

IRINA MURAVSKAYA

TRAP

FANTASTIC FICTION



Irina Muravskaya
Trap. Fantastic fiction

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Some details escape the notice of protagonists and heroes of the stories, as the circumstances and the life itself want some attention, too...

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Trap

Fantastic fiction

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TRAP

“Greetings, Trap!” Vengeance took a rapid glance on the room and the Trap, who was clearly bored; then quickly slipped inside, and slouched in the armchair, smiling.

“Well then?” Trap stared indifferently, rubbing her scraggy hands.

“What then? How are you keeping?” Vengeance’s eyes were shifty; she was trying to catch the mood.

“Things go south. I’m totally fed up with it. I speak wrong, I entrap wrong, I spook wrong... I am sickened of my clients. It’s high time to have some rest.” Trap heaved a sigh.

“Rest? Well, people definitely won’t be better off without you!”

“Yes, the will. I’ll let them rest on their own, while I’m slackening cares. Enjoying life, you know.” Trap yawned and wrapped herself in her old shawl. She looked offended.

“That’s all for nothing. It’s gonna be dull as ditch-water.”

“Might be dull for you. You’re having too much fun anyway, it’s me who has to do all the nasty job afterwards. They moan, they scream... My ears are not made of stone, you know. I have to actually scrape quite a number of people off the pavement... Jumping from the window is a weird trend, indeed.”

“Put some headphones on... Grief has presented you cool ones!”

“Yeah, right... It’s only her stinkaroo that they reproduce, totally tiresome. Her music made me lose a taste for good hunt, you know. That present is as good as a headache.”

“How can we get through without you?” Vengeance became nervous. “What if your vacation runs over time?”

“It’s none of your business. I’ll rest as long as it takes. Let Intrigues entertain you,” Trap flatly answered.

“It makes no sense without you,” Vengeance sounded unsure.

“Stop whining, or I’ll get angry and you’ll end up in the end of the queue – forever.”

“We’ll get you a new shawl. A pink of fashion!”

“I have my own fashion,” the Trap made a wry face and turned away.

“I know, I know... Witches knit for you.”

“Oh, you’ve reminded me of something. I need a new witch for the woods, do you have anyone in mind?”

“No problems, we’ll look for her. I’ll go through your files, maybe someone will do.”

“Yes, do it,” the Trap yawned. “I’m so sleepy. Don’t bother me any longer. I’m telling you, I want to go back to good old traps in the woods, and to rest in silence. All these loans, bankruptcy, honey-traps... Boring.”

“All right, all right, rest then!” Vengeance pulled a face, tidied her magnificent hair and quietly disappeared outside.

“Tickets to Yaroslavl...” A ticket merchant, wearing suburban worn leather jacket, whose shag covered a large scar on his forehead, walked around the ticket desks, urging people to buy a bus ticket.

“Where are you going, girl?” He approached to Victoria.

“Get away from me, I’m in a queue to the ticket desk,” the girl answered as harshly as possible.

“And still...” The hawker smiled crookedly. “I know that you are heading to Saint Petersburg, and you are in a hurry... You need to pick up an urgent parcel, but it is far away... You are late...”

“I ask you, dude, back off. Don’t you add insult to injury,” Victoria snapped, and silently regretted that she had not bought the ticket via the Internet.

“Well, you are the boss,” the merchant turned around, and, spinning his keys on the finger, headed into the depth of the box office. “Tickets to Yaroslavl!” He continued to tout.

His voice almost blended into the rumble of voices and the noise of the station, but she could still hear it.

“Tickets to London, request stop in Saint Petersburg...” the hawker went on in an indifferent voice.

Victoria flinched and turned abruptly to look at the merchant, who slowly disappeared at the back of the station.

“Tickets to Yaroslavl...” She heard his monotonous voice.

“What’s wrong with me?” Victoria thought. “How come he knows... Holy smokes! What kind of joke is this?”

“Tickets to London...” She heard the merchant again.

“Wait, fellow!” She gave in, she stepped away from the ticket desk and walked briskly towards the merchant.

He turned around instantly, as if he had eyes in the back of his head, caught the girl’s confused look and smiled savagely.

“So, how do I get to London?” Victoria was slightly out of breath, as she was walking too fast. She hoped that she had not misheard. “Request stop in Saint Petersburg... You’re kidding me, right?”

“Am I?” The merchant looked concentrated. “I’m selling tickets. You need them, don’t you?”

“Let’s assume you’re right.” She pulled herself together, although her heart was sinking. “Be that as it may, how is it possible to go there by bus?”

“It’s not by bus, it’s by subway,” the merchant smiled.

“What?” Victoria took a step back.

“It’s possible, if you buy a ticket from me.”

“You are kidding me. Why?” The girl cracked up.

“Easy up, keep in mind the instructions to the ticket,” the merchant grinned. “Here, take the ticket.” He quickly gave the book to the girl. “Leave your phone number. Once you’re in the tube train, you’ll get an SMS with the page number. You open it and then you get off in Saint Petersburg. Then you enter the subway again, and get the second SMS. You open the necessary page and end up in London. Got it? I keep it all simple!”

Victoria froze.

“Hello there...” She heard the merchant. “So, do we take the ticket, or do we hold the line?”

“We definitely will. What’s the figure?”

“Well,” the merchant lowered his voice. “It’s not expensive.”

“And still.”

“You’ll need to become a witch... For a while.” The merchant murmured quietly in a soft-soapy voice.

“A witch?” Victoria smiled in confusion.

“Yes, a casual witch, you know... Just for a little while.”

She laughed.

“I appreciated the joke. Funny. Now let’s talk serious business: how much do I owe?”

“I’ve already told you,” the trader answered dryly.

“I’m a stone’s throw away from becoming a Doctor of biological sciences, alright? And you ask me to be a witch. I used to be cynical about fairy-tales even when I was a little girl.”

“But you did believe in the ticket,” the merchant didn’t give up “You are young and pretty, you can’t be a Doctor of sciences... Alright? It’s you who tells fairy tales.

Victoria blushed slightly. She had a difficult day, and she caught herself thinking that the whole conversation with the complete stranger is akin to the theater bizarre. She couldn't figure out, what kept her from bringing this senselessness to the end, she was confused.

"You see, dude, I'm very tired, and I'm really late. I have no idea of how you can help me, but if your tickets are real, then – fine, I'll be a witch for a while. If that's what it takes. But I can't do it for a long time, I have plenty to do, you know. So, who do we set up pranks against?" She sighed heavily. "Or what have you – the address of the theater... Although I repeat once more, I'm no actress, I'm a Doctor of sciences.

"Biological, right – a stone's throw away..." The merchant smiled and suddenly his voice grew louder. "Deal! Now it's your book, Victoria, thank you so much... And enjoy your trip."

