

ELENA SPERANSKAYA

IMPRINT OF HEART

ILLUMINATION WITH LOVE

The lower half of the image features a vibrant red background with a repeating pattern of small, white, circular polka dots. A white rectangular box is positioned in the upper left of this section, containing the text 'ILLUMINATION WITH LOVE' in a clean, black, sans-serif font.

Elena Speranskaya
Imprint of Heart.
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Аннотация

A detective story tells about a successful career for a woman who can overcome difficulties in life. The author delves into the psychology of love relationships and experiences of her friend through poetic insight. The mechanisms of disorientation are launched due to the criminal activities of individual elements, which are successfully investigated by the city police, where the main heroine lives and works.

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Imprint of Heart

Illumination with love

Elena Speranskaya

*This book is dedicated to Ivan, Mary and their son
Semen.*

*“... on days when you do not fight for peace, you are
helping the war.”*

N. Grieg

*I am the man who looked for peace and found
My own eyes barbed.*

*I am the man who groped for words and found
An arrow in my hand.*

*I am the builder whose firm walls surround
A slipping land.*

*When I grow sick or mad
Mock me not nor chain me:*

*When I reach for the wind
Cast me not down:*

*Though my face is a burnt book
And a wasted town.*

**“War poet”, Sidney Keyes
(1922 – 1943)**

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Prologue

The monotonous sound of the wheels announced the appearance of a column with the wounded and killed. The paratrooper rose on his elbows and fell. He was found when all the marines were loaded into covered cars and sent to a hospital in the territory adjacent to Iran. Two Red Cross nurses from the French Legion – one of African descent, the other from the Transcaucasian regions, speaking in a mixture of Anglo German dialect – tried to drag the body on stretchers. On the way, they came upon a mine.

The mine of the time of war in Dagestan exploded, leaving three corpses lying on the ground: two young women and a guy, presumably of the same age, that is, reached of the adulthood that arrived to this remote country from the Chechen aul, where he served along with his other comrades from Russia. The three of them were crowned by death. They are nobody and nothing.

The body of the guy, torn to pieces, with turned insides, the paratroopers carefully wrapped in a cape-tent, put in a barely survived, dust-covered armored car of self-propelled gun and drove to the nearest point where all the wounded and killed were together.

They were transferred to the boards that had appeared from near the point, and all the attendants lit cigarettes stuffed with tobacco, causing a gag vomit reflex among the Kurds children

standing next to them.

The tall boy, Ramil, dirty appearance stayed at the curb and accidentally pushed his bare-foot a cord – a silver color metal chain with a jetton – a token of appreciation and the number of the paratrooper killed during the explosion. Having rummaged in the dust, he found more scraps of scarves and letters, blood-soaked female nurses. Ramil collected all the contents, except the tattered fabric, including a token, and, hanging it himself on his neck, fled into the village. His family ate up the remains of dinner, consisting of dried bread and drinking water from mugs.

“When we solved the Afghan question, we forgot to put an end to this area,” recalled the major, the battalion commander in the fight against terrorism, barely remembering the Russian words. His age did not tell anyone anything. He tensed and spit out the remnants of a viscous makhorka stuck in his yellow teeth. “May he rest in peace.”

Getting accustomed, everyone recognized in this short man a helicopter pilot of landing troops, a pensioner and a professional warrior. All those killed on the same day were taken to the port, where they loaded it on a submarine with the letter “K” at first and taken to an open ocean. The submarine met the cargo with the least losses for itself, having arranged final send-offs to the heroes.

The whole structure of the unit lined up on deck. Wreaths of foreign countries, twined with black, mourning ribbons,

swam through the dark water, changing greatness and morality in everyday life and habit. Moving bodies to the sound of music blurred throughout the space. Who will find their corpses in a faraway country, where they did not come of their own free will? Seagulls, usually sitting on the handrails of the upper and the only deck, met these victims with a preference never to fly away from here, favorably having got in touch with the boat until the end of the voyage and demanding more and more new gifts from the attendants on duty in the galley. Their guttural cries lost their power and slowed down with the advent of aircraft, in which the combat power was several times greater than a nuclear-powered submarine.

The fatigue of the living sailors made it clear to the commanders of the divisions that the only way to follow the voice of reason is to swim in an endless voyage along the road of revenge and insanity. All the rest is a foolhardy carnival of shadows, costumes, faces.

Night views perished in the day's hustle and bustle. Shredded in small handwriting, the sheets were strewn all over the bottom of the submarine, when three representatives of the commander-in-chief, one of them a doctor, full, in a white coat, checked the condition of the cabin.

"It is required to clean the room before mooring," concluded, on the right holding, the captain of the second rank.

They went back to the cabin and began to straighten their things to land on the beach in the morning.

1. August. Memories

Warm August days were standing. Hot summer to everyone's pleasure came to an end. Everyone was waiting for the autumn. The season of holidays was more than ever stifling and dry. Even the most ardent opponents of sunburn have visited the beach and at least once bathed in the Volga. The winners were those who had vacation for any other time of the year. To escape from the heat they could only be in the walls of institutions where air conditioners are installed or on the banks of a cool river. The shadow inspired the idea that winter is an invention of evil people who have never experienced the "charms" of summer heat.

Examinations in higher education institutions were handed over and new-born freshmen were attached to student life at the construction site, in dormitories and subsidiary farms as trainees.

Those who did not enter the university were also not saved from the heat, but it was easier for them – all the year it was possible to prepare for the next entrance exams. The specialists who left from the city to their destinations no longer had a black envy for those who were fortunate enough to stay on the distribution, at least they were avenged.

For Lucy Uvarova summer flew faster than ever before: State exams, a trip to the Crimea, and then to Moscow. By the time she practically did not prepare. Everything that had been done in the last year was repeated. They did not pass new themes; only

in practice they used the received knowledge. Therefore, the time for self-training was enough, and to go to the beach, and have fun in the cinema, after watching a blockbuster – action-packed movie with the participation of Bred Pete or Steven Seagal.

To the cinema, Lucy loved to go alone, so as not to spoil the impression of the movie because she had her own, special approach. With many actors of Russian and foreign pictures she was familiar in absentia and was with them on “you”.

Lucy, like all the girls, when she was at school, dreamed of becoming an actress, so that her photos would be displayed in all the windows of newsstands. But she perfectly understood the minuses of her face, and she could not really reincarnate. Her appearance did not meet the standards of female beauty. Everything spoiled, in her opinion, a rather long and unsympathetically extended nose, like an owl. Lucy’s eyes were light green, the mermaid’s, her hair was chestnut, thick, shoulder-length. With them she had to constantly fight. A female braid from hair has long out of fashion, so after graduation, the first independent step was going to the hairdresser and to do a haircut in the fashionable style of “square”. She took the braids with her, as a reminder of her school years.

One day, Lucy read in the medical journal that in Moscow at the Beauty House plastic facial operations are being done, and the next step was to fix the nose.

Money she accumulated for a trip to Moscow, where she intended to buy something fashionable and make a plastic

operation of the nose. All the plans were fulfilled exactly.

Operation was successfully completed. Now her profile, corresponding to the world standards, could easily be placed on the pages of a fashion magazine.

Studying at the university attracted Lucy. She was well aware that mathematics was much more important for her than theatrical farce or philology. In mathematical precision, she found her romance. It gave her a pleasure to make discoveries for herself in geometry, astrophysics, and mathematics. ... Einstein, Curie, Landau... She wanted to learn about these scientists as much as possible. How did they live, who surrounded them, were they happy, whether they loved or not? She found answers to these questions in fiction about their lives. But this seemed to her little, often stayed late in the scientific library of the university. Classes took a lot of energy and time.

But there was no regret, as the wide perspective and research work abroad opened in one of the successful and prosperous scientific laboratories of Belgium, Germany, Canada, the USA, Japan or France.

2. New Meetings

Two years of study passed unnoticed. But after the first course there were complications. Lucy was sick. The sudden death of a blind mother was unsettling. The whole household was on her. It was necessary to cook, to wash, and to clean the apartment. To do this, it took time, but it was almost not there.

Lucy and during her mother's life helped her, but she did not suspect that everything would not be so easy when the native person died. The blind father was a weak support and continued to teach Braille in a school for blind children.

Her nerves shook, she began to smoke and because of this often hurt. She had to skip classes. It so happened that they did not allow Lucy to pass the winter session, and they offered to take an academic leave at the dean's office, otherwise she would be expelled on poor grades. Academic leave was issued without unnecessary ceremony. It was necessary to work a year, not forgetting about studying, to read that did not have time. Uvarova went to work to the post as the postal operator. There was no special preparation, although she had to learn the speed. The work was replaceable. Sometimes, about once a week, she had to go out into the night.

At the post Lucy was not tired; she even liked to be a conductor of thoughts and feelings. When she picked up a bunch of letters, it seemed that she was holding all of Russia in her hands. Joys,

sorrows, grieves, victories, failures – all these fit on ordinary sheets of paper, despite the fact that the Internet has conquered the whole world, the letters did not decrease.

There was more work for the holidays, so they did not indulge in the days off, but the vacations were paid doubly, and the money to Lucy was very useful. She wanted to dress nicely, buy model shoes, and generally look no worse than others. The collective was purely female, even the chief of the shop was a woman, however, several men of retirement age worked at the delivery.

Lucy befriended one girl. Her new girlfriend was Marina. She came to the city from an area where she had elderly parents. She lived here with her aunt. Aunt helped Marina get a job and wanted her to go to college, because she said “now you can not break through with school education”. But Marina did not think about any studies, she met Alik, and devoted all her free time to him. Alik was an Azerbaijani and, apparently, was going to marry. Lucy knew all the details of their relationship, up to what he was wearing, and how much each of his things cost.

Lucy also wanted to get acquainted with some nice male representative, but to ask Marina about this Lucy was shy, and there was practically no time for walks. She did not want to leave the university before the time, especially since Marina was younger than Lucy, and Lucy was too proud to drop herself in the eyes of a friend younger than herself for two years. Therefore, Lucy kept mum, and when the conversation came about her personal life, she tried to translate into another topic, which she

successfully managed.

Soon Lucy got acquainted with Natasha and Larissa. Communicate with them was interesting. Natasha was older than all of them. She was twenty-five years old, serious, but her appearance caused a smile: small and very plump, like a donut. She traveled twice to the Czech Republic and told many interesting things about her trips, about the sights of the Czech Republic, about the castles, the palaces of Emperor Charles IV, the church of St. Vitas, the picture gallery of the Prague Castle.

She came to the post office by accident; she was a photographer by profession. But for some unknown reasons she left the photo studio, where she worked before. Larissa was her constant companion. They were fond of movies and often went to the cinema together. They were interested team wise. Familiar guys they probably did not have. Larissa was younger than her friend and prettier. Soon Lucy got acquainted with another woman, who was called Katya. During the break, she smoked cheap Magna cigarettes and boasted that she was buying a cigarette from her daughter Natasha, who worked with them. During the work Lucy met almost all the team. There were employees who worked at the post office for ten, or even fifteen years. To them, the chief of the workshop, Aleksandra Petrovna, treated with special respect.

The year passed by unnoticed. She worked on shifts, studying, reading fiction and wanted to learn, see, and do as much as possible. Walking in the air was minimized, so if the second

shift ended a little earlier, she was walking home. At work, too, often walked on foot, so as not to deprive her of the pleasure of breathing fresh air. Lucy dressed modestly.

Once while she was working at the post office there was a strange case. The operator Natasha, who received communal payments, did not come out on her shift. They forgot about her forever, but along with her, a large sum of money disappeared from the cash register. On that ill-fated day, strangely enough, the encashment was delayed. All the day's earnings, left on the table in a gray-green tarpaulin, disappeared completely together with the package when Larissa went out to meet the detachment of guards with automatic weapons, which was called in order to clean up the premises for visitors.

Nobody wanted to go out, and everyone was indignant that the working day set by the administration was too short. Natasha calmed down the customers and made order with her eyes on the routine. Once she came out when Larissa asked that the neighboring car repair shop not "stare" at the windows. The scandal dragged on. Encashment left with nothing, Natasha wrote an explanatory note and went home in a terribly bad mood. The next day she did not appear at all at work. All suspicions of missing money fell on her.

The investigation interrogated all employees, except for Natasha, who simply blatantly robbed this post. The case was conducted by a woman in a Renault-Megane car from the criminality's department, which was embedded in their team as

an operator, so that all employees were happy to put over her all responsibility for the mail. It turned out that the private detective and investigator in one person – Tatiana Ivanova – took the side of the missing Natasha.

When the next day after the disappearance of three hundred thousand rubles Ivanova began to search all the safes, she accidentally found an empty bag of collectors in the dust under the safe, and near, wrapped in an old newspaper, the missing amount. Larissa and Lucy were assigned to recalculate the money. The whole operation took away an hour or so from them. Then Tanya called the administration and happily reported:

“The case of the loss of encashment can be closed. Some dwarf threw it. Do you have such specialists in the database?”

At the other end, someone was looking for something for a long time, and finally the detective loudly proclaimed: “I’ll come, we’ll play solitaire.”

In her report to the authorities there was one miscalculation, she did not take into account neighboring private enterprises, and justified her evidence solely on the speculation of postmen and operators.

Lucy’s jaw squeaked with tension when she heard the whole story, because she knew all the details of the case. Alexandra Petrovna alternated her disagreement with obscene language, but continued to work and even delivered a bottle of Bosco Italian champagne with a peach taste to settle relations with postmen and Lucy, who simply had a desperate situation. The

investigation in search of the vanished Natasha has reached a dead end.

She disappeared suddenly. No one was hoping that she would appear. Several times they were called from the police and even the prosecutor's office for a month, but the girl seemed to have dissolved. They were told that it turned out that she was married to a university lecturer – the son of a professor. Her husband had an older brother, a Ph. D. student. Lucy remembered that she had heard about this family of physicists, where they all devoted themselves to science. Soon they with Larissa visited a low house without a garden and a courtyard where the newlyweds lived. Acquainted with the youngest of the Skripals, who was very friendly, he invited the girls to the table.

“No, no,” Lucy hurried, and Larissa added modestly: “Natasha loved children very much; maybe she went to work in a nursery or a kindergarten?”

