. It happens so that to save energy, the body shuts down for a more important, in simple terms, fight. Now everything is fine, have a good rest. The discharge papers will be ready tomorrow, and today you will take another blood test, and the nurse will measure your blood pressure and temperature. If everything is all right, you'll be home by tomorrow night.

Oleg's phone was disconnected or out of network coverage. Vera dialed the number she knew by heart over and over again with a stubborn, stupid persistence until she was exhausted.

– Hello, Vika, hi. It's alright. Can you come tomorrow before two I'll send the address? No, nothing is serious. I'm being discharged from the clinic. Thank you, see you tomorrow – last word was said hysterically, the voice wavered and she instantly hung up.

Vera didn't want to feel sorry for herself, she was afraid to start and then not stop. She texted the address of the clinic to a friend, plugged the empty battery phone to the charger, answered to her worried mother twenty messages "mom, a lot of work, I can't call for a few more days, we rent objects, love, and kiss, hello to dad", turned to the wall with unusual patterns and silently howled.

Vika was here colleague and a friend. She was a strikingly well curve shaped, tall, blond, green-eyed, and as precisely accurate as a Swiss watch. Filling the clinic's lobby with the aroma of

fresh pastries, coffee, and expensive perfume, she gave Vera a businesslike look, introduced herself as a sister, and received all the documents and statements. Vera, like a faded carnation on a monument, leaned against the reception desk, suddenly noticed a familiar silhouette in the distance along the corridor. The girl went to the head doctor's door, but the secretary halted her into it.

– Sorry, the Doctor is busy right now.

"I'm sorry, I..."

– So, Vera Klimova. The Doctor has already signed the documents for your discharge.

"I just wanted to say thanks and say goodbye."

– The doctor has a consultation right now, I'm sorry, you can't see him.

Vera had already turned to leave when the communicator on the secretary's desk asked for two coffees in the voice of the chief doctor.

"And juice, please, I need fresh juice," the voice on the speakerphone said with a loud laugh.

– Daria, bring two coffees and fresh orange juice, please.

– Of course, Doctor.

– Vera? – the secretary has already left the table and addressed the girl, – Can I help you with anything else?

"No, no, thank you. Tell me, who is in the Doctor's office now?"

– This is closed information, – Daria shrugged her shoulders and danced to make coffee and fresh orange juice on perfectly

long and straight legs for her boss and Arina, Oleg's wife.

Vika made herbal tea with berries, put the tray on the small coffee table, and sat down on the sofa next to Vera.

"Well?"

"Well, what?"

"Are you going to be silent for a long time?" What happened?

– Nothing. All right.

Vika nodded and went into the hall.

"Where are you going?" Vera got up weakly from the sofa and threw off the blanket, shivering, although there was no temperature.

– Home.

– Vika, wait, and tea?

Always temperamental and cheerful friend exploded like a bomb:

– Tea? What kind of tea, Vera? You're in a clinic, you've had fainting spells, surgery, and abortion, which, by the way, is not listed in this statement. It's listed in the history of your medicine cabinet. What the hell, friend? Are you a normal person? Why don't I know anything?

Vicka's green eyes burned with righteous fire. She was standing in the corridor in one boot and an unbuttoned raincoat. She was angry, brave, and beautiful.

"Vic, I'm sorry, I couldn't tell you, it's embarrassing and painful.

"So I'm a stranger to you?"

– No, not a stranger, sorry, – Vera sighed and trudged to the sofa, she took the cup and took a small sip, then resolutely took a deep breath.

Vika listened with her mouth open, still sitting on the sofa in her raincoat, her boot in her hands, having forgotten to take it to the corridor. Vera told about Oleg, about their secret affair, which lasts more than a year, told about the abortion, about travel, about calls from his wife, meeting, and events of the last days.

Twilight faded into the late evening, and then into the night. The girls were sitting on the sofa, one occasionally crying and falling silent, while the other only nodded sympathetically and shook her head.

Vera finished her story and covered her face with her hands. She felt ease and lightness as if a heavy stone that had been pressing her to the ground fell from her shoulders. A secret affair with a married man was no longer just her secret.

But for some reason, Vika was more interested in his wife's charitable actions than in Oleg.

"Vera, dear, this is not the worst thing, believe me. We all make mistakes. You're still young, but I'm five years older than you, and I once slept with a married man.

Vera looked at her friend gratefully. She knew that Vika was telling all this to comfort her, but saint Vika, the mother of an equally fair four-year-old beauty daughter and the wife of a

famous Moscow lawyer, could not be....