"Who do we set up pranks against?" Perplexedly staring at the small and bright soft-cover, asked Victoria once again.

"Your trip, Victoria, is what you should concentrate on. It's very important for you, I know..." The merchant muttered, slightly bowing and taking half a step back. "You'll receive a payment instruction later. Got to go now. Hurry up, please..."

She smiled faintly.

"Some kind of aberration." She turned back to the ticket desk.

"Wrong! It's the subway you need. Good luck." The merchant whispered ingratiatingly, bowed once more, quickly turned and started moving.

"Wait!" Victoria suddenly recovered her consciousness. "I haven't told you my name."

The merchant put the pedal to the metal and disappeared in the crowd.

"What's the matter with this day! What's going on?" She kept looking around, staring at people, trying to ask someone for advice. She hoped that someone had heard the weird conversation. But no one would pay attention to her. She realized, that she'd gladly sit and have a rest. Victoria looked around and realized that there were no benches nearby. She caught the sight of the chair near the ticket terminals, but some corpulent lady placed herself over it, wiping sweat from her face with a blue handkerchief and straightening her bags with her legs.

Victoria turned and went to the ticket desk. She bought a train ticket to Saint Petersburg and looked at the book she was holding. Then she checked her watch. She had plenty of time before the train.

"Well, I'll get down to the subway. At least I shall give it a try. Things do happen. You never know." She said aloud wearily and headed to the exit. Thoroughly counterproductive, though..."

Victoria was a very educated and happy – in her own way – girl from a wealthy family. Having received an excellent education, she entirely devoted herself to science. To onlookers it appeared that she forgot about her smart appearance and did not take the compliments and attention from the stronger sex seriously.

Her laboratory and test tubes interested her the most.

Hut the sudden departure of her mother, who didn't even explain the reasons, knocked her sideways.

"What kind of business trip? Why didn't you tell me? Where? Why?" She kept thinking.

She never knew her father, so, after struggling with several months of abeyance, she couldn't figure out how to move on.

Every household trifle would cause a lot of stress and effort. Vic realized, that she's all by herself from now on, and she had to somehow cope with it and learn to live a simple everyday life. Once she got really embarrassed, when she didn't immediately understand why the phone stopped working. She called to the service company, and found out that she needed to pay the bill. This was always done by her mother, who protected her and took enormous care of her...

Victoria was very surprised by the call from a notary from Moscow. With horror, he demanded to come and register real estate. He didn't understand, why a trusted person, even a family lawyer, would want to use power of attorney to register the property in their own name, while the owners are both safe and sound. The power of attorney itself caused many doubts, too. He asked to answer him in person.

Victoria faced a real issue. She had to rush from London to Moscow, then to Saint Petersburg to take documents from the cell, and then get back to another notary, who happened to be in London. Otherwise, as a notary explained to her in a rough manner, she will live in her lab with her mother, since their apartments in different cities, will be transferred to their lawyer, and it's up to her good will to grant them some shelter.

It took Victoria a week to stomach the idea. She looked through the Internet, and couldn't understand what harm may be done by Angelina Sergeevna, a lawyer and the closest assistant of her mother's business. Then she rushed to Moscow, following the notary's request.

Time was running out, but having pulled herself together, Victoria made up a travel plan and set a goal to solve this problem.

Then, all of a sudden, this incomprehensible trader appeared, like some unidentified bacterium. With all the fatigue and absurdity of the situation, Victoria was motivated by mere curiosity, mixed with despair and unknown variables, present in her equation...

Victoria headed into the subway, went through the turnstile and silently stared at the trains that flashed exactly according to the schedule.

"Which way? Apparently, anyway. It's nonsense. I'll ride a station and come back. Freaks are everywhere. In Moscow, I did perfectly well, so I might check..." She decided.

"Damn your DNA, merchant, everything is simple, you say..." Victoria whispered, realizing that this was Saint Petersburg subway she was traveling in.

Shocked and amazed, she made it out of the car, then got out into the street, caught a taxi, and took the documents from the bank with her brain on autopilot. Then she found the nearest metro station and headed downstairs without hesitation.

"Who is the core of this transport company..." Victoria thought in horror, realizing that she was in the London tube already.

Forcing herself to pull together, she reached the second notary, and, having resolved all the family matters as planned, rushed home.

"I haven't eaten anything for so long!" She suddenly thought. Her throat went dry. "I'm just very tired, these weird briefings. Everything is weird. I need to eat, and the brain will help me figure it out. In any case, it's brilliant, but how does it work?"

Victoria happened along her favorite cafe nearby, sat down at the table in the corner, made an order and sighed.

"It's OK, there have to be an explanation. I'll sort it out, and I cease to do so, we'll sort it out together with my Mom, when she comes back. Of course, I miss something, such movements can't be explained scientifically. Although, maybe I'm wrong... What a delicious dinner it is! I deserved it!" Victoria slightly relaxed. "I've done so much today... Or messed up!" She uttered a cry, all in cold sweat. "Ticket pay instruction!"

The house was within reach. Counting her slow steps while walking under in the rain, Victoria was trying to understand what would happen next. Cold drops hit her face, as if they were trying to pull Vic together.

At home, she bathed, changed her clothes, putting on a warm sports suit, sat down in the corner of the couch and tried to concentrate, but the fatigue took toll.

“No, I can’t sleep. I need to understand what I’m to do next.” Victoria was nervous. “As a decent person, I shall pay for a *ticket*, and as a fool – for my *stupidity*... Mom, did I get into trouble? When will you come? Of course, I took part in incredible events today... From the scientific point of view... Life is so complicated, I understand it. You see, I’m a grown-up already.” Looking at Mom’s picture, Victoria cried hysterically, and buried herself in the pillow.

In the morning, she received a text message.

Victoria instantly woke up and took a book out of her bag with a trembling hand.

“This is how the instruction looks like, huh.” Victoria looked at the three figures on the screen. “Maybe I should write a note to my Mom... Else she comes back, knowing not, where I’m at.

No, no. She’ll get really worried. I’ve done everything right, she’ll be happy, I’ll tell her everything later. I need to wash, I guess...” Her thoughts were interrupted by SMS.

“The figures are the same,” she thoughtfully looked at the phone’s screen, and quickly dialed them, not allowing herself to think long. She closed her eyes.

Ozone-saturated air, mixed with the smell of autumn foliage and thus, hit her hard. Victoria was afraid to open her eyes, having understood, that the soft home sofa had disappeared, and she was sitting on the grass...

“I’m probably in the park. And what’s wrong with that?” She thought quickly. “Probably, the prank will happen here...”