“Who told you about this?” answered Eugene, smiling sweetly. “She had health problems. I sent her to be treated abroad, to Germany, where the Russian tsars were vacationing, to Baden-Baden, and she would be back soon. Then she will go to work. Imagine having paid for this pleasure a thousand dollars plus road and various documents. It turned out almost one and a half bucks.

“Where did you get that kind of money?” Larissa said imperiously, crouching on the edge of the stool at the front door.

They did not meet a more miserable home in life. A cobwebbed ceiling, gray walls, a dirty veil on an old sofa. On

the table, eaten by a scrub, there were cans of canned food and bread crumbs. In the corner was a stove used to store things. In the passage between the room and the hallway there was a gas cooker for two hot plates, where there was an empty pan.

“The millionaire was killed,” the host replied glumly. “Try it yourself. I do not have anything to pay for the house and electricity. My parents have died long ago; she and I have no other relatives.”

“Did your father teach at Physics department of the University? I met such a name in the list of teachers,” Lucy became interested in surprise. “He read us lectures on physics at the first course.”

“No, this is a mistake. It is either a namesake, or a distant relative. I have no one and the point.”

Lucy did not like his familiar tone at once, and a scrawny smile resembling a wolfish grin.

The girls went off upset that they did not know the details of the life of their employee. Most likely, she cohabited with this Zheka, as he presented himself to his wife’s friends. Neither the one nor the other from Natasha heard of any husband. So, the boyfriend has appeared recently and at once has entered the rights of the husband and the lover simultaneously.

Soon the police stopped the inquiry. And one day Larissa accidentally informed Lucy that she had met with Skripal, and they were about to sign marriage contract.

“How is Natasha?” Lucy was surprised, worrying when they

came back after the shift.

“And she stayed there, in this state forever,” Lara explained. “They have the opportunity to get a job as migrants. And we have already arranged our accommodation and will register soon.”

“Fast!” Lucya rejoiced. “Will not it be disgusting for you to live with this scumbag?”

“Why? He promised me a local residence permit and treated me to wine. It is difficult to imagine that such a person will be my husband.”

“What a man he is. A real beast! And the house is about to collapse.”

“Are you envious of my happiness?”

Larissa laughed and shook the snow off the collar of her sheepskin coat.

“Do whatever you want!”

They broke up. A few days later, Larissa called and told them that their house was on fire, and all her husband’s documents and belongings were burnt. She will spend the night with relatives in the hostel.

Suddenly, Zheka appeared on the post with his girlfriend, and they stayed overnight, where there were no surveillance cameras, that is, in the office of the postmaster, where Larissa had an access, since she managed to become a deputy in a short time.

Tears will not help for sorrow. Everyone sympathized with the young people. The house was going to restore and allocated from the trade union committee money for repairs, like fire victims.

Larissa began an affair with Zheka. They bought a second-hand foreign car, somehow repaired the house for money, allocated by the team. All employees – operators and postmen – accurately handed over two thousand, which amounted to thirty thousand rubles. Zheka did not work and lived well at the expense of the concubine: he got drunk and threatened with reprisal “to all the neighbors who planned to come to visit them.” This story was presented by Lara when investigators came to her home.

On her return from the academic vacation, Lucy got into another social environment.

She became friends with her former fellow students, so she did not feel comfortable in the new group. They seemed like children to her. After a year of work, Lucy understood much, became more serious. Life no longer seemed so cheerful and bright as it was before.

It was not very difficult to pass the “tails” exams over. The girl did a lot and worked hard throughout the year. At the last courses the studies went smoothly. Lucy spent all her scholarship on herself.

Her father bought food, and she cooked. Lucy was able to cook quickly and deliciously. She liked occasionally to pamper her father with some delicacy. He was not cranky and ate everything that Lucy had given him.

After the third year, the study went much easier, since the main foundation of knowledge was already laid. Lucy knew almost all teachers; she was used to the requirements.

The group, with whom Uvarova studied after the forced leave, consisted of ten girls and six boys.

Gradually, she was recognized as “their own mutual like-minded girlfriend” and she was elected the monitor. Discos were rare, it was very difficult to get there, but, as an elder, she could at any time get a ticket.

Several times she and her group mates visited the café “Student”, where dancing took place. She liked the music of modern, fashionable authors, rhythm, and tempo.

It was good to be shaken, distracted from all problems to the sound of the guitar. Many songs pleased Lucy with their melodiousness. But a frequent visit to the disco was tiresome.

Sometimes she visited the café as necessary, as the head of the stream, but this did not happen constantly. The more often she attended discos, the less she wanted to get there again.

In the fifth year, many of the girlfriends got married. Lucy could not yet decide on someone specific. Familiar young men were enough, but she had not wanted to bind herself by bond of marriage yet and so she frequently refused to meet.

One tall, dark-haired guy with blue eyes and a dark mustache – Yuri Preobrazhensky – stayed in Lucy’s memory for a long time, perhaps she remembered him always, even when she did not want to think about him.

They met by chance at a friend’s party on the occasion of May Day. Yuri was a surgeon and taught at the Medical University. He liked all of Lucy’s friends right away, was very modest, always

inventing poems, tricks and it was fun with him.

It seemed that in his spare time he only did that he was preparing for admission to the circus school. Although, with all this, he worked well and managed to take the session without the triples. They did not meet often, but enough to get used to each other.

Yuri often invited Lucy to concerts, to the cinema; he was very attentive and helpful. Their meetings continued throughout the year. In the spring he stopped calling Lucy, and it seemed strange to her. From friends, she found out that he had some other sympathy – a brunette older than he for a year.

Lucy severely experienced the gap and, by her youth, decided to fall in love with no one, or at least not to get used to it, since she considered studying and future work to be her main task, and lost all interest in her private life. She represented her future career in black paints.

She often said to herself: “In any case, happiness is not in love, but in work,” and recalled how mom, the teacher of literature and the Russian language at the school of the blind, quoted Schiller: “...Enlightened mind ennobles moral feelings: the head must educate the heart.”

Lucy’s parents were blind. They lost sight during the war, were brought up in a boarding school, and there they met. Together they entered the university, helped each other at school, graduated from high school, got married. Lucy was the second child in the family. Her brother Vladimir was seven years older.

With him, Lucy had a good relationship, since Vladimir grew up independent and purposeful. He graduated from the geological department of the university, married a girl named Lucy, too; they had a son. Vladimir decently earned and, as soon as he married, went to his wife. Soon Vladimir received an apartment. His life was arranged as best as possible.

3. Alexey

After the completion of the State Examinations, a banquet was held in the restaurant, in a low circular room with sparkling walls. Glittering parquet. Glittering chandeliers. Glittering white tablecloth. Sparkling glasses.

The whole day was unusual and full of adventure. So it stayed until the end... They will have dinner in a restaurant. In the restaurant! This one word caressed an ear. It was much more pleasant Lucy to think about the restaurant than to recall the worries experienced and realize that now the former students already graduated soon will part and perhaps forever.

At the table, everyone was quiet and felt at first uncomfortable. But the girls were given absolutely new, specially tailored dresses and shoes that had never been worn before. The guys did not lag behind the girls. Smart, festive suits and shirts were very much corresponded towards their young and happy faces. Lucy was a bit scary... The atmosphere was solemn, as if in a temple!

People were not enough in the beginning. Their table stood at all in sight, as on the stage, in the very center of the hall. Performed dignity waiters carried dishes and put drinks. At the beginning they brought ragout, and then served a meat assortment. On the table there were already sandwiches with black caviar and balyk – smoked fish, spring salads with fresh vegetables. Among the fruits there were grapefruits and apples.

Separately there were served fried pieces of rabbit and chicken in oil. At the dessert – coffee with ice cream and candy.

Everybody were satisfied with assortment, this was the merit of Lucy, as she had previously agreed on the arrangement of the banquet, so she worried more than others. But when everything went off as smoothly as possible, Lucy sighed with relief. Now everything would be okay if she knew how to behave, where to put her hands: to keep on her knees or lean on the edge of the table? Lucy was in the restaurant for the first time, so everything was new and unusual for her. Yuri never invited to a restaurant, and in general, Lucy was negative about alcohol, preferring only dry wines, which was not enough on the table: only six bottles of dry and two bottles of champagne. “Boys” ordered separately cognac for themselves.

Several hours flew by unnoticed, as if someone had specially accelerated time. Dusk fell outside the windows. Lucy looked around the room. All the tables were occupied. On the stage musicians appeared, the hall came to life, the light of the chandeliers became less bright, multicolored lights jumped on the walls. Everyone cheered up. Stiffness disappeared somewhere, life seemed simple and carefree, as if there was only happiness ahead of all, and grieves and sorrows are the destiny of other people.

Lucy danced almost all the dances, except those when she simply physically tired and could not get up from the chair; in this case she had to refuse.

At one point, she thought that she saw Yuri when he appeared in the foyer of the restaurant with a girl. Apparently, they wanted to get into the hall, but they came too late. There were no more places. He also saw her, recognized and became doubly annoyed. She did not look the same as he used to see her, but surrounded by cute guys whose presence Lucy was not indifferent... She just sparkled with beauty and youth in a dark-maroon, tight-fitting figure, a dress with a white collar of lace, in white sandals. In the ears of Lucy were gold earrings with rubies gleamed. On the head there was a high hairstyle, done in advance at the hairdresser.

Yuri immediately wanted to continue acquaintance with her, and he seemed to be ready to leave his companion, which was a burden to him, but it was too late. Lucy did not even pay attention to him.

That night she was in shock, she laughed incessantly, talked a lot. She was very dizzy from the champagne, and she seemed to have forgotten all the hard things she had experienced: both her mother's death and illness, and a forced break in her studies, and a break up with Yuri. She believed in tomorrow, in her future interesting work at the plant, where she received direction, in love, in happiness. That was great! Be able to overcome all adversity and come out victorious in a fight with life. This evening, she seemed to have realized and experienced all over again, so as not to repeat, perhaps, the mistakes made to her, but to go always with her head held high.

At the height of the evening, a young man of pleasant

appearance approached her, about twenty-seven years old, fair-haired, in a fashionable suit. He immediately liked Lucy. They met. The guy was called Alexey Izmailov. He worked at the plant as a programmer. About himself Alexey said that he graduated from college, left the army, and then returned to the plant.

As it turned out, Alexey worked at the plant where Lucy received the direction for the distribution of vacant seats. This fact was very pleased a girl. Now it was not so terrible to appear in the new factory team, at least one familiar person. All subsequent dances Alexey did not depart from her, accompanied Lucy home in a taxi. On the road, he told her a lot about the plant. He found himself in a restaurant on the occasion of his friend's birthday. Lucy felt that Alex liked her, but she did not want to stay ahead of the event, as she was afraid, he would not want to meet her if he realized that his presence was also not uninteresting to her.

The evening was warm. After the heat of the day and the stuffiness of the restaurant it was pleasant to walk from the taxi to the house. Lucy realized that he was very fond of his country when he served in the army.

"Why do not you want to continue studying at the Technical University?" Lucy asked insolently when they stopped near the entrance.

"This is not the time," Alexey said shortly and hesitated a little. Lucy did not ask why "not time" and when there will be time, as she feared that the friend was offended. They parted friends

and agreed to meet on Saturday and go for a walk.

Rising to her room on the fourth floor, Lucy immediately laid down her bed and lay down. Her father was already asleep. It was about midnight. Usually, returning from somewhere late, Lucy found her father waiting for her, but today he knew that his daughter had the final banquet and was calm. He completely trusted her. Lucy was a good daughter. She often shared her interests with her father, talked about her troubles and worries. Father morally could always support Lucy and calm her. She often read aloud or together they listened to a tape recorder with recordings of radio shows and performances.

Lucy could not sleep for a long time, because she was very excited: the banquet, the appearance of Yuri, unexpected success, a new pleasant acquaintance with the man who immediately liked her. All this together for a long time swirled in the girl's head and a loving heart pounded in rhythm.

In the morning she did not want to get out of bed. Yes, in general, she could relax a little, because there was a lot of work to be done, and it was necessary to approach it with all thoroughness. Lucy had a two-month vacation after taking the exams. During August she had to start work. A good rest is necessary for a full-blooded work with the greatest impact. She wanted to stay a week in the city, and then go to the Crimea and from there to Moscow. But she did not want to go to the Crimea alone, therefore agreed in advance with my two friends – students of the medical institute – Olga and Irene, who studied in the same

group, about the trip. They bought tickets beforehand, so could calmly gather and prepare for their departure. All three lived next door and often met with each other.

Accidentally, Lucy ran into Alex twice. Once they went to the movies, and the second – just so walked along the street. He was not talkative on the last date. They met at the corner, near the trolleybus stop. There were many people. To be noticeable, Alex walked away a little to the side. And now, finally!

Lucy walked, holding a small bonnet from the wind. She wore a light blue dress and small, white, pearly beads around her neck, a handbag in her hands, and white sandals on her legs. Alex was frightened. Every time Lucy liked him more and more. He wanted to rush to meet her, but he pulled himself together in time and decided not to do it. She ran and slyly said:

“Hello, I seem to be a little late.”

“No, that’s right. I just came up,” Alex answered, and even more embarrassed, hugged Lucy around the waist. “You look great!”

It seemed to him that he had done something wrong and, perhaps, she had joked at him. Alex wanted to see himself from this moment. Suddenly he realized his mistake, he had to buy flowers. “This mistake can be corrected,” thought Alex and boldly said:

“You know, we’ll walk to the square.”

“With pleasure,” answered Lucy and took his arm.

There was a flower market on the market square, where Alex

planned to buy flowers. In the street there was a crowd. At 6:00 p.m. everyone was in a hurry from work. Alex took out a pack of cigarettes and smoked eagerly.

“What to talk about? Even there is no one to consult with. And why, in the end, not to tell Lucy one of the books read recently?” Alexey reflected. He was fond of military memoirs and detectives.

“Lucy, do you like detective stories?” Alex asked as politely as possible.

“Yes, I do. I have read the whole Conan Doyle. I even have his complete works.”

Alex realized that according to the detectives, Lucy was more educated, than he and it was pleased, that they had the same tastes.

