



Andrey Titov

*Seaside
tales*



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Аннотация

Perhaps this book seems to consist of scattered stories. A boy dreaming of the sea; a man burning with jealousy; the businessman-loser, wishing to settle scores with a life; things that can talk. Love, passion, unexpected, sometimes on the edge of fantasy, detective plot twists... But only turning the last page, you will understand: the author's ability not only to observe life, but also to notice the most interesting in it, combines these fragments of being into a single picture of the world.

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Fiction stories very often happen in live and are the most truthful.

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A Sea



In early childhood, I did not go to the sea, but I saw a lot of programs and films about it. I was reading different books about it. I was dreaming about this great miracle of nature; the boundless water expanse, the lulling sound of the waves and the gentle sunlight. Eventually everything changed when I became an independent person and earned enough money to be able to visit the sea. During my vacation, I was completely devoted to the celebration of life and doing nothing. Now my life has changed and I have the privilege of living on the seacoast, rejoicing in my embodied childhood dream.

Today, walking along the sea, I watch people around me, who express their feelings and emotions honestly and transparently. They are so pure and sincere that they attract everyone to themselves, beckoning with their secrets and mysteries. I like watching them, fantasizing and creating stories about their lives. People coming to the sea on vacation are a special category of holidaymakers who are improved by the surrounding marine environment, making them kinder, gentler and more tolerant to each other.

Here is a young, beautiful, tanned couple, visiting the sea for the first time together. They are innocent and in love. They are so passionate about each other and their feelings, awakened by this sun, that they completely ignore others, unknowingly attracting the glances. The rules of decency, however, do not allow you to admire this natural innocence and beauty.

The company of young girls, enthusiastically twittering like a flock of carefree birds, attracts the eye of passers-by. Young, cheerful, naughty girls are looking at the guys of the same age, sitting nearby. And here is an attractive couple, an imposing man of about 60 years old, gently telling something to his companion, who is obviously younger. On the face of his companion, a dreamy smile is wandering. She is happy with her life at this moment and probably wishes it would last longer.

Summer's relaxing warmth, gentle sun and soft sea water makes people kinder by awakening their purest feelings, giving a wonderful sense of lightness and love. Viewing this, I want

to immerse myself in an endless sensual tenderness together with my beloved woman. Approaching her calmly sitting in the deckchair, I am dreaming about hugging as once a very long time ago, patting her tanned knees and touching gently her knees with lips...

– You can go to swim in the sea, just to freshen up and cool off! – she says tritely, shattering any illusion of universal tenderness and bliss.

– Yes, of course, you're right, – I said, coming back from my fantasy. And so the fairy tale ends before it started. In my life, I have to look at beautiful, tanned, loving men and women, dreaming and creating my own fairy tale.

At the cliff



Life is often compared with a striped cloth; the black strips mean bad luck, the gray ones symbolize the everyday routine. Rarely among them there are light strips of happiness. Quick jump from black to white means feeling the fullness of life; the opposite is to travel along the black strip for a long time, enduring endless defeats and failures.

Leo was turning 30 and found himself in this situation. Fortune seemed to have turned away from him forever. First, misfortune hit his business, in which Leo invested all his money and energy. Being a boy, he was dreaming of owning a cafe.

He pictured a cozy hall, French wicker chairs, with photographs of old cars on the walls... Leo worked at two jobs, saving every penny until he had enough money to rent the space and buy equipment.

He rented a cafe in a popular, crowded area. He outfitted the cafe exactly as he had dreamed in his childhood, hired two cooks and developed the menu. The cafe was never empty. Clerks and secretaries from the neighboring offices came before work to drink coffee with hot buns and read the morning newspapers. Taxi drivers came at lunch to eat a steak with mashed potatoes. In the evening, courting couples came to the café; they liked the French chanson, which was played there.

Leo already began to make a decent profit and continued to improve his café. He bought a large TV and exotic plants in pots. Leo's wife helped with the bookkeeping and gave some ideas for the design. But a Chinese restaurant opened to the left of Leo's Cafe and many customers left, enticed by the exotic. Leo tried to fight with his competitor and lowered prices. But because of this, he had to let one of his chefs go and reduce the salary of the waitresses.