– Yes, before I met Misha, I worked as a designer in Novosibirsk, you know, but you don't know why I moved to Moscow. My boss, Roman, was an elementary womanizer and freak. But that doesn't mean it's not my fault. I am guilty, of course, guilty as a sin. I was naive twenty-year-old fool who fell for the sweet speeches, words, and velvet chatter of an elderly ladies ' man. Naturally, at the corporate party, it happened right in his office. It was later that I found out that all our women's team had been there before me, including the accountant Valentina, his age, with whom he had had affairs twenty years ago when both were young and hot. His wife, who had long endured his infidelities and debauchery, for some reason went berserk with me. Not only did she make a scene at my house in front of my parents, but she also brought her children to work so they could see "daddy's new whore." The entire team was in shock, each with fear thought that in my place could be it. But many of our women also had families and children. My affair with Roman ended with a couple of times of dubious quality of comfort in the office before it had time to begin and flourish. The hero-lover cowardly suggested that I write of my own accord, which I did with great pleasure. My parents calmed me down and blessed me for Moscow. And I am happy that I came here. Here I met Misha, my love, my happiness. But he has not yet shown me his documents and passport with an empty column about marital status, I even forbade him to kiss. We're still laughing. He, by

the way, that's why he married me, said that he had never seen anyone like me. And I told him that I had vowed never to have any personal dealings with married men in my life.

Vera never talked to her friend about her personal life. She knew their family, sometimes went to birthday parties, but always alone. Vera was silent about her married lover, and Vika pretended not to notice her secretive personal life. Vera did not know that in the past, Victoria had such an instructive and difficult story, although with a happy ending. And Vika, in turn, having heard her friend's story, felt that the situation had gone too far. Vika realized that Vera had already lost this battle. The main thing was that Arina in this unequal struggle felt sorry and let go of the stupid fool. Although in the back of her mind, something told Vika that Ara did not take prisoners and shot them on the spot.

Chapter 8

Oleg has always been a very exemplary boy, a loving son, and a caring grandson. He loved his mother and grandmother very much. It should be noted that mother Olga and grandmother Zina loved Oleg much more. He has always been too overprotected and put on a pedestal as a little God.

Oleg's father left the family when the boy was eighteen. Having suffered in eternal quarrels and scandals about the upbringing of the child, the family broke up, the father was forbidden to punish the boy for pranks, give him to sports or take him fishing. It was a taboo to punish him, he could get injured in sports, and catch a cold at the open air. The slightest desire of a man to teach his son was met with hostility. And it ended with another stupid and vulgar scandal.

Grandmother Zina, who came from the countryside to help with her grandson, remained in Moscow. Their seniors' apartment was a large one, left as a legacy by rich and distinguished relatives. His great-aunt had no children, and the only heir was a grandson her dear and beloved sister, Maxim, Oleg's father.

Having met Olya at an exhibition of paintings, a modest, provincial girl studying the art of the Silver age, Maxim just a few months later made a proposition. The couple was among a smart set of artists and the Bohemia of Moscow. Quiet, intelligent, and

smiling Maxim and Olga carefully hid their main family problem, they tried to get pregnant for a long time, but fate, generous in everything, did not give them a child for many years.

Maxim was forty, Olga was thirty-eight.

– Pregnant! – reported the district gynecologist with joy and relief.

The late pregnancy was a very hard ordeal. Olya went blue from toxicosis and thin from headaches and nausea. In the last months, she was taken to the hospital. There was a real threat of miscarriage. That happened at the beginning of the ninth month, the long-awaited first child Oleg was born.

The boy was very weak and sickly. Granny Zina rushing to help her daughter and it was reliable support and help. They took turns sleeping, the little boy screamed from colic and often had a fever. In the first three years of life, three adults never got eight hours of sleep each. Oleg had caught all types of children and adult illnesses. He was a regular visitor to all hospitals, managed to break not only his hands but also his legs on the playground, so until he was three years old, the three adult idiots did learn how to take care of a small trouble bag.

A little later it became a bit better, the boy got stronger, almost equal in height and weight with his peers, was ill once every six months and almost never missed school.

The family returned to its usual rhythm of life, Maxim and Olga were engaged in work in the field of art, and Olga's mother helped around the house and with Oleg.

– Pregnant, – the district gynecologist looked at Olga.

There was a vivid discussion until morning. Olga decided to give a birth, although Maxim was strictly against it. The mother was on her daughter's side.

The miscarriage happened almost at the sixth month, the child could not stand the virus Olga got sick with and got still inside. She asked not to tell the gender of the unborn child, even though she knew in her heart that it was a girl. She had already secretly named her, Eva.