The road to the square seemed to Alex very long, but there was a lady alongside and this fact brightened up today. He came on a date right from work and felt a little tired. When the light breeze blew in his direction, he sensed that Lucy was emitting a fragrance of good perfume. “Maybe even French ones,” Alex decided.

At the entrance to the market, next to the kiosk “Seeds” was a bright blonde with vases filled with armfuls of peonies. Alex chose five barely begun to blossom white and pink buds. Luce really liked the bouquet, and she looked at the guy with tenderness, feeling that he was the person with whom he could share his sorrows and cares.

He also longed to meet a good, smart, pretty girl. Following the voice of reason, he realized that Lucy was the only one about whom he secretly dreamed.

“Let’s go to the cafe,” Alex decided. “We’ll have a snack and have a drink of juice. I am immediately after work and did not have time to go home to eat. I will pay.”

Offer to drink beer Alex was afraid that Lucy would consider him an avid alcoholic.

“May be it not worth?”

“What nonsense! If you do not want to eat, I’ll order ice cream. Do not you like Popsicle? Especially it is such a heat.”

Alex was right; it was tedious and uninteresting to walk around the streets for a long time. So, the proposal was almost adopted, as by silence he realized that Lucy was ready to agree.

“All right,” she said after a moment’s hesitation. “Come on!”

They went to the cafe “Arabella”. A small, extremely clean room was located on one of the busy streets.

“Of course, it would be better to go to a restaurant,” he said.

In his pocket he had only five hundred rubles, and going to a restaurant with this amount was just silly. Lucy knew “Arabella” for a long time and repeatedly visited with her friends. There it was possible cheaply and satisfyingly to eat, sit, talk, listen to music, throwing a coin in the jukebox.

Lovers of strong, spirits were not interested here, as the menu was full of only dry wines and juices. They came here to pass the time. As a rule, this ordinary cafe visited the same people. It

was a sort of private youth club.

“It’s good that we came here,” Lucy said, crossing the threshold of the establishment. “Perhaps later, Olga and Irene will appear here, and I will introduce you to them.”

“Do you like it here?” he asked, looking around the room.

“Yes, I do, because I often visited my friends here,” answered Lucy, as she understood that they had chosen the right place to spend time.

“How many respectable personalities,” he continued.

The couple passed between the tables and took a place close to the window. They were served quickly. Alex ordered an entrecote, a salad of tomatoes, Lucy – two bottles of beer. Conversation again went about work.

“Over the past year, I made two business projects. One of them was introduced into production, and with the second there was a delay. The production manager believed that it was necessary to wait, to check all the pros and cons of the new method and only then to put his ‘agree’, ” he talked about his complicated relationship with the production manager.

Alex, in his youth, was impatient to see the fruits of his labor in the business as soon as possible. In Lucy, as in a young specialist, he saw his supporter.

“You know, Lucy, it’s great that we met. I really want you to enjoy our production. We have our own hostel on the banks of the Volga. We can get tickets there, if you want, we’ll go to the next Saturday for two days.”

“No, I’m traveling with friends to the Crimea,” she stressed her independence.

“Very sorry. We’d have a nice weekend there. You can get there on the river boat.”

“Will you wait for my return?” she smiled coquettishly. “I will go to the plant, will go in the camp site as a full member of the team.”

“Come back soon. I’ll miss you, patiently waiting for your return. Write my address and call, I’ll meet.”

Lucy liked the nice guy’s care. She felt like a child next to him. Well, if he wanted so much, she did not mind. However, Lucy has become unaccustomed to any excessive guardianship.

They did not stay in the cafe for long. At nine, Lucy hurried home, citing a headache. He did not want to leave. The music evoked pleasant memories, but she insisted, and they left. At parting, they agreed that Alex would come at the day of departure.

For a week she got ready for the journey, prepared everything she needed, did not even forget to put a notebook in her suitcase with the verses of her friend called “Illumination with Love”. She gave her to read and evaluate when they were resting with Yuri in one company at the cottage. The girlfriend studied at the Faculty of Philology and by lucky coincidence with Lucy in views.

They exchanged telephone numbers, found many common acquaintances and topics for conversation, but they saw each

other rarely. Lucy often re-read one poem and again began reciting herself, remembering her former friend, marveling at the name:

Wanderer

Like white clouds,
A wanderer swims along the wave's bounds.
He forgot peace and sleep.
An eternal wanderer in life he is steep.

Years pass, but again
The harsh truth does not in vain.
He had been forgotten and thrown by all.
Let the violins echo drawl.

The singer is cruel, cold and wavy.
But his bright face is forgotten.
The crown of thorns was heavy.
Forever he will be doting.

Anxiety, doubt, sadness trotted
And passed for him without a trace.
He is only an observer from the distance.
With longing was betrothed.

Fight, prove, and argue as a bull,
To victory go to the end and what's?

Why should a wanderer be ruled?
Will prompt other hearts.

From now on, the fatigues mute
Will fill out a notebook with words as lute.
Forgotten other people's suffering.
He has not any speech metaphoring.

Twice on weekdays Lucy went to the beach, where there were few people. There she, leafing through the pages of her diary, read poetry. Of course, it would be better to go to the beach with Alex, but he was at work. The week flew by unnoticed. The day of departure came.

With her friends she met at the entrance, took a taxi. The flight was morning. Alex promised to take time off work, Lucy called him beforehand. His voice was too confident in the phone, she thought that Alex was not at all the kind of person with whom she would be happy, but then she threw away such tricky thoughts and decided that she was too worried on the eve of her departure.

Alex was waiting at the airport with a bouquet of lilies. Olga and Irene were escorted by Olga's brother – a student of the university, who came especially to Saratov to visit his parents. Five of them went into the buffet, bought champagne and drank in honor of leaving “for a smooth path.” Alex raised his glass and said:

“Look, Lucy, do not flirt much,” he sighed, “and you girls, watch my bride return home safe and sound.”

The girls laughed, and Lucy was offended by such rude patronage, but she did not say anything.

* * *

Gurzuf. Wild beach. The people are few. Here and there groups of tourists are visible. Lucy, Irena and Olga are already bored. They lived only ten days, and from the monotony it seemed that the whole summer was devoted to sunburn. The sea was turbid, slightly stormy. It was decided to return home in two days. The day before departure, Irena met a handsome guy Igor in the form of a paratrooper from Lvov. He escorted the girls to the airport on his black Ford sedan. Lucy flew to Moscow on the same day, but four hours later.

They left the terminal and returned to his house, where he worked as a rescuer. Crimea attracted by the variety of colors and flowers, the riot of plants and fruits.

In the house there were sports equipment, but in general everything was beautiful and cozy. Lucy was taken aback by the excitement. Igor hugged the girl by the shoulders, trying to calm, and they began to look for an inflatable mattress, so she swam before leaving. He suggested that she had to do a massage and undressed naked.

“I have a great experience,” he said, and showed his tanned stomach and shoulders without too much shame. “Touch me, I do not bite. Also undress. That’s more interesting.”

Lucy took off her shorts, tightly tied on her hips, a pink, glamorous jersey. She remained in a swimsuit, which

immediately appeared on the floor, drawing white spaces on the body. She lay on my stomach right on the carpet. He switched on the receiver and began massaging her neck, back and legs to the beat with the music.

“Do not hurt, say if you feel something unpleasant,” Igor said, touching the body of the girl with strong hands. “Do you like?”

Lucy hugged the rescuer, and they lay down on the inflatable mattress and made love. Igor turned the girl on her back, admiring the beauty, and she pressed herself warmly to him, hugging him by the shoulders. Their sudden coition continued.

“Your friends are just as proud,” Igor said when they were already calmly going to swim. “My job is to teach you how to swim.”

The love story ended literally when she boarded the plane. Many-voiced and multicolored Moscow met Lucy hospitably and happily. Lucy took a taxi and asked to bring to the hotel near the exhibition, hoping to stay three days in the capital. The hotel administrator – a pretty dyed brunette – smiled and said:

“There is one luxury room in a double room for hundred dollars a day.”

She did not have to choose, and Lucy paid ahead in three days. She went up to the third floor, opened the door of the hotel room and looked around. From a small but spacious hallway with a refrigerator and wardrobe, the door led to the bedroom, living room and bathroom.

In the bedroom there was a bed, two bedside tables, an

armchair and a chair. The room could be called “blue”, as the wallpaper, the bedspread on the beds, the upholstery of the furniture and the curtains on the windows were blue. The furniture was modern, low, polished. In the living room there was a high cabinet, a table, a sofa, four chairs, a plasma TV and a telephone. Lucy put things on and, without undressing, lay down on the bed. She wanted to rest after a tiring road.

She seemed to doze off. The feeling of hunger made her wake up. She took a bath with pleasure.

“I’ll put on something especially elegant to look more attractive and cute than ever,” she said aloud.

Once again, having reconsidered her things, Lucy opted for a bright colored blouse with short sleeves-wings and a light, sports skirt; she put on her shoulders a colorful, shortened jacket.

She went to the mirror: a young, elegant woman was looking at her. Lucy combed her hair, slightly tinted her lips with a toned lipstick of Yves Rocher, picked up her purse and thought.

“We have to figure out where to go first. Dine and then... Cover as much as possible, so you need a solid plan,” she reasoned.

For three days Lucy managed to visit many places: the Tretyakov Gallery, the Moscow Art Theater, and the Beauty House at her plastic surgeon; managed to bypass the hypermarkets and department stores, bought some of the things for father and herself.

From Moscow she called Alex twice. At the airport he met,

helped carry the suitcases. The taxi was already waiting at the bus stop. Alex admired the works of contemporary artists, the appearance and tan of Lucy.

“Next time, we’ll go together. It’s bad for you to sunbathe a lot, you look like a movie star, and it scares me. I can imagine what was going on in Moscow when you were walking down the street.”

“Stop joking. I was so looking forward to this meeting, hoping to see you more intelligent. We will never find a common language. I realized...”

Lucy did not finish, as the taxi braked sharply. Because of the sudden stop, she lost the thread, what she was talking about, yes it was and to nothing, since he did not listen, but looked out the window.

“You seem to be interested in something more than I do. Then why come to meet me, since we do not understand each other,” she added.

Then he distracted from the examination of his hands and said, hypnotizing the girl:

“Come to me.”

Everything became clear to her, and she decided not to tell her father about the time of her return and agreed to stay with him for a couple of days, but changed her mind.

4. Visible Windows

Father met Lucy as usual with questions: “How did you get there? How did you rest? Where did you go to Moscow? What was the most memorable? How is your health?”

For a long time she retold the screenplay “Like the gods...” with the participation of folk artists, and herself tensely thought: “What has happened? Whence this cold? Alex was right, why did I go to the south? It would have been better if I stayed in the city to avoid conflict.”

Her father took the excitement with which she talked about the performance she saw, fatigue and overwork of her daughter, but, despite this, he asked:

“Lucy, what happened?” It seems to me that you are ill. You do not say something. Maybe you have complications at work? You’re very worried. Before you left, you had not been so nervous.

After these words, she could not stand it and burst into tears: “Here’s how it always is. My father understands me even more than I do myself.”

The next day she felt unwell. She wanted to call Alex, but he did not say if he wanted to hear her.

“Perhaps during my trip to the south he had another girl. No. So it can not go on. You can go crazy with the unknown. It is necessary to find out the relationship. Does he want to continue

meeting or decided that I no longer want to see him? Let it be so, but I will say this first...”

This day Alex was loaded to the limit. It all began in the morning. He did not have time to appear in the shop, as a replacement master came up to him and said in a businesslike manner:

“You know what, Alex, two newcomers will come to our workshop today and we’ll have to debug the machine tools with programmed control. Actually, I already have watched them. They’re fine, but without you I can not let the guys go to work. You, Alex, have ‘golden hands’,” she patted him on the shoulder. “Check the machines, please. Do not forget safety. In a word, do everything as expected. Young people need to be taught!”

“Young people need to be taught,” the last words of the master sounded in Alex’s mind.

He sat down at the computer. He had to check every machine in all working positions.

While he was working, the cell phone flashed Lucy’s number several times, but he was busy and did not answer. When released, he dialed the number himself, but no one picked up the phone.

After work, Alex went to her house: “Maybe something has happened? I am guilty myself, did not agree to a meeting in a human way.”

Lucy was alone. She met him in a light blue home dressing gown. Her hair was neatly stabbed; she looked very cute at home.

“I want to talk with you seriously,” she began first, when he came and sat down at the table in the kitchen, but Alex felt her voice tremble. “What kind of change? If you decided to part with me, then tell me honestly, and we will stop seeing each other. If you have another woman, tell me, why did you come to me?”

“Do not worry, I like you as before, but I thought that after a trip to the south, you had no desire to meet. I was busy, so I did not answer calls, but I came to you myself. If you want, we’ll go, take a walk or go to the movies, or better to a concert. The ensemble ‘Young Voices’ came on tour.”

“No, I see, you’re tired, sit down, I’ll pour you some tea and, please, do not refuse!”

Lucy set before Alex a plate of soup and a hot dish with meat. He ate everything, because he was really hungry.

“Yes, Lucy, you are an amazing person,” he said. “I love girls with a character.”

“I have adequate feelings for you,” she laughed.

Never did any of the girls with whom Alex was familiar before her liked him so much. The desire to make her an offer to marry him appeared with him when she was in the south, but he decided to wait.

“It is necessary to check the feelings. Lucy is a very nice girl and she will surely find a boyfriend, so if I’ll be in a hurry, can cause antipathy,” Alexey reasoned in a secret.

He stayed with her not for long, they still sat in the hall on the couch, listened to the music, Lucy showed him the albums

of painting brought from Moscow.

They kissed and feelings seized Alexey when she offered to show him a red night dressing gown.

“French, look how handsome! Chanel,” she pulled out of the bedroom a coat rack with a nightgown on straps. “Try it on?”

“Let me touch,” Alexey got up and moved towards the bedroom, but then she blocked his way. “Come on... You allow me to smoke with you?”

“As you want.”