“Well, right, a prank,” she heard a husky female voice. “You open your eyes, it’s your station, ha-ha...”

Victoria quickly opened her eyes. Looking around, she found herself in a dense forest. And there was this woman, smiling, and looking at her.

“I’m not in the park, am I?” Asked Victoria softly. “Who are you?”

“I’m a fare collector,” the woman laughed. “Pay for the tickets, will you? Ha-ha-ha... I’m so amused, well done! A park!”

“Yes, of course... Thanks for the tickets,” Victoria whispered, nodding her head timidly. “How much do I owe?”

“Well, at least you are reasonable,” the woman smiled. “To cut it short, a trifle. You’ll be a witch while I’m on vacation.”

“What did you say?”

“Hearing problems? We’ll fix that.”

“No, I’ve heard you,” Victoria got herself together. “Witch means what? To fly on a broomstick?”

“Oh, men...” The woman sighed. “Well, let’s start with the broom. Pick some branches, make a broom. Do you see the house?”

“Yes,” said Victoria.

“You’ll make a broom and clean up. There’s a stream, you can get some water there. Heat the house properly, it’s damp in here.”

“Are there any matches?”

“Yes. My previous helpmate got them in the village twenty miles away, so lucky you are!

Well, I’ll go for a walk now.” The woman stretched and pulled her nose, eagerly swallowing the air. “Can you feel it? Awesome!”

“Yes, the air is wonderful,” Victoria said quietly, looking around. “Will your vacation last long? And how do I address you?”

“I’ve had it up to here with you all! I’ll rest as much as I want to.” Snapped the woman and headed into the depths of the forest.

Very soon she disappeared, and Victoria sighed with relief, but soon the shivers of fear attacked from all sides, preventing her from concentrating. She cried.

“What a mess! Where am I? It does not look like a prank to me now! This woman is so impudent, talking to me, as if I were her property or something.”

Rubbing her stiff legs, Victoria rose from the grass and, having looked around, headed towards the hut.

“It’s just a task,” she prompted softly to herself. “It should be solved...”

“Let’s say she is the core of their transport company. So, I’m in the woods, huh? Dense woods,” she corrected herself. “And what is it they want from me? Am I a hostage? Whose hostage? She said she was on vacation, okay, so what? Everyone takes a vacation where they want to. She’s in the woods. Why does she need me? And then, a witch! What does she mean? I’m no witch! Maybe she finds it difficult to be here all by herself, and she needs an assistant? And let’s assume, she calls them witches. She told me that her helpmate went to the village to get matches... And now I am the assistant. Well, seems logical to me. The helped me, my family hasn’t lost its property, now I have to help her, okay. Well, somehow it feels better now. I should *not* be afraid. Its vice versa! I have a unique opportunity to get acquainted with non-standard people and stay in a picturesque place! The air is really wonderful here!”

“It’s all, sort of... Why do my hands and feet keep trembling?” Said Victoria aloud and touched the hut door.

The door creaked open, and a wave of dampness splashed out, slowly wrapping around Victoria’s legs, then her back, slightly pausing on the head, and eventually disappearing in the woods.

“And what was that supposed to mean? Did the air just sniffed me? Well, OK, I keep on hallucinating.” Victoria waved her hand and stepped into the hut.

The room was dark; only scarce rays of light, coming through the shutter cracks, illuminated the space.

“Cleaning, yes, that’s it! Once you are up to some activities, nerves come right. Even more so, it seems that I’ll have to spend the night here today.” Victoria was walking around the house, talking loudly and slowly to herself. “I need to get these shutters open, otherwise I see nothing! And I need to find a rag, I’ll manage without a broom.” Victoria smiled. “What a foolishness to say, to fly on a broom...”

The latches on the shutters were tight, but Victoria managed to open them up. She examined the glasses for a long time. They were really unusual: very thick, with a vague greenish tinge, of different sizes.

“Ancient they are... But looking like armor piercing. Interesting, indeed! I need to move my stupid fears aside. I haven’t seen anything in my life except for the lab. Now I get to know the world!” She encouraged herself.

There was a beautiful fireplace in the corner of the room, built of large river stones. A few firewood was stacked in front of it.

After inspecting the house, Victoria started looking for matches and a rag.

Next to the fireplace, there was a bed, in the other corner there were three massive chests, put close to each other.

Near the large window there was a round carved table and a bench. Vic also noticed a small shelf with clay and iron dishes.

“Well, quite ascetic, yet tasteful, I would say...”

She ceased to find the bucket, but found a wooden barrel instead.

“I hope you can use it to wash the floors... Okay, first we need to find matches...”

The first chest opened easily, it was filled with candles. There was also a heavy iron candlestick, a bag of salt and – a precious box of matches.

Victoria fixed a candlestick, lit the candles, and the room instantly changed.

The day passed very quickly. Victoria went to the stream to get water, washed the floors, removed the webs, collected the branches for the fireplace and even managed to rekindle a fire. At the same time, she gathered some mushrooms, and cooked a nice soup in a cast-iron bowl. She opened the second chest. It was stuffed with old books. She tried to read a page or two, but the text was all Greek to her. The third chest wouldn't want to cooperate and open either. Victoria tried to find its lid as hard as she could, finally, she sat on the floor beside it and looked at the barely visible pattern on the side wall.

"It's not working out, is it?" She heard a familiar husky voice behind her.

Victoria turned abruptly, and fell to her side, losing balance.

"Even a mouse can't make it unnoticed through this creaking door, and I didn't hear her come in," Victoria thought, realizing that her hands and feet were trembling again.

"Yeah, but I'm not a mouse," the woman said with a grin. She was holding two large dead hares. She walked around the room and threw them near the fireplace on the floor. Choosing a large clay cup, she poured herself some soup and sat down at the table.

Victoria was afraid to utter a word.

"The mushroom soup is delicious!" The woman smiled and scraped her plate with a spoon. Then she looked at Victoria.

"Thank you!" Victoria felt a little embarrassed and sat down on the chest.

"Look in the mirror and you'll manage to open your chest," the woman continued.

"But there is no mirror..." Victoria carefully began to examine the walls of the house.

"And... Is this my chest? Sorry for opening these two, I was looking for matches."

"It's yours, while you're here," the woman yawned and went to the bed. "There are mirrors everywhere," she added quietly, wrapping herself in the blanket.

"Where can I sleep?" Victoria asked boldly.

"What? Chests make a good bed," adjusting the pillow, the woman looked at Victoria in surprise, waved her hand and turned to the wall.

"Okay, I understand, good night," thought Victoria.

"Rest, I had such a nice quiet day today..." she heard in response.

Victoria didn't want to make noise, although she really needed to find a mirror in the house. She curled up on hard chests and instantly fell asleep.