A month later, an American fast food restaurant opened on the right. Leo calculated that the café now had no more than seven visitors a day. He fired the waitresses and he and Laura themselves began to serve the occasional customers. Attempts to save his business failed. Leo owed the suppliers of products and could not pay for utilities. His lifetime dream was getting

vanished.

Leo lost his appetite and slept occasionally. Tired and gloomy, he returned home late, counting losses in his mind and trying to come up with a plan to escape. On one of these evenings he saw his wife with another man. They were sitting in a dark red Mercedes parked under a street lamp and kissed passionately. Leo, exhausted by his failures with business, stood and looked in silence. He saw his beloved beautiful Laura hugging a stranger, in an expensive suit, as his hand pulled the strap of the dress from her shoulder...

Leo felt a burning pain in his heart and stood frozen, paralyzed, unable to move though the eerie scene in the Mercedes stuck in his memory for a long time.

He tried not to think about it, along with Laura's words, as she shouted, picking up her suitcase:

– Yes, I had an affair and I'm not ashamed of that! I can't live with you! You are loser! You are falling into a hole and you want to take me with you!

Leo stood with his back to her, gazed at the lights of the evening city outside the window, and seemed to hear nothing. He realized that Laura, his beloved and only friend, betrayed and abandoned him at the most difficult moment in his life.

– Why? How could she? – Leo asked himself unhesitatingly.

Everything lost its meaning. It was not necessary to rush to the café or to make morning coffee for his sweetheart. There was no longer a reason to shave; a burning clot of pain constantly stuck

in his chest. Leo tried to forget with the help of beer and wine, but the heaviness did not decrease. During the day yearning teared to pieces, at night – insomnia or nightmares.

Constantly in his mind was the image of Laura and her arms around another man. Leo felt the scent of her skin, smelled of meadow flowers, heard her frequent breathing and muffled love sighs, as if she was there. Alcohol first increased his agonizing hallucinations, then plunged him into a black dream. Waking up, Leo saw Laura again, her eyes closed with pleasure, her slender hand on the neck of a stranger in an expensive suit...

Is it worth living in this hell? Work, wife, money – everything is lost. There are only debts left, which cannot be paid. It seemed that all good things were gone forever together with Laura. Leo could not think about future without anguish and fear. He involuntarily remembered his uncle, who shot himself with a gun, and a cousin who hung himself. The causes of both suicides were unknown. The family talked about secret losses in the casino, about deadly diseases and even mistresses who blackmailed. But all these were just speculation. Now Leo seemed to understand why his relatives had chosen this path. They were just tired of life.

He was tired too. Driving his car, he looked at the mountains on both sides of the road and whispered:

– Only courageous people can voluntarily leave their lives when they realize that they have failed.

He confidently drove the car through a narrow mountain pass

to the seashore. He was thinking about Laura. Leo imagined her face when she knew what had happened. Of course, she realized her guilt, shuddered with bitter shame and, most likely, cried. She'd never been insensitive. Let her live with eternal guilt on her conscience, Leo thought, driving to a high rock at the edge of the sea.

It was a favorite place for climbers; one slope of the mountain was steep, almost vertical, while the other was a steep slope, capable of driving a car on.

At three hundred meters from the top there was a place for parking. Leo left his car there, and walked; the sun was setting, and at dusk it was difficult to climb a slippery path, but Leo fearlessly forged ahead.

– In five minutes it will end, dear Laura, – he muttered, grinning bitterly.

He climbed up the top and suddenly saw a human silhouette in the last rays of the sunset. Someone stood on the edge and leaned over, as if measuring the height of the cliff.

– Are you wondering how long it will take you to fall? – asked Leo, unexpectedly for himself.

The stranger quickly turned the face toward Leo. It was a young girl in a light raincoat and the mountain breeze ruffled her long, loose hair.

– Only 5 seconds, – Leo continued, – but, people say, during this time, your whole life passes before you.

He stepped toward the girl and saw that her eyes were filled

with tears and her face was frightened. She extended her hand toward Leo as if forbidding Leo to come closer.