He lit a cigarette and went out into the kitchen again. He began to shake the ashes into a metal ashtray in the shape of a snake. Then he came back and pushed the curtains in the bedroom, and she was already dressed in a silk, blood-red shirt and lay on the bed on her side, leaning her elbows on the pillow. All the bends of the fragile body loomed. He imagined a fire in the snow from the sight of such a dazzling and burning picture. They actually froze from the air conditioner, which was switched on at full power. It seemed to him little – plus sixteen, but she forbade increasing degrees, and to smooth the trouble, she said:

“I have Crimean wine. Let’s try?”

“Prepare me something stronger to drink. Vodka can be mixed with this compote.”

“There’s no vodka. Father will be back soon,” she rose from the pillow and pulled him to her with an arm as he sat down beside her. “I’ll bring some glasses, do you mind?”

Defiantly she rose from the bed, and, causing an impression

of flaming the fire of the dress, returned with a tray on which stood two tall crystal glasses filled with an amber drink.

They drank a glass of Crimean sherry and felt that they loved each other. Drink gave honey and grapes at the same time, causing secret desires, intoxicating and warming the body to the depths of the soul.

“If you want, I’ll read poetry for you. I have my friend’s notebook. It is called: ‘Illumination with Love’. She let me study.”

Without permission, Lucy began to read, turning the yellow sheets in half:

Trip to Yalta

Have long seduced southern beauties and treasure,
Why should we hide it!
How do you want sometimes worldly pleasure?!
But where do we get them quite?

Here things are tied up and tickets on the hands...
The fresh wind in bands!
Enough of boredom to wander in the clouds
We’ll wait for morning bounds.

There is the lovely sea, silk surf adventure.
Sailboat in the freedom play with me in venture,
I will run away with a wild path
To the mountains, not to overtake a bus.

For the new events the forces
I will gather for all five, without losses.
The exotic flavor is so good,
Better place for rest you won't find with food!

“I will listen further, read, and then pour me a little more of your sherry. A fine style, something reminds me of the old fortress and the ruins of Chersonese, where I was with my parents when I was a child.”

She poured him and herself. They drank, and she began to flip through, choosing the most interesting poems in her opinion.

About Love

Who among us, trying to be reasonable,
Talked about love too simply and noble,
Denying feelings in a straight as a Wight
That is of spirituality of small height.

For love the answer is in everyone glance,
Though she recognized it once.
It is brighter than daylight nice,
Of mine, you listen to an advice.

Loving amateur for nuts and sweet,
Walking with a smoothly gait.
I don't swear at you, don't scold you,
Remember myself only sometimes and few.

The seventeenth spring was beautiful,
Love was not jealous and cool.
Everything was singing, growing, and fragrant;
The bird of happiness didn't give us to sleep as ant.

They became interested in poetry and forgot about time. Alexey was dozing, and sometimes he got up and went to the kitchen to smoke, and she stopped reading and lay relaxed and remembered her mother, their talking of love, the rocking on the waves in the sea, the table covered with a white tablecloth and tea appliances, paintings by Renoir, Monet, Gauguin, Van Gogh, Modigliani, Picasso, Kandinsky. The notebook consisted of several inserts that scattered on the floor.

“Take it, or it will break.” Alexey handed her several sheets. “I’ll hurry. I’m afraid of your father,” he got out of bed, dressed, and, slowly combing himself in the glass of the bookcase stuffed with books, he said:

“I want to explain something to you. My aunt was recently killed near the mail building. She was slaughtered by a nerd. She was on her way from work. He attacked from behind and stabbed her with an ordinary knife. The investigation was entrusted to lieutenant-colonel Kiryanov. Do you have any friends among private detectives? It’s just a perfect murder. There is no evidence, no instrument of crime, no criminal.”

Lucy put scattered sheets of poetry on the table and stood up. She rummaged in her memory and remembered that she

had kept the telephone number of the private detective, Tatiana Alexandrovna Ivanova, when she investigated the theft of a large amount of money intended for encashment.

“Yes, I do, but for that, kiss.” She held out her thin hand to him.

He kissed the palm of her hand from the inside to the center. Every nerve of her hand shrank from the warm touch of his lips. With her other hand, she wrote the phone number of the detective on a green sheet with a sticky end and stuck to his arm.

“Call her for sure. A very knowledgeable woman but be careful. She does not like to be flirting with her.”

Lucy turned to Alexey’s face and removed this red glow from the Chanel caprone. The appearance of the girl turned pale and acquired quite real outlines.

Dressing and lightly beating up her forelock, she looked appraisingly at Alexey’s reaction. He was completely intoxicated and counted the number of drink wine glasses on his fingers. It turned out to be only three, but the bottle was full to the middle.

“What I do not like about you is that you are too businesslike,” the newly-made fiancé babbled, barely moving his tongue.

“Leave your comments for the cats and I need a real man with dignity and salary,” she said cheerfully, but her look corrected his perception of reality.

Her father appeared at the door of the apartment, when Alexey was already standing on the landing and looking through the cardholder where he had put the private detective’s phone

number. Alexey dialed the number and immediately heard the order, the request for a date. He had nothing to do but go to a meeting with a lover of investigations by taxi, because he put off his dream of buying a car to start a wedding with Lucy, and then give her a beautiful car on wheels from Nissan-Teana.

Tanya appeared at the corner where the meeting should take place, not immediately. First she bought cigarettes, and then drove to her friends in the police, met with the homeless informant Venchik. He advised her to love her neighbor as herself for two hundred dollars an hour. That fact made her very happy and she jerked in the direction of Lucy's house.

Two blocks later, near the restaurant "Mask", the publishing house of the local newspaper "Regional News" and the snack-bar stood the victim and waited impatiently for her appearance.

He recognized the woman with the bag over her shoulder with supplies, including a Makarov pistol.

She smiled and invited Alexey to the shady avenues of the park called "Lime trees", recalling Bunin's "Dark alleys," and, shifting her impressions on the shoulders of the classic, asked:

"Have you decided to become a lover again? Oh, I'm sorry; I'm just so simply speaking about life..."

He winced at the sagacity of the detective, but he did not give a look.

Alexey's blossoming face and somewhat slovenly appearance spoke of the complete absence of female influence and adoration. But he tolerated the attack and immediately went

to a business. Tanya listened and, making a few notes in the iPad, said goodbye to Izmailov. Before leaving for work there were only a few days. Lucy calmed down a little bit, because she realized that Alexey was still delighted with her, apparently, he had firm intentions.

Recollecting the frustrated love with Yuri, she was afraid to get used to Alexey and chased herself from all sorts of thoughts about a positive relationship with him. She liked his fatherly care, modesty, and most importantly, what attracted to Alexey the most was simple artlessness, inability to lie and dodge. This is how she imagined her future husband – a principled and honest.

The week went day by day. It was possible to postpone the arrival to the plant for another month, but she was quite well rested. After the holiday, she was impatient to go to work as soon as possible.

“Who would have thought that I would be so eager for the plant,” she told Irena on the phone. “I need money, and I do not want to borrow from my father, so that he does not think that during the holiday I completely lost his head.

“I decided on Monday to go to production, postpone and pull on there is nowhere else to wait.”

At the weekend it was cloudy. It was felt the approach of autumn. Autumn in the middle zone of Russia came quickly and imperceptibly. It seems that yesterday there was an unbearable heat, but today it was drizzling and the cool wind was blowing. Autumn no one expected, it came itself. Slowly, day

by day it became cooler, and here the first frosts appeared...

On Monday, Lucy got up early in the morning and went to the plant for the production of electrical and office equipment: kettles, air conditioners, microwave ovens, irons, heaters, electricity meters and other household items.

At the entrance Lucy stopped and dialed Alexey's number.

"Hi! Perhaps today they will tell me in which shop I will work."

"Good luck," he said approvingly.

5. Acquaintance with Plant

The administrative building of glass and concrete, the electronic clock on top of it showed 8.45. At the entrance there was an announcement: “They are looking for a permanent job”. The list was long. On the other side of the turntable and the glass booths with the guards there were the modern corps of the workshops.

Lyudmila went inside. On the left there was the inscription: “Human Resources Department”. She opened her purse, took out a compact powder with a mirror, looked critically at herself again, boldly opened the door and went up to the second floor. In the corridor to the head of the reception there were three more people: a young guy and a woman with a young girl. The guy quickly walked in and left with sheets of paper.

“Probably a sample application and questionnaire,” thought Uvarova. The woman brought her daughter to the factory after a school. The girl was very cute and cleanly dressed. She was worried, and she had a blush on her cheeks. They went into the chief’s office together. The woman was about forty. From the conversation, Lucy realized that one of them has been working in this manufacturing plant for a long time. In the office, the two women stayed long enough. Soon it was Lucy’s turn.

The head of the personnel department – a large middle-aged man was sitting at a massive table at the computer. On the table

he had several files with printed characteristics. Lucy said hello.

“On what issue?” he nodded to Uvarova to sit down.

“I got a referral for consultation, review, or further action at your factory.”

She showed the boss the direction given to her at the university, the diploma and the passport. The head carefully studied the direction, opened the passport, looked at whether there was a local residence permit, and then again studied the direction. Here he looked at Lucy for the second time and said:

“So, it means your specialty is electronics. We need specialists in this field. You can contact with people or prefer to deal with calculations and drawings?”

“I’m more interested in working with people.”

“Well, then I can offer the work of a replacement foreman in the sixth shop, the salary is at first twenty thousand rubles plus a premium. The work is serious and interesting. You need to immediately find a common language with the team, otherwise you will break the plan, and if there is a breakdown of the plan, then there can not even be any speech about a prize. How satisfied?”

“It is difficult to answer at once, but I think I can manage my work.”

“Good. Here is a sample application and questionnaire. Take a physical examination. When you prepare all the documents and take a picture, we will issue a pass and you can start working. And remember the main thing – you will work with people, everyone

has his own character, but we have one plan, so everything depends on you, how you can get the job done.”

She listened attentively to the chief, took the questionnaire and a copy of the statement, said: “Thank you, good-bye,” and left the room in full confidence that the work of the replacement master is exactly what she needed, and her salary suited. A week went by for the medical commission. A week later, with all the documents, she again appeared in the office of the head of the personnel department. Now he met her already not so formal and cold. It was evident that she liked him. And Lucy was already less afraid. She was smiling.

“Here, please, my documents.”

“Very well. Your immediate chief of the workshop, Alexander Dmitrievich Torobov,” the personnel officer dialed the phone number, but it was busy, replaced the receiver, took another minute and invited his colleague to his office. “Now he’s busy with college graduates, wait. Torobov will talk about the main points of work and conduct safety briefings.”

A handsome man of about thirty-six appeared on the threshold.

“Meet – Lyudmila Nikolaevna Uvarova – a replacement master. Please love and respect.”

“Very nice. Now I will tell you about the need to observe safety procedures and specifically in your work.”

Lucy followed him into the shop. He instructed, and then added:

“You’ll work in the sixth shop. First you’ll have to learn. Six months later, you’ll understand everything yourself. Our workshop is very clean. We are fighting for the cleanliness of the workplace. By your specialty – electronics – there will be a wide field of activity. If you get down to business thoroughly, you can achieve success. We have all the conditions for trouble-free work in the shop.”

Lucy listened attentively to the instructions of the commander. He immediately liked her, spoke calmly and clearly, it was hard not to get confidence in him. “It will be easy to work under the guidance of this person,” she thought.

By lunchtime the conversation with Torobov was ended. Uvarova was a little tired. It was necessary once again to go to the head of the personnel department for a pass, but at lunch time all the rooms were empty. Lucy did not want to go home and also decided to have dinner at the nearest cafe. When she walked from the checkpoint with the employees, she felt herself a full member of the production team.

It was an August day. Hot. The weather was dry and sunny. At her heart it was easy and peaceful. Singing a fashionable tune, somewhere accidentally heard, Lucy drew attention to the age of the staff. There were mostly young people.

Lucy ran across the street and walked two blocks in the hope of seeing a cafe. She paid attention to the peasant’s house “Hut” in the Russian style and went inside.

A spacious room with walls painted with bright colors,

wooden tables and chairs, where on the windows hung embroidered curtains with cockerels, carved saltcellars in the form of barrels. All the staff was in national clothes. The people were few.

Lucy ordered Russian borscht, cutlets and compote. After substantial lunch, she turned on the music in the phone, inserted a small button-transmitter in her ears, and a melody sounded that resonated with the mood. She turned off the melody and pressed Alexey's number. He hurriedly responded to hear his beloved voice:

“What if I study a foreign language and then try to enter graduate school,” she sang in a thin voice, waiting for an answer.

“You will begin professional growth; eventually become the chief of the shop, and possibly the chief of production. Dare...”

“If my mother were alive, she certainly approved my plans. You know, I did not meet a more caring and sympathetic person, my dear.”

Lucy sat for a while in the cafe and, it seems, completely relaxed and forgot that she should go to the factory. Then she got up and went to the door.

She received the pass the same day, and from the next day she was to attend the workshop. She wanted to call Alex, but decided to ring Olga:

“How are you? Do you work with Alexey?” asked an eternally busy friend.

“That's when everything will go back to normal at work, and

then I'll call him," Lucy categorically answered, "if he himself does not think of calling me."

"I'm beginning to get used to the fact that your relationship has become cool, as before," Olga lazily sympathized. "Come in, we'll chat..."

Suddenly Alexey called, but his voice was sad and tired.

"Tanya started a private investigation and hopes to find the killer of my aunt, oddly enough, next week for a thousand bucks," he explained.

"That's great!" Lucy approved and wanted to ask what was on his soul, knowing that Alex would be pleased. "I hope the mood has improved?"

"A wood grouse is a winter bird... See you, for now," he turned off the iPhone.

The next day Lucy went to work. The first thing Torobov conducted in the shop and showed where the workplace was – a table with a computer in the room with a view from the window to the factory yard.

"The room is clean and bright. There are flowers on the windowsills, a shelf with books at the wall," Lucy praised the chief. "Very cozy!"

"Do not think that you'll be sitting here. Now you go everywhere with me first, until you know all the work, and then I trust you to lead the shop on your own. You'll only turn to me for some insoluble questions," Torobov said smiling.

She liked this state of affairs. "There will be time for

professional growth,” she thought.

The working week passed unnoticed. At the end she called Izmailov:

“The feeling comes, we are an integral part of the debugged mechanism of the plant,” she said. “The industry is progressive and important. The main difficulty: to find contact with people. I kiss and look forward to meeting with you.”