In the morning, Victoria woke up with an insistent knock on the window. The room was empty, the woman left at dawn. The murky glass hid the one, who was knocking, so she went out into the street.

"What is it you want?" Victoria asked a large bird, who continued to tap its beak on the glass. She noticed the girl, stopped and twitched, quickly nodding her head.

"All right," Victoria replied with a nod. "I'm sorry, I don't have a clue of what you're saying..."

The bird waved its wings, made a circle over the hut and sat next to Victoria.

"I still don't understand, sorry..." Victoria said, looking at the bird.

She pecked Victoria in the leg and flew away.

"I might not be the nest talk partner, but it hurts!" Victoria shouted after her, rubbing her ankle.

The water in the creek was pure ice, but Victoria didn't pay attention to the cold. She washed herself, thinking how to open the chest and where to find the mirror.

"And those hares... I need to cook them somehow, maybe, just fry them," she thought. "I am about to settle down here. I wonder if her vacation is for long."

After carefully inspecting the house, she didn't find a mirror, so she started cooking. Then, choosing a book in a thick old leather binding, she tried to read it. It was dark in the house, so, she went out into the street. She had just opened the book, as the bird returned. She heavily pecked it in the hand, so that the book fell down.

“Do not read anything!” She heard a piercing whistle in her head.

“Fine, I won't! You should have said so at once...” Victoria tried to find the bird, but she disappeared.

“This whistle sounds familiar to me, like a voice,” she thought. “Okay, perhaps, it just seemed to me...”

But she still closed the book.

Victoria tried to open the third chest once more, and then she sat on it, legs tucked, leaning against the wall.

“Shall I try with a knife? It seems to have no lid, where am I to use it...” She thought.

Suddenly, she felt an unobtrusive chill. Victoria sharply recoiled from the logs on the wall and began to scrutinize them carefully.

“Usual logs they are... But something's not right...” Stroking the logs with her hand, Victoria could not feel the joint. “The glass! The glass is a mirror! A disguised one!”

Carefully feeling the mirror with her hand, she could estimate its size, but there was no reflection.

“How do I open the chest? The woman said: ‘Look in the mirror,’ well, I do look in one, but this mirror does not want to reflect anything... May be, I should clean it?” Victoria rushed to the stream to get water.

“Genius lies in simplicity...” Victoria whispered, slowly washing the mirror with water. She already saw herself in reflection and whispered to the mirror.

“How come did you hide in the logs? It's just incredible! You absorbed the environment...”

The mirror was made of thick glass, like windows. It gradually became clean and studied Victoria carefully, while she smoothed her hair and looked into the eyes of her reflection.

“I'll bring more fresh water,” she winked at the mirror and got off the chest. She reached the door, and slowly turned back. “Eyes are not playing tricks on me!”

A slightly open lid appeared on the top of the chest. Victoria slowly put the barrel on the floor.

“Bingo!” Victoria smiled, barely restraining her curiosity. She brought some clean water and washed the mirror to the shining state.

In the third chest, she found a long, ancient dress of black color. Victoria took it out and examined carefully. The two parts of it were completely different from each other.

The big collar was also black, but it was made of a different, gently and airy fabric with elegant embroidery on it. A thick net of animal skin, mixed with wool, covered all the dress down to the hem.

“Kinda queerish,” thought Victoria, “the net seems superfluous to me.”

Looking at the mirror for a second, she froze in shock. She looked at her mirror reflection, wearing the dress... But the dress was lying on the chest!

“If you ask me, I'd say it suits you well...” A husky voice behind Victoria helped her wake up.

“Well, yes...” Victoria answered quietly. “The net seems superfluous to me.”

This net hides you from any animal or human being. So, it's *not* superfluous,” the woman grinned. “You put it on and go into the woods. I need to sharpen the piling in my pit. And, by the way. I need a new shawl. You are to knit it for me. This one is old.”

Victoria looked at the woman in amazement. Her old ragged shawl was tied around her waist. She asked timidly:

“What about the wool? Besides, I know nothing about knitting...”

“Well, you do now. The wool is your concern.”

“I never asked what your name was,” Victoria said more boldly.

“I’m Trap, call me this...” the woman laughed and sat down at the table.

“Well done with these fried hares. I like you. Get dressed while I eat,” she added.

“Maybe it’s better to climb in the pit, wearing a sport suit?” Victoria asked busily.

“Put on a dress! A fat lot of use you are, wearing this sport suit. You can’t even lift up a wild boar,” Trap said, grimacing.

“Surely, I can’t. It’s a *boar*,” Victoria smiled, taking Trap’s words for a joke.

“This is not a joke!” Trap suddenly became angry, putting the hare leg aside. “Take a look at yourself, you’ll be blown off with the wind in moment. You can’t lift or carry anything. And the dress will give you strength enough to do what’s required. Is this clear, point-head?”

“Excellent!” Victoria was surprised. “I felt that I’m pretty weak...”

“Well, now you do not have to worry. You may easily take out a bear. Okay, get dressed and let me finish, I’m no chatter-box. You could have read everything yourself, the books are for you.”

“The books...” Victoria stepped aside and rubbed her aching arm, pecked by a bird.

“So, here’s an ax, careful, it’s sharp, and a rope. There’s a boar in the pit. Bring it here, and then fix the paling and sharpen it with an ax. The second pit is near the lake. There’s a fallen tree, you’ll see it right away. Don’t fall in there. I removed the branches, but you need to watch your step anyway.” Trap instructed Victoria. “I’ll be back by night, I still have a lot to do.”

Victoria crouched, peering into the pit.

“Trap, I can see a boar, but there’s also a man there! Look!”

“We don’t need him. Put him in a corner.”

“What do you mean? Should I bury him?” Victoria looked at Trap in perplexity.

“Well, OK, bury him, good Samaritan. There’s a shovel in the attic, I guess. He spoils my pit! It’s not his grave.” Trap snapped, and disappeared among the trees without uttering another word.

Victoria sat beside the pit in confusion for a long time, occasionally throwing dry grass-blades into it. She sadly examined the spoiled manicure, while biting the tips of her dirty hair pulled up in a tail.

“My life has sure changed dramatically in the last few days, to an incredible degree, and it’s me who brought it upon myself... I’ll wash my head, I can heat up a pot of water... But how am I supposed to bury the corpse? A-a-a!” Victoria began to cry and covered her face with her hands.

A light wave of warm air blew into her face. Victoria slowly opened her eyes, afraid to make another move. The huge collar of the dress was iridescent. The flowers on the embroidery changed color from black to light green, then to purple... She felt calm and appeasement. Her hair went loose, and she felt someone slowly comb her hair...