Since then, their family had had a black streak. Olga gave up her job at the state gallery and devoted herself to her only son. And his grandmother was taking care of him as well, now both women were praying for him. At first, the husband blamed his wife's insanity on a severe loss and then realized that the wife had gone mad because of her only son. All-day long they waited for him from school, taking him to music, drawing, and language classes. Maxim wanted to go in for swimming with him but met with such a cruel rebuff that he closed the subject.

Once Oleg, spoiled by two eternal servants stole some money from his grandmother's purse and bought binoculars, cigarettes, and chocolate. Maxim wanted to punish the impudent youth, but his mother and grandmother, with bloodshot eyes, rushed at his father and son-in-law like tigresses.

The head of the family began to come home later and later. Then he started staying with a colleague from work. But he left the family like a decent man, leaving everything when the child

turned eighteen.

Oleg, who had pretty much driven his mother and grandmother with his antics, became subdued after his father left. Looking at himself from the side, he shook himself up, entered the Moscow Polytechnic and moved to a hostel. Without his mother and his grandmother it was difficult for the first few weeks. Then he forgot that someone had cooked for him, washed, cleaned and ironed. He made friends with his classmates and was surprised to discover football and swimming.

Oleg was the best in computer science at the University. In the late nineties, computers were unavailable for ordinary citizens like spaceships. And having learned that the computer was going to restore the peace in their family, his mother and his grandmother called Oleg's father and asked for half of the sum of money. He listened to the offer, bought and brought to them a real computer, a gift for his son's birthday by himself.

The only condition that the computer would stay at the mother's flat (Maxim's former apartment), Oleg was happy as a young dolphin. Now was spending days and nights through in the family home. Mother Olya and grandmother Zina was crying with emotions of happiness, his father came once a week to visit his son and always found him at home, by the computer. Moreover, Tolik, his best friend, who was a graduate of medical school, came to work on the computer with Oleg every day. And women, instead on his coming every day, now they had a double joy. They loved Tolik as if he also was their son and grandson.

Chapter 9

Vera spoke to Oleg rather coldly, for the first time during a long period of their relationship.

– Hi, Honey, why are you so sad?

– Oleg, I called you a lot of times the day before yesterday and yesterday. I decided not to bother you today. My friend picked me up from the hospital yesterday and brought me home.

"From the hospital?" What happened? He pretended to be so surprised that even Vera, who was in love with him, did not believe his words this time.

"Don't be ridiculous. Your wife took me to the hospital to see the doctor. Didn't you know? Didn't any of them tell you? Did you decide not to bother me? I might die, – self-pity covered the girl with such force that she hung up for the first time.

As she washed away her angry tears with mascara in the bathroom, the phone rang and the walls of the bathroom spread its echo across. Without looking at the display and being sure it was him begging for the excuse, she grumbled fiercely:

"I've already told you. Is there anything unclear?"

"Excuse me, is this Vera?"

The woman's voice on the other end of the line was agitated and trembling. Obviously, the woman had been preparing for this conversation for a long time. And today I decided to dial the destined number.

"Who are you and what do you want?"

– Vera, my name is Larisa... I'm Oleg's ex-girlfriend. I want to talk to you. Can we have a meeting?

"I've already met his wife, thank you and goodbye," the current mistress sighed heavily and was about to hang up when she heard the unexpected sharp quickly pronounced words cutting her ear:

"I know that you are not able to have children. Ara sacrificed you to her gods! She is familiar with Dark Magic!"

Vera's hands began to shake, she mechanically hung up, but the tremor was so strong that the phone fell on the snow-white floor tiles. It rang again.

She pressed the broken display against her ear and answered:
"Come to my house. I'll text you the address.

– Vera, you are in touch, thank God. I'm sorry, but I know your address. I also lived in this apartment for several years.

Larisa rang the doorbell exactly thirty minutes later. A tall, slender woman in her thirties looked chic. Dark, long hair, light brown eyes, a perfect face minimally touched with makeup, on the lips a nude fashionable shade of lipstick and a light train of expensive perfume, a black turtleneck, jeans, jewelry only a watch of a famous Swiss brand and a diamond ring on the ring finger.

I am Larisa, Lala for short. She took off her coat and left her bag in the corridor, followed the hostess to the kitchen.

– Tea? Coffee? – Vera barely uttered the words, such a crazy weight, fatigue, physical and moral pain fell on her, that she was becoming smaller and grayer in front of the gorgeous Lala.

"Thank you, I'll just have a glass of water."

Lala immediately got down to the main point. She told her story.