“Encourage trust and understanding, and then respect for your work,” he shared his experience. “Tomorrow I’ll see you, my love!”

“Our collective of the workshop is all youth,” she admired with emotion.

“The most fascinating thing for me is communication with people,” she told Alexey when she met him. “I understood that the formation of the working man was taking place here.”

“Not a single dynasty has brought up and raised a factory within its walls.” Alex took Lucy by the arm and casually hugged her around the waist. “Previously, they came here after a vocational school with professional skills. I love your scent.”

“I understand, let’s have coffee,” she said and felt a hot breath on her shoulder as they sat down at a coffee table.

“The foundation of the working profession is laid, and, most importantly, the consciousness is being brought up that the work is needed not only for everyone individually, but for the whole country as a whole,” he added.

“Me without sugar,” she protested

When Lucy walked through the territory of the company, she repeatedly drew attention to the Board of Honor – photos of people who had devoted more than one year to work at the plant – assemblers of grinders, programmers and computer engineers, crane and electronics operators, doctors, painters and builders, electricians and technologists.

“The working dynasties in the factory were treated in a special way. They are the backbone of the team, they were set as an example, and they were equal to the foremost producers,” Alexey answered when he put two cups of coffee and a pie with dried apricots on a table.

“It is interesting to work at the plant. I’m used to rhythm. You helped me, suggested. Appealed for advice to the chief of the shop, he invariably said: “Get used to, learn, and everything will go back to normal. You will understand how to work. Not all at once is obtained by newcomers,” Lucy has shared painfully, understanding that to study it is necessary to work, to be the person.

“Did not you think about going to postgraduate studies?” Alexey asked simply.

“No, but I am doing my English on my own. I read fiction. By the way, gradually I was loved in the team. I’m sociable and I’m not afraid to help beginners,” her eyes were shining, looking at a friend. “Remember, at first time I worked exclusively during the day, but after two months they instructed the workshop and the second shift...”

“The second shift is more difficult and at the same time easier. More responsibility, since you are for the boss,” said Alexey, reaching out to his girlfriend, kissing her cheek, looking with reverence, and she herself wanted to be better, worthy of respect. “Do not forget to work on yourself, take from the library books on electronics, electrical engineering and physics. The plant continues to grow. A new building is being built, a hostel for singles and from rural areas.”

“I remember earlier they said: “We will fulfill the five-year plan for 4 years,” she answered with enthusiasm and passion. “We are beautiful even at night!”

The sixth assembly workshop, where Lucy worked, was in the yard of the plant and occupied the entire first floor of one of the buildings. Large windows illuminated the room, but despite this, each place has its own electric, energy-saving light bulb so that the worker can turn on the light.

In the evening, in addition, the upper lighting was switched on – “daylight”. The workshop – long and spacious – resembled an operating room, but many times larger. Everywhere cleanliness, the walls are lined with white tiles, the ceiling, the lathes are also white, rather not even the lathes, but, as was customary called, the workplace. The windows here and there are flowers. But it was impossible to set many plants, so as not to block daylight.

There were special relaxation rooms where employees could come and discuss their problems, read the press, relax, and

distract themselves. The shop buzzed electric motors, smelled of acetone and rubber. Workers, whose work was associated with harmful colorants, received milk in half a liter a day. When Lucy first got into her shop, she thought that she was in the hall of the palace. Wardrobes for clothes stood separately. At the end of the shift, they were required to wash themselves in the showers. For those wishing someone did a manicure. Before starting work, employees wore white robes and scarves or caps.

“There are twelve brigades in the workshop. Everyone is fighting for the title of the best. Two already wear the honorary title of the foremost percussionist,” Lucy said, stroking the guy’s hand. “I learned all this long ago, after a week of work. Let’s get back together, darling.”

“Who will be against? Have agreed!” Alexey smiled generously.

They met during the break to discuss the progress of the investigation into the murder of his aunt and current affairs, since they worked in one shift.

“The private police officer reported that all suspicions fall on people living in the area where the murder occurred. But the main suspect could be a person who knows her well and who had motives for committing this atrocity. This could be anyone who needed money or gold jewelry. Most importantly, the aunt had a set of emeralds in a ring and earrings of antique value, a chain with a diamond slash of a half carat, which she inherited from her sister. These ornaments in the amount

of half a million rubles disappeared from the apartment, and the search for them on the body of the victim gave no results. They examined the scene of the incident, found the scattered things from the bag: a broken case for glasses with fingerprints of the victim, a pack of cigarettes, a notebook with notes and phone numbers of employees, a pen, a pencil for eyebrows and a lipstick of a well-known manufacturer, bought at the *Ile de Beaute* branch. In the database, fingerprints are of a formal nature. Belonged to any mortal, except for the murderer,” Alexey told, and the detective-Tanya was sent with him sms for more details.

“How is the investigation progressing,” Lucy asked in the foyer when he went out to smoke. “Or should I not ask about this?”

“There are many problems with the evidences, there is not a single witness, and even blood stains are barely perceptible on the victim. Detective Tanya is studying forensic expertise. Her character is too energetic and lively, she all leads with her emotional nature,” Alexis’s face expressed the most tragic mask among all the representatives of the human race. “She wants to make a search herself.”

“Were there any other relatives besides aunt Kate?”

“My parents died when I went to school, I cried for them. I was sent to a boarding school in the sixth grade. And my aunt Kate had come and visited me. She brought gifts: sweets, cookies to children. She had a daughter, Natasha, but she disappeared when she worked on the same post. I already told

investigators...” Alexey plunged into a dejected silence.

“I remember such a thing. Natasha disappeared about three years ago. They said they went abroad to be treated. Somewhere in Germany or Switzerland,” Lucy confessed sadly. “Come on, quit smoking, they’ll be looking for us. Come to me today after work, we’ll sit and read the poetry of my old friend Izmailov Alexey.”

“You’re joking, I do not write poetry, but I’ll try to get back what I took to read last time. I liked it very much. Tell your friend, well done! Let her write further.”

“You will return with agreement that you will find for me a private publisher to print this book of poems in a separate volume. Next we will develop the ideal murder of your cousin in the logic of poem-sized iambic or horei, we do not care. But Ivanova will calculate thoroughly every step of the criminal and force him to begin the investigation against himself.”

“I am sure that she will be right, as she hinted at the former roommate – Skripal, when she was looking for Natasha’s remains in his yard. And she found a soil soaked in blood, of the same group as that of my aunt Kate. Probably someone buried the corpse of Natasha. The investigation resumed. It is believed that the owner of the house himself was hacked and buried in the hope of obtaining a hidden amount of money, and then disappears. But his plans failed because of the smallest detail: the headmistress’s child climbed under the table to look for his toy and found a bag of money,” Alexey ascertained and in return

took Lucy's hand and stroked it.

"It can not be," Lucy continued to sort out her notes in the phone, stunned. "And is here your aunt Kate?"

"They were very interesting women and similar in psychology. However, Tanya-detective said that it is too early to draw any conclusions. You know, there are also interesting circles, own club, where you can watch a movie in your spare time. At the club there was a children's dance group 'Kalinka' for the children of the workers of the enterprise," he was distracted from the topic. "I was fascinated by the idea of leisure."

"No less than studying at the university?" Lucy asked impetuously.

"The plant works around the clock in the same rhythm. In the assembly shop, there is night duty for the brigades. The number of products produced by the plant at night is not less than the number of products produced in the day. For work at night they receive an additional surcharge to the salary."

"Engineering workers on night shift do not work. Our work is connected with research, sometimes creative work and requires special tension. According to the doctors, the creative brain should work during the day," Lucy was offended.

"The medical commission will help you get a ticket to a sanatorium or a dispensary. Soon it will be the annual medical examination. Vouchers to holiday houses and camp sites are given through the trade-union. Local committee helps large families and lonely ones. To everyone who was on treatment,"

Alexey distributed compliments to the right and to the left. “Are you not accidentally pregnant?”

“No, calm down. We’ll meet at the checkpoint at the end of the day. I’m running away.”

They went to workplaces, he – to his computer, she rose a floor above, sat down at the table and opened a laptop, brought from the warehouse.

The plant – the most common, like many hundreds of other plants, became for Lucy Uvarova a second home. She realized that to find out all the work should be worked out not one year and, perhaps, not one decade. She, as a young specialist, was impatient to be at the forefront. But she did not know much and, as a young specialist, and did not understand.

Nina Vasilievna Korbutova – deputy head of the workshop – gave many years to the plant. She has developed her own style of work and constantly kept Lucy under her control, was a very strict and categorical mentor; it was easy and curious to work with her. A tall, bright brunette, always dressed in the latest fashion, but not flashy, but elegantly and simply, without unnecessary jewelry. She also demanded from Lucy neatness in clothes.

“They are equal to us, we are the face of the plant,” she loved to repeat.

Nina did not have a personal life. She was lonely, she had no children of her own, but she found her vocation at the plant not only as a first-class engineer, but also as a wonderful mentor, an

assistant to the youth. The chief of the shop was respected for these qualities, with whom he had already worked for ten years.

In the beginning, he grew up to a senior engineer, and then, after joining the trade union, was appointed head of the shop. Nina helped him in everything. The educational work in the shop lay entirely on her. She was the second mother of the assembly shop. Young technicians came for advice to her even home. She lived not far from the factory, ten minutes walk. She liked the role of the second mother. She was always happy to solve any problems that arise with young professionals. No wedding, no celebration took place without Nina. She was the pioneer of all intriguing undertakings.

“In the shop, the combat leaf is issued by the post of people’s control, where they criticized the scammers and loafers. They were few, and the combat leaf with the weapon of satire and humor struggled with them and not without result. So it helped to get to his feet completely drunk Sergey Levin. He even got into the forefront of production and was repeatedly awarded with the badge ‘For excellent work’, ” explained Nina Lucy, considering the main indicators of the brigades.

“To every holiday in the shop, I noticed, a wall newspaper is always posted. They are all on the site of the enterprise. There are reflected the events of the assembly shop: trips to the sponsored farm for harvesting potatoes and tomatoes, weeding out beds, working on building a hostel and school.

“That’s right,” Nina patted Lucy on the shoulder

encouragingly. “The factory is the chief of the school of this microdistrict. A sports hall was built. Funds for construction released the plant. The specialists built themselves, because their children will go in for sports there. They are growing generation, new working hands, which are so necessary for us.”

“I know that there is a college on the basis of the plant,” Lucy remembered her studies.

“So do I, our current chief of the shop graduated from it. Then, of course, there was an evening university and an army. The main products of the plant are intravenous batchers, medregistrators, iPads, iPhones, calculators, plasma TVs, monitors, computers, air fresheners, air conditioners.”

“I’m amazed at such a huge number of household items and assortments,” Lucy put in caution.

In fact, in a specially designated place there were already ready-packed products. Gradually ready made items of production were sent to various cities and even abroad, their place was occupied by others. Engineering staff worked without white gowns, but if they went to the workshop they also put on white robes, because they demanded a clean workplace for associates.

“Once a week, usually on Saturday was sanitary cleaning of the premises. Every cooperator washes his place,” the deputy chief told.

Once Lucy had been appearing in the workshop, she was standing and wondering at everything. She had imagined the

factory not so immense. Someone accidentally pushed her. She turned around. Before her stood a tall, light-haired girl in a white gown and a hat. In her hands she had an open laptop, where drawings and diagrams appeared. The girl looked then at the drawing, then on the already made circuit and checked whether the product was correctly executed. So it's no surprise that she did not notice Lucy.

“Hi, you can call me Lucy. I'm your manager.”

“Hi, my name is Sveta Erengeld.”

The voice of Sveta was low and melodic with a slight accent. Lucy later found out that she was Latvian. With the husband they have arrived on a factory after the graduation of the Riga technical university.

“I would like to know what I need to do,” asked the newcomer.

“Now I do your work, that is, I check the correctness of the manufacturing and packaging.”

Sveta began to tell how to do it. Sveta's husband worked as a replacement foreman, but in another shop, they had two children. She loved them very much. She often told about her little ones: a boy and a girl. Sveta's children visited the “Sunny House” kindergarten near the plant. After the shift the girlfriends went to the children's educational combine – for the kids almost the same age. Seeing their mother from the window, they jumped and laughed. Lucy befriended Sveta. By nature, she was calm and balanced, worked well, with knowledge and also helped at first. She was engaged in the manufacture of circuits, and Lucy

watched that these schemes and drawings were introduced into production without defects, connected reality with the drawings. Prior to Lucy, this work was performed by Sveta, but with the advent of the girl, she could directly engage in engineering work, that is, with the construction, the invention of a new one. All the drawings made by Sveta were tested by Razumov, the senior engineer, whose workplace was in the room where Uvarova's desk was. When they returned home on the first day after the end of the shift, Sveta asked a friend:

“Lucy, are you married?”

“It's a strange question, no.”

“Why? Are you against marriage?”

And then, for the first time, Lucy was seriously thinking, and after all, she is already twenty-six, she has a higher education, she is cute, intelligent, she knows how to cook and wash, and even sew and knit and thoughtfully said:

“Once I get a family. Is it possible to live alone all my life? Father is not eternal. Maybe he has ten years left, or even more, but the years go by and you can miss them.”

“It's logical,” Sveta agreed. “Then it will be difficult to find a person for the role of husband.”

Lucy suggested that it would not be bad if Alexey invited her to marry him. She knew him well enough. Especially she used to him and remembered Alex, and not someone else.

“In the end, I will make up my mind. Whoever Alexey will be a true companion and helper in life will understand and calm

at a difficult moment,” Lucy mused aloud, looking at the nearby Sveta.

“Yes, you must decide. And if he talks about marriage, do not push him away, but give consent and get to know with your father if you have not yet introduced them.”

6. Father

Tanya, a private detective, phoned Kiryanov, hoping that the lieutenant-colonel would free himself from analyzing current affairs.

He was after his duty and was sitting at the table in the pose of the “Thinker” by French sculptor Rodin, trying to make the right decision to take the hostage in the face of private entrepreneur Ivanova, finally to put an end to all the crimes of the world. Her concerns were enough for all the confusion of this cunning crime.

“Glad to hear. How are you?”