“What is this?” Whispered Victoria, examining the collar with iridescent flowers. “Are you calming me down?”

With a slightly perceptible wind, the collar rose and soaked the tears on her face.

“It’s too much. Do you want me to go crazy?”

The color waves on the collar slowed down slightly, the flowers became blue.

“I agree,” Victoria said softly. “I do not know much, maybe I should read your library. But thank you, I really feel better now. Fear is gone, as well as the desperation. Thank you...”

And she gently stroked the collar, adjusting the dress.

“Okay, let’s assume that I’m a brave girl,” Victoria said aloud, and, tied the rope to a tree, and threw the other end into the pit.

She climbed down carefully, and then quickly tied the wild boar with a rope, trying not to look at the human. She got out in a clap. It was easy to pull the boar out of the pit. Vic was no longer surprised about her new power.

The boar had obviously fallen into the pit recently. It was covered with fresh blood. Its hair was still warm.

“It’s not enough for a shawl,” sighed Victoria. “But I guess I have to start with something, otherwise I’ll be here forever.” Having untied the rope from the tree, she dragged the boar into the hut.

She quickly found the shovel in the attic. She also noticed a spindle with a spinning wheel, carefully covered with a dusty cloth.

Victoria didn’t feel like going back to the pit, but she had to.

The man was lying awkwardly crouched, his hands clasped. Victoria was shaking all over. Trying not to panic, she tightly tied him with a rope and instantly climbed out of the pit.

“I need to dig a grave for him,” she said to herself, “I can’t look at him. And then I’ll get him out and quickly put in the grave... That I can do, ‘she reassured herself.

The easiest part of the day was to sharpen the piling in the pits; first in the one she had freed, then in the second, which was located near the lake, easy to find. It was already dark, and Victoria walked slowly to the hut. She almost didn’t feel tired, the dress helped her a lot, giving her strength and power, but she was lonesome, and couldn’t cope with it. For the first time in her life she had to bury a man, even though he was a stranger...

The collar managed to cheer her up a little. Flowers shimmered and brightly lit the way, like a lantern.

Victoria returned later than Trap. Approaching the hut, she noticed Trap in the clearing. She made a large broiling rack and was frying a boar.

“It will be ready soon,” she winked at Victoria. “You’re doing fine today, eat, and go to bed.”

“Thank you,” Victoria smiled sadly and sat down beside Trap. “I am to go to the village,” Victoria said quietly.

“What for?” Trap turned to her.

“Wool. Maybe I’ll find it there.”

“Well, yes, they have goats there, that’s true. Go, you can bring one home, it would be nice to have milk. Head north, you won’t get lost, the dress will help you.” Trap approved.

The boar turned out delicious. Trap and Victoria were sitting in the clearing for a long time, listening to the chirping of birds.

“She likes the stars...” Victoria thought, watching Trap as she looked thoughtfully into the night sky.

“I’m going to sleep then. Thank you for the dinner.” Victoria rose from the grass and walked slowly into the house.

Trap wrapped up in her old shawl and nodded in approval.

Victoria changed her clothes and neatly put the dress on the chest. She curled up on other two chests. She no longer felt their stiffness, as she really wanted to sleep. But all of a sudden, the chests transformed into a soft bed with pillows and a blanket.

“Thank you,” Victoria whispered weakly, smiled and fell into sleep.

Early in the morning, Trap was gone. Victoria washed herself, changed her clothes and found old scissors in the attic. She went out onto the clearing and plunged into reverie, looking at the huge furry spruce around her...

“Where is the nearest village?”

She was staring at the spruce branch for several minutes.

“Why haven’t I seen your beauty before?” She slowly stroked the rough trunk of the tree. A light wind slightly lifted the hem of the dress.

“Looks like I’ll learn to understand the wind soon. Do I understand you correctly? Was that a direction?”

But the wind didn’t answer. Somewhere deep inside, timidly, as if trying to get to know her, inner confidence in her actions awoke.

“Well, Victoria, now we need to go there... It’s very simple,” Confidence grew bolder. “Listen, and you will hear... Look, and you will see. And I will help.”

“All right, that’s a bargain,” Victoria said softly. “We need to get to the village. And if I understand it correctly, we need to go straight.”

“That’s right,” whispered the confidence.

“I have to take food along,” thought Victoria, cutting a piece of meat from the boar and wrapping it in bag cloth. She fixed a small bundle and swung it to her back.

“There we go. Funny, no one ate it up during the night... It seems that the beasts are avoiding the house, they feel there’s something fishy going on here... It’s time for me to think about going back home, preferably unharmed, both mentally and physically.” Victoria looked back at the hut.

“One question bothers me, confidence. A poser, that is... This was me, who thought about the food, and that was you, who gave a clue on signs, is that right? It’s not that I have any problems with that, perish the thought! It’s just that the split mind is not what I need right now.”

“What?” She heard a surprised voice of confidence.

“I’m sorry, dress, is that you?”

“It’s me,” Victoria felt embarrassment. “But I liked the new name, ‘Confidence’. Could you call me that?”

“No problem,” Victoria smiled. “That’s better... I’ve brought something upon myself.”

“I understand... But I like you. You duly raise the hemstitch, and you hear me perfectly well!”

“You know, I’m also very happy, especially that you can talk. Very nice to meet you, can I ask another question?”

“Of course.” The dress livened up a little.

“You hear my thoughts, don’t you? Well, what am I thinking about?”

“No, I don’t. I only feel your condition, you were sick yesterday...”

“Yes, I’m glad that I can thank you. I wasn’t sick, I’d say, scared is the right word... If it was not for you... Well, thank you very much.”

“It’s my duty to protect you and help you,” the dress answered.

It was only in the evening, when Victoria came to the village. It was a long way. But she liked it. She admired the trees and grass, listened to the birds, peeped at the forest animals. They really couldn’t see her. The dress enshrouded her, the only thing that could give her away was the rustling of fir-needles under her feet, although the beasts took her steps for the wind and were not frightened. Victoria was very surprised.

The constant idea of finding wool pushed her to a desperate experiment, which was quite successful: she managed to shave a piece of wool from the sleeping wolf, neatly folded the lump into her bag and with childish delight continued to look for another opportunity to find something else, but she did not get any more luck in the forest.

“It’s OK, the goats can be pretty fluffy, I’ll get as much as I need. Let the locals forgive me, I really need to go home...”

She walked around several houses, but she didn’t see any goats, so she sat down in confusion near the well, wondering what to do.

“Well, I can’t shave dogs, can I. Although, perhaps, their wool also suits well... There *must* be some goats in the village! I just need to go around all the yards,” reflected Victoria, when suddenly she noticed a boy coming from the field. He shepherded a dozen or more goats, including the little ones!