– Ok, I will not come closer, – he said calmly. – I just want to warn you. People do not care about your suffering. Do you think that you will force someone to suffer guilt because of your death? It's pointless! You'll smash your head and you'll lie on the stones, crippled and bloodied. They will bury you and in three days they will forget you. What is the purpose to kill yourself?

Leo's voice sounded loud and convincing and the girl quickly walked away from the cliff.

– Why did you want to do that? – Leo asked.

– Did you lose your favorite work as I did? Did you lose your life's savings like me? Did a man close to you left you and you found yourself alone at the most difficult time of your life?

He held his hand out to the girl, wanting to take her by the elbow and taking them away from the abyss. She suddenly smiled and quickly wiped her eyes with the back of her hand.

– Don't worry! I wasn't going to jump! I just took pictures of the mountains and accidentally dropped my phone and my eyes became wet because of the wind... You know, you're very nice, kind and intelligent. You just need someone who can support you when you are down. Do you want me to be that person?

With these words, the girl took Leo's hand and led him away from the cliff.

Angel dog



Waking up at about 6 am, Mark habitually decided to take

a morning run along the sea. For him, this ritual had recently become an obligatory part of his day. Enjoying the coolness of the sea, Mark once again was running past the familiar lanes, well-maintained houses, passed fig and apple orchards, so adored by a small resort town on the seacoast of Slovenia.

He liked to stop while jogging and gaze into the distance. It was a fascinating sight to see the sunrise, when the first rays began to make their way through the bluish-gray clouds that, like waves on the sea, compete with each other, ran into the embankment, spreading all over the seacoast.

“Your shoestring is untied, you could accidentally fall off” Mark heard a small, strange voice.

Mark shuddered and looked around; no one was there.

“Is it just my impression?” thought Mark, grinning at his own hallucinations.

“Yes, it has happened in reality,” Mark heard again. “Look down once again!” the voice repeated.

Mark made sweat from surprise, and saw that there was a golden Labrador standing next to him and looking into his eyes.

“You’re talking, aren’t you?” he said to himself, not believing that he was talking to the dog. Mark is an adult and normal, healthy and sensible and suddenly seriously is talking to a Labrador? Who would believe this? How could he believe that this meeting was actually taking place? Besides, as he started talking to the dog, it began to answer him.

“Of course, I am” it answered to Mark.

“Have I changed so much? And you have not changed very much! I recognized you immediately,” it continued happily.

It, of course, was really hard to believe, impossible to believe, but it was her! His dog, a Golden Labrador Almekka, who Mark had returned to the breeders ten years before with tears in his eyes and gripping emotional pain, which lingered for a long time.

“Almekka, my God, is that really you? Here, by the sea, thousands of miles from home, and you are even talking? “Mark began saying with a shudder in his voice,

“Or am I getting crazy?”

“No, nothing’s wrong with you! I was surprised when yesterday morning I saw you jogging. The whole day I was thinking, wondering whether to approach you and talk to you. I consulted with my friends and obtained the permission for the meeting and short conversation with you. You understand, the situation is not standard, but I really missed you, my master – and the dog quickly wagged its tail.

“Of course, I must explain everything to you” continued Almekka,

“Do you remember the terrible accident that we got into together? On that summer Saturday evening, when the group of drunk young people decided to turn around in the wrong place and you drove into them at full speed? “the dog reminded, continuing wagging her tail and looking straight into Mark’s eyes.

Mark remembered that evening in all details. Many times the accident had been replayed in his head and he always came to the

conclusion that he could do nothing to prevent it. It was the most serious violation of traffic rules and only Mark's reaction and luck helped avoid additional casualties. Almeka sat in the backseat and was not hurt at all. Mark was seriously injured in that accident; he was treated for a long time. Many months passed before he became healthy again and many fractures of the cervical vertebrae, scapula and clavicle were healed.

“So, when the accident happened, the time had stopped, and our Ruler “Almeka shook her head and pointed up with her face, “asked me if I want to go up there instead of you?”