“Take a couple of your guards, come to arrest Skripal. I found a private burial in his yard near the door. This is the employee of the post that was missing a couple of years ago – Natalia, I’m sorry, I do not remember the last name, and in the kitchen, under the stove, the decayed receipts from the pawnshop were littered for the amount of the robbery.”

“We’ve that case in our archive for a long time now. But as you say, we leave urgently. And where is the owner of the cemetery?”

“Sits under my supervision. A gunshot wound in the arm put an end to vandalism and blood loss. I think that, and the death of Natalia’s mother, Catherine Vdovina, this is a business of his hands. The evidence is minimal, but it can be proved by the blood group left on the tablecloth and knife injuries of the victim that

he is guilty. He has a lot of knives here and even has a massive ax and a hammer at the same time. We must prove that his guilt is unquestionable, and then he will split in the second crime himself, in order to shorten his term with a frank confession.”

“With such an arsenal, I think he will have something to think about over the course of his life,” Kiryanov turned off the phone and the computer at the same time, and called through reinforcements through the officer on duty, who was immediately in the person of senior lieutenant Garik Papazyan, who for a long time was admirer of Tanya.

Kiryanov left with two riot police to the place of residence Zheka.

The foul of the room, despite a cool day, caused disgust at the neighbor's cat, which scraped the fence, when ten minutes later Kiryanov entered the courtyard of this one-story private, multi-apartment anthill.

Seeing the aliens, the cat rushed headlong to the opposite side and was just next to Tanya, slipped between the legs of two high patrolmen from the department of especially important crimes and the lieutenant-colonel herself, began to arch her back and ruffle her tail to be stroked.

Tanya took a hungry animal in her arms and, stroking it, threw it back to a bowl, in which, besides the empty bottom, the Whiskas cubes appeared, as the detective put the food she had taken with her, and in the presence of witnesses they began to write a report on the detention.

The neighbors who did not see anything from their houses with high fences were witnesses, but they often heard threats from this shaggy subhuman.

In a car with flashers, suspected of particularly serious crimes with aggravating circumstances, the neighbor was taken to the police and left until the circumstances of the case were fully clarified. From there, in ten minutes later, when they made him a new dressing and recording in the book of regular customers of this serious institution, they sent to the pre-trial detention cell of the federal surveillance service – FSS – investigative isolator.

After a maximum of a week, when his guilt in the second crime is proved, he will be sent where he came from, that is, to wait for the court in a prison cell. This will continue until he confesses to the second atrocity.

The material evidences will appear as soon as there are witnesses who will be more than enough in consequence, as everyone saw and even heard screams, but were afraid to leave the post office.

The whole farce concerning money was thought out by Zheka in advance, but it was poorly planned, so he decided to kill both the daughter and the mother with a length of two or three years to avenge the shortfall in profits and developed by him robbery of a mail. The employee, who agreed with him, and who caused the fire, had to pay to the cashier of the institution, the money she had taken for false information about the origin of the fire.

For Lucy, this story became edifying and she was afraid to go

out on the street even at six o'clock, when she was finishing the shift, and took with her to the escorted Sveta, then Alexey.

All September days have flown by unnoticeably for Lucy. Work on shifts, evenings reading, TV. The weather was amazing. On the shelves of shops and markets, there were a lot of fruits and vegetables. Lucy especially loved early autumn. It was not hot at all, but everyone was dressed in summer clothes. After a hot summer was somehow breathing easier, and everyone secretly thought about the coming winter. What will it bring...

Particularly good were the evenings. People went out for a walk in parks and squares. In some places you could see a yellow leaf. In the flower beds, fragrant tobacco, marigold, dahlias, and zinnia smelled in a peculiar way. They seemed to want to give the air their last, outgoing scent. All the colors of the summer have faded. Early autumn was painted in its colors – crimson, orange, yellow, and brown.

Lucya began to go out for the evening walks with Alex. He usually called her, and they met in the park, near the house, on a bench. Long talked. Alexey talked about work. They practically did not see each other at the factory. Sometimes on a break, when their shifts coincided, they went to dinner together at the cafe. Their relationship has improved. He regularly called, and she gladly met him. They shared their amorous plans, impressions that arose constantly.

At one of the meetings, Lucy looked very sweet and funny:
“Today you look like, as in the evening of our acquaintance.

Your dress suits to the face perfectly,” he remembered the day when they received the award and decided to mark this fact under the guise of a birthday.

“Amazing, do you like me?” Lucya doubted his sincerity.

“Of course, this can not even be a question. Would I meet with you if you were not interesting to me?”

“Cute! But sometimes it seems that you are meeting with me just because of somehow killing time. And I would be here or someone else you do not care. Maybe you’ll buy yourself some kind of thoroughbred dog, you’ll walk with her instead of me,” Lucya’s voice grew harsh. “You do not listen to me!”

“You’re not right in many respects. You want to offend me, if you say so. Did I deserve such words?” he took her hand and held it to his lips.

She did not pull back. She was pleased with his fits of tenderness. But it seemed that he does it somehow as a duty and he does not want to kiss her at all. And, in general, it should not have started from the very beginning of these meetings, if he is indifferent to her. He politely continued:

“I like you, and I would like to be with you always together. In those hours when we are alone, is it worth to torment each other with distrust. You are in vain nervous. Do not quarrel over a trifle.”

She understood the sincerity of Alexey’s words and already repented that she did not believe him. Wanted to reassure and somehow encourage close friend, but words did not go into her

head. Then she remembered that she had decided to introduce him to her father.

“I want to introduce you to my dad. You have been at my house several times during our friendship, but you still do not know him.”

Alexey smiled. It was evident that he liked the idea of acquaintance.

“If you insist, I do not mind,” he thawed. “But it offends me that you are not much interested in my relatives.”

“Why do you say that? I want to support you and distract you from worries. I bought my father a shirt, a tie and cufflinks in the capital’s hypermarket and a great gift for you. I dream of introducing you closer. Your tastes match. I saw beautiful snake skin belts at a high price. Look,” she took a box out of her bag and handed it to Alexey. “Do you like?”

Alexey unfolded the cellophane, opened a beautiful, blue, shiny plastic box, picked up the belt, returned her the box, and unrolled his belt. The skin of a black viper flashed in his hands, and there were two buttons in place of the eyes. He tried on the belt.

“Ok, I’ll wear it,” he took off his belt and put it back in the package. “Bunny!”

“Tell me a secret, how is the investigation going on? But since you are silent, then you do not want to talk.” She put her hands on his shoulders.

“The investigation is over. Kiryanov referred the case to the

prosecutor's office. And I did not talk about him because when I meet you, I admire you and forget everything.”

Lucy thought for a moment. The gift cost her fabulous amount – \$300. Alexey saw that she had tears in her eyes.

“As for the rest, you know everything. I had to punch my way myself, without anyone's help.”

At these words of her friend, she blushed profusely, she thought that he hardly knows how to cook food, realized why he is always so calm, it is difficult to get out of balance. He has his own special, established opinion. She felt so small; quite a child compared to him and decided to postpone her acquaintance with her father until a more convenient opportunity, which immediately appeared.

Usually, the father returned from work tired and would hardly have reacted positively to the acquaintance. On Sundays, he usually rested: he read or listened to plays and did not approve of his daughter's choice. He got used to the idea that she was alone, and he would not like Lucy's plan to marry, especially since her health, as her father thought, “did not allow pulling all the household affairs and taking care of her husband.” In a word, it was necessary to wait.

In early October, when Lucya had already decided to bury the idea of her father's acquaintance with Alexey, and the investigation was finally confused in the papers, who was the main defendant in the murder of Aleksey's relative, the father warned his daughter:

“In three days I will have time off for work on the second shift. So do not worry, when I return home later than usual. I replace the ill teacher of history.”

Lucy estimated that after a day off, Saturday and Sunday will follow. So, the day of the meeting can be scheduled for Friday, since the father did not like any guests at the weekend. So, it was decided. Now it remained to warn Alexey about the day and hour so that he does not schedule any other events for Friday.

On Thursday, Lucy called him to work to arrange a meeting; she was on the second shift. He did not take the phone for a long time, probably it was urgent work.

“Hello, I’m listening,” he said distinctly and clearly. “I have an urgent task; I must do it before lunch. Debug new equipment sent from Germany.”

Something was jammed in the receiver and it was difficult to talk.

“Come to my place tomorrow at seven o’clock in the evening. The father will be at home, and I will introduce you. But please do not be late, as I have already warned my father,” Lucy lied, “he does not like being late.”

“Okay, I’ll be at seven.”

“Have agreed,” Lucy has disconnected phone and with relief sighed.

She had not yet warned her father, but she hoped to do so. “Anyway, I’ll say, even if he’s in a bad mood,” she decided to herself.

The working day flew by unnoticed. A new chip, developed by Sveta Erengeld, was introduced into processing and it was necessary to keep under control how manufacturing of products went on the conveyor.

By dinner Lucy had a little headache. The bee buzz of electric motors and fluorescent lamps, to the sound of which she had already become accustomed, was cut short.

Lucy began flipping through the Internet. The implementation of the scheme went slowly. Not all workers immediately realized how to build setting-up. It was especially difficult for the young. Experience was not enough with them, mastering the new technology took more time than the same operation for experienced workers.

A conveyor is not a simple matter. At a hitch or breakdown on one table there was a delay of all course of working process. On that day, the iPads were collected notably less, this means that the earnings of the workers will be rather less, but with the development of the last operation, more wares will be produced, and this will pay off a temporary failure.

Even at the university, Uvarova paid more attention to physics than mathematics. And faced with unfamiliar phenomena, she had to repeatedly access the Internet. They had enough literature in the department on electronics and it was easy for her to comprehend something that was not clear.

Returning home from work, she straight away decided to tell her father about her intention. Her father was busy, as usual,

reading books. He drove his fingers through a sheet of thick paper with a lot of holes. Lucy went to his room.

“Dad, my good friend, Alexey Izmailov, will come to us tomorrow. We work together at the factory. He is modest and handsome. Maybe I’ll marry him. I want you to like him. He will be exactly seven.”

“If you want to introduce us, Lucy, I do not mind. I’m interested in who you spend your free time with. I guess Alex will like me. Do you say that you work in a factory together?”

Father spoke slowly, making a stop after each word, so that what he said was better reached the listener.

“Yes, I do. He is a master-adjuster in another department; he graduated from college and is going to study further. He is talented and managed to make two proposals.”

“So, the work is done, the father is warned,” it made her feel better. “We need to think about how best to meet Alex. I’ll cook something delicious. It will be necessary to look great, so that under the eyes without dark circles. He’s attentive and will immediately notice if I’m tired. Hairstyle in the hairdresser, in the first place, will take a lot of time, and secondly, I will have too formal appearance.”

It was decided to make permanent curls at home. On Friday, she worked on the first shift. At the beginning of the working day Alexander Dmitrievich approached her.

“I see, Uvarova, you cope with your duties, if things go on like this, then a quarterly bonus is guaranteed to us. Keep it up,

well done!”

Torobov approvingly patted her on the shoulder. She right away wanted to sing. Then Nina Vasilievna approached with a severe air.

“You look very pretty today.”

Lucy was confused. Korbutova, noticing Lucy’s embarrassment, hurried to justify herself.

“As soon as I saw you, I immediately realized that we would work together. Look,” Korbutova showed Lucy in the laptop additional corrections to the schemes. “Pay attention to the notes in red color.”

“If there are any questions, I’ll turn to Razumov.”

“You are right, these are his changes.”

* * *

After work, Lucy went to the supermarket and bought a bottle of vodka, dry Bulgarian wine and some of the products. It was necessary to buy fruit. In the vegetable department she bought pepper, next to her lay grapes and watermelons. A gray-bearded old man jumped to her.

“How do you choose a watermelon? Take this one, probably ripe,” the old man pointed to a large watermelon, lying not far from her. “Here, pay attention, the tail is dry, it means ripe. And knock on it.”

Lucy hit the watermelon with her indexed finger several times; the watermelon rang as if it was empty inside.

“Ok, indeed, the old man is right. This watermelon is ripe.”

Everything that was needed was bought; she paid for the fruit and left the store. It was hard to bear. She called a taxi, comforting herself with the thought that Alex would appreciate her care, and her father wanted to do something nice.

Preparation of dinner did not take much time. For about six hours the banquet was ready.

She fried potatoes with onion and meat. Meat cooked as for shish kebabs, soaked in advance in water with vinegar. She covered a white tablecloth; put wineglasses for wine and vodka, wine glasses for water, plates for the second and salads. Wine and fruit were put in the center of the table. Then she put knives, forks and napkins to each plate. Now she had to change dress and comb her hair.

Lucy wore a glamorous, light pink dress with white chrysanthemums from *Piero Moretti*. A thin belt emphasized the waist line. She stabbed her hair with tortoiseshell comb, has pinned sapphire brooch of her mother. White Italian sandals, French perfumes and elixir “Nina Ricci” had completed the image.

There was a ring at the door. Lucy rushed to the door and, without asking, opened it. On the threshold stood a neighbor on the staircase – an elderly woman in a colored dressing gown with a small, trembling, gray kitten on her hands.

“Lucy, do you happen to need a kitten?” she whispered.

“No, Nadezhda Sergeevna.”

“Okay. Forgive me, Lucy, what an amazing perfume you have.

Where did you buy them?”

“In Moscow,” the girl began to get angry at the intrusiveness of her neighbor. “Sorry, now I’m going to the theater,” she did not know what else to lie, so she did not intelligently close the door right in front of the guest’s nose.

“It remains to have a kitten for a complete happiness,” she thought, and looked at her watch.

Ten minutes later the doorbell rang again. On the threshold stood Alex with a beautiful bouquet of chrysanthemums. A new blue suit, brown shoes, a white with a blue striped shirt, a blue tie with brown strokes from *Mastai Ferretti*. He brushed his hair and handed her a bouquet.

“Put it in the vase, please,” his words aroused her sympathy.

She let the guest go into the hallway, where he looked self-assured in the mirror.

“Do not worry; my father’s name is Nikolai Nikolaevich. Try to be more polite to him.”

She led Alex to the table, sat him next to her father.

“Lucya told me about you. Pour all a little. I want to drink for our acquaintance.”