“That’s luck!” Victoria was inspired. “So happy about the herd of goats... I would not have believed, if someone told me this a week ago,” she smiled.

After tracing the shepherd, she memorized all the yards, where he had taken his wards to and followed him in the last yard, where he had led five of them. She wanted to start shaving, when she realized that the landlady was going to milk them.

“I’m stupid,” Victoria scolded herself. “She would have me in this barn and shut up with them for the whole night.” She took a deep breath to calm herself and moved away from the barn.

After the whole evening procedure had passed, Victoria slipped into the barn. It was dark there, and for several minutes she wondered whether it was worth turning on the light, but she didn’t dare to do so.

“I feel like a thief, a nasty feeling that is,” Victoria was nervous. “But I really need to go home. Without this shawl, she just won’t let me go... Forgive me, dear house owners, your goats will grow a new coat. This one I need for my return ticket...”

Victoria was hesitant.

“I’ve traveled a way that long, now what?”

The collar glowed slightly yellowish, gradually growing brighter.

“Thank you, I can see now,” Victoria whispered with relief and stroked the goat. She twitched slightly, but then calmed down. Carefully, not to injure the animal, Victoria began to shear the wool. At first it worked out with difficulty, the scissors were clumsy, but soon she caught the trick.

“That’s how absurd rumors appear,” Victoria thought, and suddenly stopped, realizing that she was being watched.

She turned her head slowly and saw a large fluffy cat, who kept his eyes on her and jerked his tail nervously.

“Can you see me?” Victoria was genuinely surprised.

The cat lay down on the straw, but didn’t avert his gaze.

“Go, tell me something. I hope you don’t mind me having some wool? Are you guarding milk? I won’t harm them.” She said tenderly and slowly to the cat, who listened attentively.

Victoria went around all the yards, and managed to gather quite a lot of wool. She hoped that it would be enough for a shawl. She felt exhausted, so having reached the last barn, she lay down in the hayloft to get a quick nap. Victoria woke up in the morning, the roosters were crowing loudly. She nervously felt for the knapsack of wool under her head and looked around... A cat was sleeping in her legs. He lazily opened one eye and stretched. Victoria carefully pulled the hem from underneath the animal and silently went out into the street, taking a goat on the rope along...

“It will be quite a challenge, to get you home,” she said, patting the goat on its side. “Don’t worry, I’ll bring you back afterwards...”

“We did great job, you and me.” She fixed the dress. “It’s time to go back, I’ll try to knit a beautiful thing. Although, I’ve never knitted in my entire life...”

The collar reacted by turning blue. Victoria looked back. The cat sat on the well and watched her go.

“Bye, wiggelfloof,” Victoria smiled and waved to him.

The way back was far more difficult... The goat would get stubborn, obviously afraid of the forest, and constantly looked around, trying to escape. At one moment, she even managed to escape. Half an hour later Victoria found her near a small river. The goat was drinking water peacefully.

“Don’t you do that again,” Victoria was nervous. “You’ll get lost, and end up eaten by someone. Hold beside me.”

Victoria also drank some water and washed herself. A little further the river formed a small dam. Victoria, after a moment’s thought, looked around, tied the goat to a tree and carefully took off her dress. Then she got into the icy water.

Her heart nearly leapt out from the sharp sensation of cold. She gasped, slightly out of her breath, but at some point her body switched the tumbler, and dissolved in transparent cold water. Victoria doused completely and closed her eyes. The flow of the river was soft. Like the seaweed, it ran its streams through the strands of her long hair. The feeling of freshness penetrated through the skin and rushed all over the body.

“I’m probably cold,” Victoria didn’t want to open her eyes. “But I should somehow understand, maybe, just for a moment, that everything that’s happening to me these days is like water, it will all go away. Maybe it’s a dream, but if not a dream, then how can I find a way out? What if I’m to stay here forever? After all, she called herself Trap. I don’t know much about people, and now... It’s just more complicated.”

Her thoughts were interrupted by a desperate scream of a goat. It seemed to sound almost like human moan... Victoria instantly jumped out of the water and quickly evaluated the situation. She rushed to her dress, unflinchingly looking at the wolf, which was astonished by his luck. The goat writhed in hysterics. She got entangled in a rope and was now desperately roaring, calling for help.

Victoria was wet and slippery, the dress would stick, the hem was tangled. Finally, she managed to put it on. The collar, this multi-colored garland, changed one color after another, trying to tune to Victoria’s mood, and yet, having picked up a warm red color, it calmed down. The girl’s body became warmer; the cold receded, cool calmness appeared. These moments seemed like an eternity to her, and Victoria rushed to the goat. Having reached the wolf, realizing that he didn’t see her, Victoria was slightly confused about what to do, and touched his head.

“Don’t touch my goat, please,” Victoria said kindly. The wolf jumped from abruptly. Victoria overbalanced and fell down.

“No, that will not do.” She rose and pushed the wolf to the side.

The wolf whimpered desperately and fell to the side.

“I gave you a little push.” She thought in a frightened manner. The force that Trap spoke about could be a reality. “He is obviously hurt...”

Victoria’s heart sank. She felt sorry for the frightened goat, for the wolf she has almost crippled...

“What’s wrong?” Her hands shook... The wolf whimpered, the goat went on screaming. Victoria was trying to calm down and take a decision. She looked around distractedly.

“Are you a she-wolf?” Victoria noticed three small gray fluffballs with tails, staring at their mother. They rushed toward her, head over heels, loudly and gaily yapping. “That’s why you didn’t bite her to death at once,” Victoria smiled. “Did you want to teach your kids how to hunt? Did I hurt her?” Victoria turned to the dress. “Can we do something? I didn’t want to, I...”

“We can...” she heard an answer. “Come to her.”

The wolf was lying on her side and whimpered softly, the little ones were spinning around and poking her with their noses.”

“Maybe I broke her rib,” Victoria thought.

“She is hurt, pet her,” the dress whispered, and the collar glowed purple.

“Shut up already!” Victoria shouted at the goat. “You are in no danger, sit quietly.”

The goat instantly went silent and pressed herself against the tree.

Victoria walked slowly to the she-wolf and began to pet her on the side, feeling the warm wave rushing along the fur... A few minutes later the beast clearly became better. She looked around, grasped one of the cubs and staring angrily at the goat, quickly ran towards the river. The rest of the toddlers rushed after her.

“Look, thank you... I didn’t want to hurt anyone,” Victoria whispered to her dress and sat down on the grass. “How did you manage to do it? Did we cure it??”

“Yes, she’s not hurt anymore...” She heard back.

“I think, I can now distinguish your voice in my head and don’t confuse it with my thoughts! Cool, we have improved our contact! And a thank you for warming me up, otherwise the water was really cold.” Victoria smiled.