The Labrador Almeka crouched, and continued “I, of course, did not hesitate and agreed on the condition that you would not feel guilty about my death. I supposedly had to spend just a couple of days alive. Then I thought just to run away, but you returned me to the breeders, because you were broken and could not take care of me.”

Mark listened attentively, remembering that terrible day.

– “I'm working as a canine angel, and to be honest, nobody can see me except in special cases and when I'm allowed to become visible, “continued Almeka, surprising Mark with her revelation.

“For appropriate behavior and good performance, I was sent on a business trip to the seaside, where you are living now” the dog yawned, and continued her unbelievable story. “Do you think only people have angels? Animals also have. I have to help go up there to many pets as hamsters, cows and sheep. And, of course, my fellow dogs, there are lots of them here and they are loved!

Yes, and how I could forget about cats, whether they are not fine”, winced Almeka.

“Here, they are walking by themselves, such impudent creatures! There are lots of things to do, local canine angels do not like to work fast. They all do it so slowly!

Mark thought that the Labrador chuckled after these words.

“I owe you my life”, Mark said quietly, as if to affirm it finally.

“Nonsense, we are all alive only because of Him”, Almeka lifted again her nose up.

“So, He, our Ruler, had plans about you, and you still did not fulfill your mission”, the dog continued, looking around.

“Accidents are links in a chain of some celestial regularity that leads all of us alive to the most important goal, on a very winding path. Each living creature has its own purpose, its predestination. And an apparent, chaotic coincidence, unexpected encounters, or occasional discoveries – all these, is a part of the divine, that is incomprehensible to us. You do not even need to try to understand and solve this cunning crossword of life. We cannot know, we do not even guess what this goal is or how it sometimes says – the mission, in what it is expressed. We can only try to live, live for love. Feel the love in our, even ordinary, everyday affairs, when the whole body and soul feel the correctness of what is happening. It is difficult for us to do good deeds, but we cannot do even evil deeds, and this will already be seen and appreciated by Him! “the Labrador began to philosophize.

Almeka, turned her head, as if listening to someone, then turned her head to Mark “Well, the message from the authorities came, we urgently need to move to Trieste, where my Italian friends do not have time to cope with the assigned work! Take care, my master. Maybe we meet again! Oh yes, and tie your shoestring, please! “there were farewell words after which the dog turned and ran along the sea.

Mark, stunned by the very fact of an unusual conversation, looked fascinated, then followed the fleeing dog, then to the calm sea, then to the unfastened shoestring and did not believe that it had happened to him.

The Mistake



All night long Boris did not sleep because of anxious thoughts. He wondered what had gone wrong in his life and why his beloved wife had changed so dramatically in past months. Ilona suddenly began to recall the long-standing grievances, reproached her husband with frivolous hobbies and harmless flirting with other women. Because of these unpleasant memories, the couple began to quarrel very often. However, Boris retained a warm feeling for his wife, and here, in immigration, he missed her a lot. When Ilona came to visit him, the man tried to persuade her to intimate caresses. She did not refuse, but she kept aloof, preferred to spend time alone and

did not tell him anything about herself. It was evident that she was bored in this paradise, and she came simply because of a sense of duty.

A couple of years ago, Boris was a successful Moscow lawyer. He completely gave himself up to the work, sacrificing his free time for it. He was often invited to lead the most complex processes, attracting the attention of the public and the press. The lawyer made lots of useful acquaintances in the capital city and often used them. For twenty years he managed to save a fortune.

But then suddenly he felt tired. Boris began to flinch from every phone call, did not sleep well at night, flipped through the clients' business for hours, not understanding the meaning of what he had read. He realized that he had overworked, – there was a professional burnout. Boris felt that he could not stand a day in a tense lawyer's environment. He decided to rest, to leave the case, go to a small quiet country on the sea coast, which brings him peace and quiet. Boris bought a cosy house with his own small beach and started to live as he had been dreaming for long... but he was completely alone.

His wife did not want to leave the noisy capital. Energetic and cheerful, Ilona could not live without social jam sessions, first nights at the theatre, fitness clubs and, of course, meetings with countless friends. However, she gave her husband and all the acquaintances another reason. Her mother lived in Moscow, the woman is not old and quite cheerful. But Ilona insisted that she could not leave her mother alone. Boris had to accept this

version, because he did not want to deprive his wife of the usual way of life.