She put the flowers in a thin, metal vase of Turkish production in the middle of the table, she sat down beside her. Alex poured the wine in the glasses and, raising his wine glass with champagne, said the speech prepared beforehand:

“I want a word,” he said. “I like your daughter, we work together, and we are going to get married. Let’s drink to our

friendship!”

“Alex, you said something early about marriage, I did not give consent,” Lucy interrupted him solemnly. “Engagement is a good thing...”

“And we will not ask you. You go with him and that’s it,” her father said.

She did not expect the collusion to happen so quickly. “It’s even better, we will not wait,” she thought, and barely audible said:

“I do not mind, Alex likes me. The best friend and life partner I do not need.”

“For this we’ll drink,” they all supported happily.

Lucy turned on the receiver, and a smooth melody played. She was courting her father, applying a salad, then the second. Alexey also did not suffer from a bad appetite.

“It turns out, Lucy, you are a great cook,” Alexey praised. “Eat it yourself. I’m a bad gentleman; I do not know how to take care of anything.” He took her plate and put a little salad in it and the second one, poured vodka to everyone and happily said:

“For the meeting!”

The music sounded. Alex was courting everyone. He invited the girl to a dance and poured a little wine into a glass of the future father-in-law.

“I will not interfere with the young,” her father said, and went into his room.

The couple danced and did not notice how her father left

them. They forgot that tomorrow they go to work, the melody completely captured the space, and they began to kiss and hug.

“Soon we get married, would you mind?” Alex asked gallantly, hoping for a compliment in his address, since the costume he bought himself in Italy for the euro of the same firm as the tie, cost him a decent amount.

“No. I agreed,” she replied, enjoying the intimate atmosphere.

“You know, I’m a very self-interested person, think it over and over, could you get along with me?”

The words of the guy hurt her. He stayed with Lucy until ten o’clock. They finished their champagne, danced several times. At the beginning of the eleventh, Alexey said:

“The evidences are collected. Soon the court will be. Lieutenant-colonel Kiryanov advises you to come too, to confirm that you were at the post office on the day of encashment.”

“It is necessary, so it is necessary, I will come. Send greetings to the detective Tanya Ivanova.”

Alexey put on his jacket, which had to be removed, as he felt hot.

Lightening disappeared from the apartment, and she went to the balcony to see how he would go out into the corner. A minute later he appeared, stopped a free taxi, got into the car and drove away. She stood on the balcony for a long time, escorting Alexey thoughtfully. She sighed.

“Well, Alexey is not Alain Delon, but he loves me, so I love him, too.” She remembered poems written by her friend,

dedicated to her, and opened a poetic notebook. At the top of page it was brightly displayed “For a friend”, and next to it there was a signature of the author:

Friend

Life said the word at last.
We broke up too quickly.
So why should I think so fast
About you as an old friend weekly?

Our holidays and everyday life, don't cry
Will be remembered by others,
Parted, well, goodbye.
We'll never forget mothers!

So much Talmuds are written.
Have read many volumes old.
I don't recognize your death.
I'll forget and leave the world.

The winds that blew to meet
Disappeared forever in the night.
The candle melted quickly from the kit.
Remained only cold white light.

To open the window widely.
To breathe of old friendship balsam...

Everything happens in this world.
I will not give you to anyone.

The girl was angry with these lines. She began to read the notebook further, trying to find something appropriate to the mood. Finally, stopping her gaze on the amusing poem, she read aloud, standing in the pose in front of the mirror, portraying the poet:

Wedding Bouquet (fable)

Ringling, wedding bouquet
Keeps the bride from possible need.
Let this truth is not new,
There no other has we view.
A brave rabbit found a rich she-wolf.
He would not believe this deep gulf.
But the rogue was too greedy,
And in the ringling of coins he was not weedy.
He would have forgotten and refused,
He ran in love to her face confused.
“Wolf, darling, be my wife!
And we will not part with you in future life.
We will live in contentment and prosperity,
Love we both will have in short priority.”
The wolf fell open his mouth with surprise
And the swallowed little rabbit was not wise.

Lucy laughed at the irony and humor and read further:

Conversations

Only the day will come again,
The talk always hinders us.
There, the rivers start backwards,
They do not end arguing here thus.

Conversations, persuasion, slander, lamentations...
Why is any suffering, as if knowing ahead?
Flashes a week again. We take the trouble in return
To say morality the guidance forget.

Politics, music, sports.
From now on, everything became one.
Whoever was crawled,
That mind also ruled the world.

Covenants, slander, loss...
All this is not for boss.
When the fanfares are silently,
Headlights flicker obstinately.

Showcases temptingly shine.
What a beautiful wine!
And how much they pay
For the cycle way?

Weekdays, concerts, holidays,
Shows, vanity and pragmatism.
Ah, why do give advice?!
Everyone will think about cubism.

Turning over the notebook, she looked for the most vivid and colorful moments. The mood increased significantly, and she continued reading, forgetting about time. She liked the syllable and rhyme, but especially admired that the verse resembled a goblet. Mentally she put in this vase flowers presented by Alexey.

She, as a mathematician and programmer, was familiar with the exact number of characters needed to write poetry and versification. On the basis of mathematical formulas, it would be easy to create more complex figures, which is easy to achieve by following the mathematical logic.

But Lucy was disappointed when she took the next page and realized that the poems were dedicated to the fan-knight in the helmet.

Modern Knights

Who you are? Can you fate decide?
Or maybe you are builders, the tamers of universe!
Perhaps your name will be called
Ship, park, institute or other world.

You, the knight of the future, stand
Before me so handsome silent on land.
In business, in my thoughts, it's time for me
To understand the essence of human being.

Forget the sorrows until the morning,
Let us sound the harmony!
I collect all the stars in the palm of my hand
And I'll throw them over your head.

And with a blue mane a white horse
It will leave my long path.
To him I will affectionately say
To be faithful to the end anyway.

Only tie the mane near mound
I will not ask the bright crown.
Whether will I succeed in melodies?
More fully convey than in words?

Or I'll be in helping of a few,
While walking on the morning dew?
Removed the visor and the fire gun.
You do not know the fear run.
This is a true living steel.
Be glorified in the ages will!

Such a flowerish poetry gamut she liked more and inspired
to talk with Alexey. She dialed his number, but then deleted it.

The autumn evening evoked memories of police visits, interrogations, signing of papers, a meeting with the accused, a private detective and policemen. A gentle breeze stirred the leaves on the street, and it seemed that the leaves tell each other something important and interesting. Her head hurt. She turned off the music, picked it up from the table, and washed the dishes. Having finished her household affairs, she looked into her father's room, where they sometimes met with Alex. The father slept with the sleep of the righteous. She closed the door and took the first book that fell into her hands and began to read, trying to find in it answers to the worried questions. She read "Walking on Torments" by Tolstoy not for the first time, and knew some places almost by heart.

Thoughts constantly jumped on the poetry of her girlfriend, and this poetic notebook worried more and more. She put the book aside, and her gaze fell on another page. Lucy read carefully:

Fatigue

Tired hands and feet, headache from rumor.
What's a steep road? I do not mind more.
As if a pink bouquet, donated once,
I bear the dream for many years of wearisome hopes.

Frozen stormy sounds and words,
Ghosts disappeared in the night.

And now the story begins
With the beautiful music and might.

How many varieties around,
Exciting songs and bounty wide.
So, that frightens me and bound
Suddenly, pushing and carries aside.

After all, the nice holiday will be ahead —
Wonderful days so stunning and mad.
But I'll say to myself some:
“Go. Your day will come.”

Do I need much glory then?
If I will put off only the pen,
All the torments of Tantalus hell
Will want to do a struggle as well.

Hand writes, brain works a few,
For a bully is more interesting with worry.
Fatigue will answer: “What are you,
There is nowhere for you to hurry!”

She was fond of philosophy within the limits of the program of the candidate's minimum, but these lines were touched for the living.

An example of complex orthopedic treatment of her moral appearance, she laid on verses, hoping to subsequently refer

to them as questions arise in her personal life.

But the pressing everyday problems were added with catastrophic speed... They expanded the space and worsened the relationship between subjects of intraplasmic reality, facilitating the amendment of the ritual of investigation and the initiation of criminal proceedings for a specific medical examination of all postal employees in order to achieve their full justification and confirmation of alibi.

7. Happy Hours Are Not Watching

That day, Tanya Ivanova laid out on the table their dice and dropped numbers, the significance of which confirmed the correctness of the actions regarding the killer of mail employees. A long term was waiting for him ahead, but Alexey had questions to him, so she called and invited him to come into the office on a confrontation with witnesses and criminalist to prove Zheka's sanity. At the same time to find out who is to blame for the murder of the second victim. The warrant for the arrest and search, she had already used in these vicissitudes of fate.

The next day Lucy worked with enthusiasm. Contact was found with Alexey, not today or tomorrow they were going to marry. She wanted to do herself charming, to look attractive. The shopping trip was postponed until Sunday. All the working day, instead of the schemes and drawings in the head, the shapes of dresses, shoes and coats were turning. She had to look more closely at the computer to understand what changes had been made.

The deputy chief of the workshop approached, looking at the modern interior of the design department in a businesslike way: "You look tired. Try it. If you are sick, go to get well."
"I feel fine," Lucy has embellished her state of health.

Nina Vasilievna was outdone. Lucy looked at her watch: it took two hours to break. She did not want to relax; she gathered

her thoughts, hoping that Torobov would not notice fatigue and make no comments.

“Sveta, do I really have a tired look?” she asked a friend in the cafe.

“Something is there,” the colleague said cautiously, hoping for a continuation.

“Yesterday I introduced my fiancé to my father, and we stayed a little longer.”

“I suppose you were going to get married, right? Who is he? Are you pregnant?”

“No, it seems. He is Alexey Izmailov – the master-serviceman of the tenth workshop.”

Lucy breathed heavily, Sveta realized that she was experiencing something, but did not continue to ask questions. After dinner, the girls strolled around the park near the factory. The sun was shining, it was warm and quiet. They did not want to go to the shop. But work is work. They returned home together.

“Lucy come to me on Sunday to visit, somehow we will go a big company to the nature. There will be co-workers of the husband and some of the relatives. Take your fiancé with you.”

“I’ll try to come. I want to sew a new dress or order from *Armani* or *Valentino*, to be fully armed.”

On the way they went to the supermarket and bought a lot of tasty things: canned food, cheese, smoked sausage, coffee, steamed veal, Hennessy brandy, sweets. Back they walked on

foot. The leaves on the trees darkened and covered the asphalt with a light, yellow, lacy pattern. Flowerbeds and bushes in the parks lost their summer completeness and brightness, but were no less attractive to the inquisitive glance of the artist. The girls had a cheerful mood.

“How cool everything is, it turns out,” Lucya reasoned naively, “Alexey’s friendship, your invitation, an interesting company, songs of bards with a guitar.”

“Honey, you have not seen my husband and children yet.”

“You know, if I have children, when we get married with Alexey, they will become as glorious as yours,” Lucy praised.

In the evening, Alex did not call. It upset her, but she knew that he would call later after an urgent matter or a swim in the factory pool. She admired his athletic build, heard from him that he used anabolics based on deer antlers.

Really to go shopping her alone was boring, she wanted to consult with someone, choose an expensive cloth for a wedding dress and make a stylish model from a the purchased material.

Pattern of mode was taken from the fashion magazine, which she carried to the tailor, inveterate gossip. Two days later the dress was ready, it was very elegant, with flowing folds.

It remained only to decide length of the dress: elongated or slightly behind the knee. “The elongated dresses are fashionable this season, but since my legs are even, I can sew a little shorter,” she reasoned, staring at herself in the mirror. So it was decided.

Personal life has always evoked the envy of girlfriends, but

their connections somehow interested a little, except for some details of an intimate nature. What she would prefer was the partner's reaction to treason.

Constant modifications in the schedule of classes and visits with a barely perceptible bridegroom or a teacher caused her irritation and response to plunge into relaxation or go to the end of the world such as Italy or Cyprus, where there would be no one except the sun, sea and fruit.

When she called Alexey, he did not answer. She decided that he fell ill, and she will have to go to Sveta without him. She examined and tried to put on the old decorations of her mother and admired the taste: a silver necklace with amethyst inserts, made of old coins, like a gypsy monisto, looked delicious.

She kept it in her safe in the form of an English-Russian dictionary in the closet, which only her father knew. There were also several hundred dollars in a pack, an expensive diamond ring, earrings and a pendant with sapphire insets.

Lucy phoned Alexey again two hours later, but it has happened that he was not there. "So he will not go to work. The holiday will be broken," she thought.

That November day was difficult. They were offered tickets from the trade union committee to the hall of philharmonic society right on the territory of the concert parlor of the plant. Everyone happily agreed and in the break they ran to brush their hair to the nearest stylist.

Lucy also preliminarily visited the Beauty Salon combed her

hair in a fashionable wave style. At the solemn meeting they announced a prize for helping sponsored farms in harvesting. The director of the enterprise congratulated all present with successes, wished all the very best in their work and in their personal life, diplomas and valuable gifts were presented to the leaders.

Following the solemn part was a concert that did not last long. During the concert, she accidentally noticed Alexey in the second row. Lucy wanted the concert to end as soon as possible. All attention was turned to Izmailov. Half an hour later, after applause, everyone rose from their seats and began to walk towards the exit. She waited while Alexey came closer, called him. He turned around, saw Lucy, her eyes shone, and he smiled. He looked more elegant than ever, and she thought: "It's a pity that we had known each other so little. Why didn't we meet before?"

"My employee Sveta Erenfeld invited me to visit her. Will you go with me as a groom?"

Instead of an answer, he involuntarily embraced her. She shrank and fell silent.

"If you do not mind, we meet at six at my house on Sunday and go to Sveta," Lucy said, worried.

Alexey nodded in agreement. She felt so well and happy that she wanted to kiss him, and she could hardly restrain herself. They walked home together, admiring the illuminations in the factory territory.

“Shall I escort you?” he asked Lucy in the wardrobe room, giving her a cloak.

“You will,” she answered shortly. “You look beautiful. Has you a haircut?”

“Is it noticeable?” Alexey answered feeling pleasure.