The dress didn’t answer, but small multicolored rays ran across the collar.

It was late in the evening when Victoria and the goat came slowly to the hut. After tying the goat, Victoria went into the house and laid out all the wool she got, near the chests. Trap was not at home. Victoria laid down on the chest. She felt exhausted.

“Something must be done with the goat. I should milk it. Otherwise, she’ll be in pain, besides, milk won’t hurt.” Victoria smiled wistfully. “The barrel will do fine.”

After looking all the possible options for milk, Victoria left the house.

“Let’s go to the river,” Victoria untied the goat, gently patting her on the head. “Let’s go, wash off the road dust. You’ll have a drink, too. Everything turned out just fine! How come? I never imagined in my whole life that I could milk a goat.” Victoria admired in surprise, and, catching a clearly embarrassed shimmer of iridescent flowers on her collar, she quietly thanked the dress. “Thank you so much, I hope you’ll help me out with a shawl, too, will you? I can’t do it... I know that you are helping me, I don’t possess knowledge like this, even in theory.”

“Well, now you do,” she heard an answer.

“Good! Thanks!” Victoria was inspired.

Time passed... Victoria spun wool into yarn, and now knitted a shawl. She gladly walked among the woods near the hut, bathed in the stream; cooked food. She got along with the goat, and would often talk to her. The goat would walk alongside the house and, not running away. At first, Victoria was very afraid for it, but Victoria’s dress calmed her down, saying, that no one would touch it... The beasts from the woods avoided Trap’s house, and Victoria noticed this.

The dreams bothered her... Victoria was really homesick, she dreamed of her mother, her lab, a warm bath and a strange bird that pecked her when Victoria was about to take the book out of the chest... Sometimes she went desperate, unable to get out of this strange place she... How much longer will she have to live in the forest? One could only guess. She only hoped, that once she’s finished with the shawl, she might be gone. But the knitting moved on very slowly. It seemed to Victoria that as soon as she have finished it, Trap would let her go.

Victoria often put her dress to the question and asked to explain some unclear issues, but the dress addressed only the everyday questions, although Victoria seemed to befriend it.

Trap would always return by night. She brought prey and disappeared from the house by dawn, barely even speaking to Victoria.

It was like that, when sleeping Victoria felt her eye on her, slowly opened her eyes and jumped up sharply.

Trap was sitting next to her, looking at the mirror.

“Get ready,” she said thoughtfully, without looking at Vic. “We’ll go to the old swamp today. Oh, I miss it so much. It’s my favorite trap, you can get an eyeful of it!”

Trying not to think about anything, Victoria quickly put on her dress and silently looked at Trap.

“What a cunning creature you are! Cunning, indeed! Why don’t you ask why I’m taking you with me? Not even a thought in your head! Have you finished my shawl?” She bent over to Victoria’s face.

“It’s almost ready,” answered Victoria, gasping.

“Good, well done... Get some food for the road. You are rather reasonable, by the way... Well, whatever,” Trap waved her hand, got up and left the house.

Victoria quickly put the fried meat in a knapsack, grabbed the matches and salt and popped out of the house.

Trap was sitting on the door sill, gazing at the stars. It was hard to tell the time of day, she had long ago ceased to use the concept of time. She breathed in some light, fresh forest mist, she realized that the dawn was coming.

They went for a long time, and stopped only by night. Victoria collected firewood and built a fire. She laid out the supplies and started cutting meat for dinner.

“Why don’t you read the books? You like to discover new, don’t you? You have a great chance... I do not quite understand you.” Trap asked gently. “And what is that bird you’re thinking about all the time? None is here, isn’t it?”

“Why do you even need my rubbish?” Victoria sighed wearily. “You are on vacation, take a rest...”

“Don’t you get smart with me!” Trap snapped. “If I ask you a question, all you need is to answer it, don’t push it.”

“Well, I do not know what kind of bird it is.” Victoria answered honestly. “It pecked me a couple of times, by the way, when I took the book. I’d also like to know, what that was.”

“Ah, everything is clear, it’s your mother... Argh, I’m sick and tired of you both, can’t get any rest!” Without saying another word, she went down to the river, leaving Victoria completely confused.

“What about the dinner?” Victoria said quietly to Trap, trying hard to understand her words. “Dress, honey, maybe you will explain me what she said about my Mom?”

The dress flashed thoughtfully.

“I know you can talk to me, I can’t decipher your shimmering... At least a couple of words, what happened to my mother... She disappeared, and I worry so... Well, think about my mother, please... What? Do you know about books in the chest?”

The collar blushed with a bright green light, and Victoria heard its joyful words in her head.

“You read them and become a superb witch, and you will always be with me, I like you so much!”

“Why did the bird peck me if the books are good?” Victoria continued in one breath.

“Your mother sent a bird. She doesn’t want you to be a real witch...” Squeaked the dress and stopped abruptly.

“Dry up, you, rag!” Trap appeared all of a sudden, out of the blue, her evil eyes sparkling.

“A unique bug she has, she can hear everything!” Victoria thought, and a chill instantly ran down her spine. “Powerful help and constant control at the subconscious level is a new word in science!”

“That’s right,” she heard Trap’s husky voice in her head. “You are clever. Don’t you beat about the bush with a dress. It’s bored, and it’ll gladly tell you too much. You, dress! Don’t relax either, it’s the real witch that we have here, since she managed to teach you to lie! I don’t give a damn about your science. Once came to me, don’t forget that you’re on a visit... And don’t spoil my vacation, I can get really angry.”

Victoria was sitting on a thick fallen branch silently. Nice talk.

“All right,” Trap snorted. “Let’s have supper and get some sleep. Tomorrow we’ll go into the swamp, it’s not far away...”

“My swamp! My quagmire! What happened?” Trap was literally freaking out.

“What’s wrong?” Victoria asked excitedly.

“Everything! It’s a mere puddle, it’s not what my favorite swamp used to be! What is left of it? How did it happen? Why? Trap ran along the bank of the quagmire, stroking the wet slime. She was furious.

Victoria looked at the vast forest swamp in confusion and did not quite understand her despair.

“It was giant, do you get it! Why is it vanishing?” Trap screamed in a shrill voice, so that all the birds around took off, as if they were blown away by the wind.

Victoria closed her ears and squeezed her eyes shut. “There must always be a reason,” flashed the thought.

“I’ll be right back!” She shouted loudly to Trap, and walked along the shore, grabbing a strong stick.

Trap waved a hand, still stroking the moss and whispering something...

Victoria returned by the evening and found her in the same place.

“It’s very dear to her...” Victoria heard the voice of the dress in her head, and then answered quickly: “Everything will be fine, let’s go faster!”