Ilona came once a month and stayed with her husband for a couple of weeks. When Boris woke up, his wife was already on the beach. She was swimming till exhaustion, and then was lying under the sun in a straw chaise longue. Boris brought breakfast to the beach, which he cooked himself, hot sandwiches, coffee, freshly squeezed juice.

“Oh, thank you, dear,” Ilona said in a languid voice.

At breakfast they hardly spoke. They just ate, drank and admired the sea. Then they swam for a short time together, and then everyone went about his business. Boris went on a boat to small islands, where he was fishing in a company of local fishermen. Ilona got into the car and went to the next town, where she was wandering through souvenir shops or sitting in a cafe chatting with other tourists.

Either lunch and dinner were cooked by Boris, or the couple went to a restaurant three kilometres from home. Ilona looked pacified and even loving. She did not talk much, but she did not refuse Boris in the marital affair and after it, fell asleep on his shoulder, as in the first years after the wedding.

Sometimes quarrels broke the idyll. Without any excuse, Ilona threw her husband of an evil reproach, they swore and then did not talk for two or three days. Boris did not understand the strange behaviour of his wife, until one night her phone flashed on the bedside table.

The wife was fast asleep, and her husband took the phone without much desire, thinking that the message came from another friend. Instead, the man saw a message and his heart contracted, and then pounded in a doubled rhythm.

“Hi! I already missed you! I want you!”

Holding the phone with trembling hands, he went into the bathroom. At first it was necessary to pick up the password, but Boris could guess it from the first attempt – the date of the birth of the wife. And suddenly in front of his eyes flashed hearts, playful hints, arrangements for visits in the famous sauna of the “Bear lair”. There was no doubt – Ilona had a lover! His beloved wife, who he always trusted and almost never was jealous.

Now Boris understood everything. He found an explanation for his wife’s mood swings and her strange alienation. In his head thoughts circled feverishly: “Of course, we have been together for twenty years... boring life, habit... I worked a lot, she often had to be alone. Brightness left the relationship... But I cannot file for a divorce now! I cannot stay alone in a foreign country, alone without my beloved one...”

At the same time Boris was tormented by the question – who is his rival? He began to watch the contacts in the phone and found the name. “This bastard is called Valera... What am I to do with you, Valera?” He copied the phone number into a notebook and lay down next to his sleeping wife. Dream did not come to him for a long time, in a mind inflamed with jealousy, thousands of plans of revenge spun.

It was not difficult to find information about the opponent. Boris called his old friend who held a high post in the police. An hour later, he sent an email with detailed data to the owner of the mobile number. Boris was dumbfounded. Valery T. appeared to be an old friend of their family. This man helped many times to make repairs at the dacha and in the apartment, hinted what materials to purchase, and even he went for them to the stores himself. Tall, not young, with thick grey hair, he was always calm and did not talk much.

“Ilona always liked this type of men,” The anger stirred in the soul of the deceived husband, and prevented thinking reasonably. – This fagot took advantage of the fact that I was not abroad and started a love affair with my wife! I’ll destroy him! And everything will be fine.”

For two days Boris was looking for a way to get rid of the rival. At last, he remembered how one customer told him occasionally about a certain e-mail address that helps in such situations. Boris was not sure whether this was true, but he decided to write only two phrases: “I urgently need to solve the problem with one person. Can you help?”.

The answer came in three minutes:

“Who recommended us?”

Boris skimmed in his memory and remembered the name of the client:

Javad.

The answer came as quickly as the previous one:

“Delete all correspondence, and then follow our instructions.”

Then everything was surprisingly very simple. Boris should send all known information about the rival and transfer twenty thousand euros to a certain bank account. And he carried out the instructions the same day. Now he could only wait for the news.

Ilona flew to Moscow. Until her next visit there were two weeks to wait. All this time Boris lived in unbearable tension. He did not doubt that Valery was no longer alive. But will the beloved wife change, when she lose her lover?

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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