Oleg got acquainted with her accidentally at the birthday of a rich friend of theirs, they instantly liked each other, and Larisa found out that Oleg had been married to Ara after a few months. Lala mentioned about the house in Thailand, how marvelously they were traveling in Europe, and then her lover rented this apartment for her.

Vera had a terrible headache. Lala's words hammered her temples with no slightest mercy. She remembered her mother used to make her wear a rabbit fur hat in winter so that Vera wouldn't get cold in her ears. That cap was warm and large, the gray fur tickled Vera's face, and the strings under her chin pressed against her neck. She said that nothing could be heard in that hat, and when her mother called her to return home from the skating rink, Vera pretended that she did not hear her mother's shouts and promises to punish her for misbehavior.

So now sitting in front of Oleg's ex-girlfriend, and the words said by the latter reached her through the imaginary child's fur hat like knife goes through the butter, she could hear and understand every word. The invisible strings were tight around her neck, and she drew in her breath noisily and heavily.

"Vera, are you alright?" She heard Larisa's words distinctly and clearly.

"I am fine. Just recently I've been in the clinic, probably, this is still the effect of drugs and anesthesia.

"That's why I came to you. You see, I was in this clinic, too. The fact is that I got pregnant from Oleg. He met this with hostility, took me to the clinic for an abortion under the careful guidance of his Doctor. Yes, Yes. It is exactly that I was terribly worried about. I wanted to keep the baby. But then my friend who works in this clinic told me that Oleg had already brought a young lady here for an abortion a few years ago. She died on the operating table. According to the documents, the cause of death was an allergy to anesthesia. Unfortunately, this happens, doctors also make mistakes, not checking the patient for tolerance. But the strangest thing is that my friend told me that during the operation, instead of Oleg, Arina, Oleg's wife, was sitting behind the door. The staff signed a non-disclosure agreement, but when my friend saw me on the abortion list, she immediately called me. I was really scared, I'll admit it. After getting Oleg fairly drunk, I began to ask him about that young lady. At first he refused, then told me that he had a young girl, a student from a poor family. They dated for several months, and then Natasha got pregnant. He always called her Natasha. I don't remember her last name. He took her to have an abortion at a friend's clinic, but she died. Oleg began to cry, saying that Ara can't have children, that he is a traitor and bastard. He also said

that he loved his wife like a goddess, like a shrine, and would never have a child with a mistress. Then the next morning he woke up, sobered up, obviously remembering our dialogue in details, behaved aggressively towards me for the first time. I've never seen Oleg so angry. But after he had left, Arina called me.

Larisa gulped down her water. Her hands began to shake visibly. She took a deep breath and continued.

– Ara came right here, to this apartment, to our cozy nest, as I dreamt it to be. She went to the sofa without taking off her shoes and lit a cigarette. This is an amazing woman, in her presence I felt like an insect that she can easily crush. All my thoughts, desires, plans disappeared. My head then was clear. All I had in my head was Ara's thoughts. She didn't say anything, but I knew everything she was telling me. She wanted a baby, my baby. She would not to love and educate that baby. Ara wanted a sacrifice. My child had to be sacrificed to her gods so that she could become pregnant. I clearly understood this. Vera, don't ask me how. Just ask Oleg who Natasha was and why she died on the operating table. I now have a family, a husband, child and business, I haven't seen Oleg for a long time, but yesterday a friend from the clinic called me and told me about you. Vera, run away from them. These three: Oleg, Arina, and Doctor are terrible people. I'm afraid of them, and I want to warn you to stay away from them.

Vera closed the door behind Larisa and sat down on the floor. Forty minutes later, the doorbell rang. Rising with difficulty,

Vera looked through the peephole and opened the door. There were two persons standing there. They were two out of three.

Chapter 10

Oleg was always mentally weak and very dependent. As a child, he was afraid of upsetting his mother and grandmother, class teacher at school, lecturers and dean at the Institute and later angering his wife. Oleg was soft, weak-willed and very submissive. He tried to choose girls who were mentally weak and much younger. The older he got, the younger his girls he dated. Next to the young, modest and inexperienced ladies he was a macho, handsome man who was sure of himself. Only once in his life he had made a mistake and committed himself to a woman much stronger, brighter and more confident Arina. She was a star. She has always been a star.

Having settled down to work for the firm of Arina, Oleg lost his sleep and quietude. He had nightmares; he could not eat, drink and feel ease. And when he was completely entrapped, Arina came to the department of programmers where Oleg worked and invited him for coffee. The meetings with Ara were pure obsession and mystique. He was drowning in black eyes, not even understanding sometimes whether their meetings were real or only in his dreams.

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