“Listen to me, please...” Trap heard Victoria’s cheerful voice and angrily turned her head.

“Having fun? Although you don’t. I hear, you know something.” And she turned all ears, so that Victoria, just for a moment, thought that she was peeping in her head like in a chest with things. She felt goose bumps on her skin...

“I’m sorry, but I found the reason and I know how to save the swamp!” Victoria blurted out in one breath, unable to tolerate such interference in her brains.

Trap approached Victoria closely and sniffed her face.

“Speak...”

“I have found a ditch a few kilometers away. It was made artificially, with some machine. “They might have decided to drain the swamp to pick up the peat... It’s extracted” Victoria replied. “This is money. People didn’t think that the swamp and everything around would wither and die.”

“People?!” Trap went mad. “They need money. Isn’t that great.”

“I’ve been to the village, when I went to look for wool, and saw a swamp buggy. I know how to drive a car, I think I can manage it. It’s unreal to backfill it by hand, the ditch is huge, and it dewater the swamp...”

Trap silently cruised around Vic.

“Go, take the buggy, my little reasonable witch. I understand the reason, we’ll sort it out. Let’s get back,” she continued in a minute. “Let’s heal my quagmire, and then I’ll take care of everyone, who thought of this. It’s next door to blasphemy! They drink this water! They breathe this air after the rain! Idiots! I play hell to them a lot, well, not enough, since they’ve decided to kill themselves like this. Well, isn’t it funny!”

“Let’s go together...” She gasped. “You won’t cope by yourself. I’ll bring down delusion, so everyone will sleep. You’re not able to do it yet... I’ll send some beavers to build a dam. It won’t hurt.” Trap sighed. “I didn’t think that I could be out of sorts! But what a thing to do; to dry my best trap! Ugly little people, you’ll get what you deserve! Ungrateful bastards, should have thought with their own heads! They spoiled everything!”



The theft of the vehicle and spare cans with diesel fuel went at the touch of a button. Vic didn't expect she could manage with a machinery like this, but she guessed that the dress still helped to direct thoughts to reach the result, especially when the whole village was sleeping and no one interfered Victoria.

Several days after, the beavers have built an excellent huge dam with all the intricacies one can think of. Now they sat proudly on the hummocks, watching Trap and Victoria on approach on a tractor with bucket.

Trap didn't prevent Victoria from working and disappeared in an unknown direction, leaving a bag with food.

Victoria spent the three lonely nights on a swamp in the forest, calmly listening to the birds before going to sleep, realizing that the beasts won't touch her, and her dress will warm her like a warm blanket.

She coped with a huge wide canal and a few smaller ones. The tractor didn't fail her, and Victoria admired that she mastered the new skill.

"Great!" Victoria heard the familiar, hoarse voice of Trap behind her. "Can you drive it into the swamp?"

"We won't return it?? Victoria asked in surprise.

"Not if I can help it! They have probably gag out this filthy thing with it. Get it in the swamp!" Said the Trap. "So that they have no desire to do anything like that!"

"What if they do it again? Say, they will find another machinery?"

"Not here," Trap smiled. "Can't speak for other places, though... Well, can you drive it in?"

"I'll try, of course," Victoria agreed thoughtfully. "The main thing is to jump out when it goes to the bed..."

"Take off your dress, otherwise you'll soak up the hem," Trap continued hoarsely. "Take that driftwood with you, and then I'll help you out."

"Why do I need take off the dress?" Asked Vic.

"It's a must," the Trap smiled wryly. "Take it off, and don't ask stupid questions."

"Well, that's it," flashed the thought in Vic's head. "The dress is a necessary thing. I'm not. Why should anyone mess with me? Send home? To pipe me down, so as to prevent chatting too much... Classic, but I still didn't think that I would end my life by drowning in the swamp..."

The collar of the dress sparkled nervously.

“Hush,” the Trap hissed threateningly, and in the next breath added gently. “Otherwise she’ll mess you up, you know? She’ll put you on real soon; first, she’ll drown the tractor, and then she’ll be dry and warm, don’t worry.”

Victoria carefully put the dress on the grass, took a driftwood and, not looking back at Trap, headed the tractor into the swamp water. Very soon she realized that it ingulfs her, so, she quickly jumped out of, grabbing a driftwood. At first, it helped a little, but soon Victoria began to get bogged down.

“It’s so stupid,” thought Victoria... “She’s Trap, why have I even decided that I’m her guest? No, I will not say goodbye, that’s too good for her...”

Realizing that she could no longer make a single step, Vic looked up at the sky.

“I’m sorry, Mom,” she whispered, barely audible.

“You know,” she heard Trap’s hoarse voice from behind. “Jealousy had really got up my nose with you, so had Vengeance. I don’t care so far, whose way did your mother stand in, but you helped me to save the swamp, which I didn’t expect at all... And the dress confirms, that you absolutely sincerely wanted to help me... *Me!* So it’s kinda... I don’t quite understand it, so I am making an amendment. Hold the stick!” She threw Victoria a long pole. Jealousy and Vengeance, go and dig their souls in another place. I like you, you are reasonable...” Trap muttered, pulling Victoria out.

“Thank you,” sighed Victoria, falling to the grass, having lost almost all her strength from the tension in a few minutes. She cried.

“No tears, will you? It’s already damp all around, if you didn’t notice it.” Trap snorted, spat on the ground and turned away from Victoria.

“Why are you like that?”

“What do you mean ‘why’? How else do I check my marshy trap?” Trap has gone cheerful.

“It’s all right,” Victoria laughed, too. “Tell me about my mother! Who hates her so much, and where is she?”

“Where is your mother or who hates her?” Trap grinned.

“Where is she? Well, if I know who wants to harm her so bad, that’s would be good, too.”

“Your mother is at home. You have almost finished the shawl, I know, that you’ll finish it... So I’ve let her go. Speaking about who hates... Turn on your dampen brains.”

Victoria stood up and reached for the dress.

“Angelina Sergeevna?”

“Well, you see, you have guessed without a dress,” pleased Trap approached Victoria and added without a smirk. “She’s always number two. Your mom’s mate, she sold her soul to Jealousy; Vengeance is always around. They are hellions, they always go together. They’ll now eat your Angelina for breakfast, after such a mistake...”

“She’s not *mine*,” Victoria answered dryly.

“And that’s right, she’s *mine* now. I didn’t want to think about work, it’s so nice in the forest...” Trap sighed.

“My goat...” Victoria burst into tears and curled up in her soft bed.

“Your goat is at home,” her mother stroked her head. “Trap has returned it, she also liked it... You are so smart. I had faith in you. You saved us, my precious,” her mother whispered proudly.

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