In the evening it was cool, and Lucy was wrapped up in a warm scarf. Romanian gloves, she hid in a brown, lacquered handbag in accordance with the color of long boots. Alexey held his hands in the pockets of a bright, English cloak from models of *Poul Richard*. They walked in silence.

The fallen leaves rustled beneath their feet, and in some places the ice could be seen. They passed the house a couple of times, came back and again passed by. So they walked until it got dark. They did not want to talk, only exchanged a few significant phrases. Finally, they stopped near the entrance; she looked up at his eyes and said gently:

“You know, it seems that we became relatives.”

Alexey bent down and kissed her for the first time on the lips. In the street it was quiet, there were no passers-by, they did not want to part. She came to her senses and said sternly:

“I have to go. Waiting for you exactly at six.”

Her heels knocked on the asphalt. He stood a minute and hurried home. Walking in the night city was not very scary.

“It is a pity that we broke up. I guess she scared, I hope not to death, she ran away so quickly. She will be glad of my presence as it is today, when we will meet at the factory.”

He decided to walk to the house on foot. Occasionally enamored couples came across him, and he reflected: “Why did Lucy leave me? Maybe she remembered that she had to do something, maybe her father was sick. I did not even interested, did not ask her about father. Any girl would do just that, I’m just an ill-mannered an impertinent person, I do not know how to take care of girls.”

Alexey remembered childhood. He remembered how his mother had cooked pancakes on Sundays. He ate them with sour cream and jam at once. Jam had flowed on his hands, as he had put more sour cream on one pancake to eat. Mom had scolded him that he had been all messed up, and instead of going to wash his hands, he had wiped them about himself and then began to cry, realizing that he was messing up Sunday clothes.

She changed his clothes, and Alex was running out into the street, already wearing old trousers and a shirt, where his friends were waiting for him: Sergey who was as blond as he and the red-haired Vovka. They were in even older trousers and shirts, and the three were starting to chase dogs down the street in search of new entertainment.

At home, Alexey, as usual, had supper alone, cleaned the dishes, carefully wiped off the table and went to bed. November morning was extremely foggy and cold. He did not have desire to prepare for a long time because had everything ready beforehand. The suit and shirt were ironed, the boots were cleaned. He scented with cologne, presented with a bride, put on

a cloak and went out.

It was getting dank. He hurried on. At eight he went to the factory entrance, where the people crowded. The head of the personnel department presented new passes of the delegation from China. Alexey noticed Lucy. Apparently, she came earlier and stood, waiting for him.

She looked unusually nice in a beautiful, light coat, a fur cap and short, leather boots with heels from *Prada*. She had a laptop in her hand. Alexey called out. She turned around, went up to him and smiled.

“How are you feeling on?” she asked mechanically.

“Fine,” he answered a little hoarsely and asked: “And you?”

“And I have the best of all. Dad remembered you and said hello. He invited without fail to visit us.”

“I will. We agreed to meet you today at six. I did not forget.”

The factory column of employees, hurrying to production, resembled a raging, with different tones, river. Someone was standing and waiting for their friends. There women’s singing voices were hearing. The mood was upbeat.

Torobov came up to them. He had long been peering Lucy, and she obviously liked him. The three of them went through the turntable and went into their workshop.

After work, Lucy met Alexey in his workshop, she was worried a little.

“Are you very tired?” he asked when they were about to go to a stop.

“Yes, I am. I would like to sit somewhere to rest,” she sighed heavily.

“Let’s go to my place. I live not far from here, ten minutes walk.”

“With pleasure. I do not mind.”

“Well, we need to buy something. Would you like some beer?” he joked.

They went to the nearest market and bought an ordinary set of food for dinner, starting with sausages and potatoes and ending with butter.

Alexey lived in a nine-story house on the sixth floor, in a one-room apartment. The room was small but cozy. Furnishings: a sofa, a desk, two chairs, two bookshelves, an armchair.

A reproduction of Picasso painting “Dove” hung on the wall, a carpet of light brown color palette lay on the floor. The whole room was decorated in brown tones – curtains on the windows and upholstery of the furniture. Alexey had a lot of books. They lay everywhere: on the desk, on the floor, on the windowsill. It was noticeable that reading in his life played a major role, mainly folios of technical content: for steel, metals, machine tools and automation. Fiction: adventures, detectives and military memoirs.

“Lucy, do you want some tea?” Alexey asked when she went into the room.

“Of course I want. I’m cold, I need to warm up a little, and something is getting colder in the street. Probably this year, early

snow will fall.”

“Do you know that, I have soup and fried potatoes with sausage, let’s have a good lunch? Let’s go to the kitchen,” he suggested enthusiastically.

She followed him to an unusually clean and cozy kitchen. It smelled delicious. The furniture was white with various appliances, a powerful refrigerator, and an air cleaner from *Fiore* and a dishwasher.

“Alexey, I’ll help you,” she said, cooking the stove, masterfully, putting the kettle on the burner, a pan of soup and a frying pan with potatoes. He had placed plates, cut some bread.

“I like cooking,” she said in a flash. “When our group was sent for cleaning work, I was a cook. I cooked for the whole brigade with my girlfriend. The guys were pleased, even the flowers were presented to us. She gave to read, a copy of her poems ‘Illumination with Love’ and then gifted it.”

After the meal they did not want to go anywhere, Alexey turned on the TV. They gave a concert with the participation of popular artists. Lucy sat in a chair, relaxed for a moment, turned off the sound, a reality show began, which could be watched without sound. Alex was cleaning in the kitchen. He returned with a bottle of red wine and poured a bit into crystal stemware standing on the table in the middle. They touched the edges of the wine glasses.

“What are we drinking for?” he said and ran his hand over her knee when he sat down on a chair next to him. “I suggest

for love...”

They drank and made love, as before, with enthusiasm and passion that resembled their first date. She leaned against his shoulder, but he silently touched her lips to her chest and whispered:

“I’ll go and take a shower, sit here and dream about our happiness.”

He did not have time to return, as she loudly said to be heard:

“I’ll read this insight. I always carry it with me,” she took something from her bag. “They say that happy people do not watch at hours.”

“I completely accepted with you. Read it,” he turned off the strong pressure of water.

Word about Rock Music

The guitars rattled disparately.

The drummer is knocking on the whole hall.

My mind was numb.

The chords make the final.

And silence... As if someone

Wanted to say and was along.

But again, a whistle, a squeal, and a roar,

Barely a refrain just played a goal.

A simple matter has become complicated,

It sounds as in law enumerated.
From fear, the heart stops tears without:
What will happen if everything plays out?

The lights, the flowers, and the noise of the song...
The midnight rumbling music spread out in unison.
And the muse died of surprise.
She was killed by a guitar flurry eyes.

So sad and anxious it was. After all,
For something we exist in the world.
Yes, in our life everything is possible,
We see it day by day without exhaustible.

It's time to get used, so what,
You can not be fooled around.
“Alas,” we can only sum up.
“The eighth miracle is not a flaunt.”

“Bravo,” he clapped when he came back and sat on the sofa,
covering himself with a blanket.

“Listen,” she said, hiding herself in a silk sheet, and sat on the
edge of the sofa, as an ancient Roman priestess of the goddess
Vesta – vestal – in toga during a sacrifice:

Age of Computers

Rock paintings of a distant creator

Infuse energy without initiator.

The ancients were smarter. What a shame!

Predicting computerization by name.

Well, what will it be from now on that?

A covenant in the future. Nobody will forget

Neither lines, nor images of our ideas in phrases,

No thoughts of relatives, no dreams of cases.

She stopped reading and wanted to hide the notebook back in the bag, but he stopped, and they exchanged passionate embraces and kisses. They drank some more wine and got excited.

“Beautiful and modern. Take care of your father; give your girlfriend something of value from yourself. She will be pleased,” Alexey said and ran his hand along the curve of her back.

“But listen, this is for our children,” she continued.

“Maybe it’s time to create, build

And construct our owning.

We want strength to triple,

To work until morning.

To forget about illnesses and quarrels,

About compulsory vacation.

So in the boyish heads of cleverers

They would see great deeds illumination.

It takes a lot of decisions.
Fulfill a lot of problems.
And there is no disagreement in opinions,
And there are no solid dilemmas.

It will happen, I know.
Why to cheat and lie.
I bequeath to love the country.
It'll happiness provide.”

“Did she die?” his question caused Lucy’s perplexity.

“No, but suffered a serious trauma to the skull. Have a rest.
I’ll probably go.”

“I’m escorting you,” he suggested, dressing. “We’ll finish it
after.”

“It’s encouraging, I’m almost ready. Come on,” she said,
standing at the door and adjusting her coat.

8. Party

The next day it was Sunday. Alexey appeared at exactly six at her home, as they agreed. He greeted her father. Lucy changed her clothes. She put on her outgoing dress, remade from the mother's old, silk.

“Dear dad, we are invited to visit our employee. Perhaps I will be late,” Lucy warned, looking at Alexey when her father listened to something on the radio.

Sveta lived completely in the other end of the city, so they had to take a taxi. They drove up to a tall, fourteen-story building of modern architecture with two high-speed elevators. The apartment on the top floor consisted of three rooms, an improved layout. Lucy and Alexey came before others.

Sveta led the guests to all the rooms, even did not forget the loggia. The rooms were large and bright. Guests liked everything.

“Sveta, will I help you to lay dishes on the table,” Lucya suggested, sympathetically.

“You may help. Here's an apron,” she held out a thing of clothes folded in a double size. “I'll put the children to bed.”

The guest took care of the table setting. Sveta had beautiful tableware: a Czech dinner set for twelve persons, lots of crystal, nickel silver forks and spoons. The landlady came up to her, she liked how Lucy had covered the table.

Gradually, the guests began to gather. They were introduced.

Lucy met a friend of Sveta's husband and his wife. They worked in another shop. They waited for the appearance of Sveta's younger brother – Jacob from Riga, but he called and told to sit at the table without him, his departure was delayed due to the weather.

Sveta was very upset, but immediately invited everyone to the table and cheered up:

“We are excellent housewives,” she complimented Lucy. “You helped me,” she said softly to her. “Take salads from the refrigerator and put them on the plates, and I'll cut the bread and spread the napkins.”

“I envy you so much,” Lucy said a little softly too. “You have a wonderful family, nice children, and an apartment. Are you probably happy?”

“Oh, yes I am, surely. But it did not come all at once. When Robert and I got married, we did not have any.”

The guests were seated in pairs. Near to Lucy on the right side sat Alex, and to the left Robert – the husband of Sveta. The first toast was offered by the owner of the apartment: “For peace and friendship between nations.”

The second toast was offered by Alexey: “For fine women.” The general merriment began: they danced, laughed, joked. Alexey did not leave Lucy all evening, but invited Sveta to dance as a sign of respect for the hostess of the house.

At the end of the evening an abundant table with several kinds of salads, hot, jellied fish, grenades and mineral water was

emptied. The guests began to disperse. The first hurried Lucy:

“Sveta, I need to go.

“Of course, of course. I understand. It’s too late.”

Sveta corrected a beautiful, knitted dress and threw her head back in agreement. Dense fair hair waves were scattered on the shoulders.

“And I need to go. Lucy, let’s go together.” Alexey hurried too.

“I’ll wait for you while you get dressed,” she answered eloquently.

It was dark outside. The weather was roaring. A cold, sharp wind blew. The sky was completely black and there was not a single asterisk. While they were dancing, it rained, had not completely stopped, drizzled in small drops. There were puddles everywhere. With gusts of wind, the streams of water increased. Alex picked up his collar.

“Come quickly, Alex, or you’ll catch a cold. Why did not you put anything on your head?” she, worried, began to show maternal care.

“Do not worry. I’m seasoned. Do not wash your feet...”

Suddenly the rain was poured with such force that it was difficult to distinguish anything in front of them.

“Let’s go under the awning,” she pointed to the shield near the store, “or into the entrance, wait until it’s raining,” she offered ardently and with love.

“You’re not afraid of the gray wolves eating you,” he joked. “The bunny.”

“You’re joking, but I’m not to jokes, I’m already soaked with water all the threads. Here, touch what cold hands I have.”

Alexey touched Lucy’s hands. Yes, in fact, they were cold.

“You’re my ice, we’ll come here soon, or I’m afraid you’ll catch a cold.”

They ran into the nearest open porch. It was damp and cold, but the main advantage was that cold water did not flow from above. Alexey shook off the raincoat and raindrops from his head.

“Allow me to look after you and shake off water from shoulders.”

“Do, please, otherwise I’m really afraid of catching a cold. I do not want to hurt at all.”

The rain intensified. Lucya stood at the open door. Rainy streams densely crossed the air. The water drained to the face and to the palms stretched forward. She stood, watched as the palm filled with water and recited the memorized lines from her girlfriend’s book “Illumination with Love”:

Autumn

Yellow leaves fly as malt

And lie on the asphalt.

The wind howls, the branches are bending...

What will happen now perhaps ending?

But let go, again quiet kindly.

All around stop mildly.
Let petty rain drizzle.
Evil days by water mizzles.

“What are you whispering?” Alexey asked frightened from somewhere above, crouching on the step of the stairs and continuing to shake the water from the cloak.

“If it was not for the cold wind, then...” she did not finish, as if she wanted to say something and changed her mind, and stood and thought about something tensely.

“I’ll get a taxi now. The rain will pour all night; we can not hang around here. We’ll spend the night next time.”

He got out of the porch entrance, but so as luck would have disappeared, not a single car was rushing past. Suddenly, in the distance, *Mazda* appeared, sparkling with a wet roof. Alexey waved his hands. The car stopped, a driver looked out of the window and said briefly:

“Sit down.”

Alexey called Lucya. She ran out of the entrance, deftly opened the back door and sat in the corner, followed by Alexey. He said the address.

“How are you feeling? Were you chilled?”

“It’s tolerant.”

The car buzzed and jerked. The driver switched on the receiver. The weather forecast was reported: “Warm weather with short-term precipitation is expected”.

“Yes, they are right, it would be nice,” said the driver. “But it is hard to believe at all.”

The couple silently supported him. The driver twisted the pen of the receiver, found a piquant music. Alexey’s warm hand lay on her shoulder, and fear completely passed. They arrived in twenty minutes. She got out of the car.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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