



FORCE MAJEURE

Aloua S.

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Force Majeure

«Издательские решения»

S. A.

Force Majeure / A. S. — «Издательские решения»,

ISBN 978-5-44-960542-9

One day the young man meets his father, who left him in childhood. Wanting to take revenge on him, he begins to “pump out” money from his father, thereby improving his own financial situation. He transformed from the “nerd” to one of the “golden youth”. He carries away with his new life so much, that he runs into large debts. Then he arranges his own kidnapping and demands a ransom from his father. But during the ransom happens a real kidnapping, in which all participants become hostages.

ISBN 978-5-44-960542-9

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© Aloua S., 2018

ISBN 978-5-4496-0542-9

Created with Ridero smart publishing system

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Book's cover

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Black and white photo non-fiction kindle cover

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The events described in the book are fiction. Mentioned names and titles are result of author's imagination. Any references to living persons or real events are purely coincidental.

The life story of an ordinary guy living in the present time in the metropolitan city. Many difficulties await him: the parents' divorce, moving from a large mansion to a small apartment, lack of understanding, lack of money, mother's disease, betrayal, sect.

Despite all of these, he gathers his strength and tries to live on. But it turns out, that to play fair sometimes is very disadvantageously, so he decides to radically change his life at the expense of a wealthy father. From among the "nerds", he completely transformed into the most inveterate "golden youth".

Such a life turns out to be very much to our hero's taste, and he becomes so keen on his new life that over time he runs into big debts. Arrangement of his own kidnapping and demanding of a ransom from his father he sees as the only way out. But during the ransom, a real kidnapping takes place in which all the participants are taken hostage.

Content:

Childhood

Alma-Ata. Winter. Noon. Blinding sun, sparkling snow and light frost – to me this is the most harmonious weather. I would call it perfect if it hadn't been spoiled by the screams and smashing of plates coming from a cottage in an elite area of the city. The cottage was big and decorated with gold elements. But the phrase: “the rich also cry” was suitable for this more than ever. It was a quarrel of an immature family: the young husband and wife again began to sort things out. And a five-year-old boy named Damir watched a quarrel of his parents sitting on the stairs leading to the second floor of the cottage.

– Your damn job! Your night negotiations! I already feed up with it! And the son?! He's waiting for you to show his drawings. Screw the drawings, just to stay with you! – wife shouted at her husband, while throwing the plates in his direction.

– Why don't you understand?! – the man shouted, trying to evade the household items flying at him: – that everything you have: this house, car, garms, all thanks to the fact that I AM EARNING MONEY! And Damir will grow up and he will understand everything himself. After all, why does he have a mother? – the husband asked indignantly. The child, no longer able to withstand the endless shouts of his parents, runs into his room and flops on the bed sobbing. The crying boy is not the first time watching the scandals of his parents, these quarrels left a deep wound in his life.

Yes, it was me. I would like to tell the story of my life, on the basis of which you can write a manual – how you shouldn't live. So, let's begin. Let's move to 1997, when I was in primary school. After classes, just at lunchtime, my father used to wait for me near the school in a company car. Full of joy and confidence, with a pleased smile, I waved my hand welcoming him. My father used to be in the car, waving back with one hand, holding the cell phone with the other, having a conversation. As soon as I got into the car, my father greeted me with the smile and hugged tightly, holding the phone with his shoulder. As always, we immediately started to play: we waved our hands, imitating the boxers. In these fights, I always turned out to be the winner, so I received from him the nickname “Ali”¹. But more often, we didn't play to the end, because persons on the other end interrupted the father all the time. And at once father became serious and completely immersed in telephone conversations. And I was left without attention and rode all the way in silence, looking out the window and being extremely offended.

After a while, he began to work for hours and came much later than usual. And once he was so late that I had to wait for him for two hours near the school. In a couple of months later, only the driver came for me. But I still did not lose hope and waited for my father. When I got into the car, the driver only said: “Unfortunately, Mr. Keeng could not come, but he left a message that Ali should be well prepared for the evening fight”. But even in the evening my father did not always return home, as he worked until late. And if he came early, he was terribly tired. It happened every time. So I began to hate his work. It was the main obstacle between our relationships. But with my mother, we were always together: playing, learning lessons, doing household chores. She was perfect in every way: she took care for me, paid a lot of attention, protected me from the outside world and did my homework with me. But her quality as an ideal mother did not define her as a wife: as soon as the father's foot stepped into the house, my mother changed. Before, I didn't understand parents, I didn't understand why they had rows. It seemed to me that they have everything they need for life: a big house, a car, money. But only now, as an adult, I realized that this is not the main criterion of happiness.

Dad always looked good: he wore a business suit, always combed and with a perfectly shaven face. He rarely let the phone out of his hands, only when he was at the negotiating table. He spent all his time with it: at home and at work. And my mother waited for him every day until late at night

¹ Muhammad Ali – American boxer, undisputed world heavyweight champion

with prepared dinner, and sometimes falling asleep at the table. She was a well-attended, beautiful and dignified woman. Dad did not allow mom to work, and there was no need, because we always had enough money. Therefore, mother was most often at home. Her friends often came to her, I did not abide them, as they either engrossed me or spoke unflatteringly about their husbands, including my father. So, I tried to steal away from them as soon as possible. Or, when dad came home early, I, knowing that another scandal was about to begin, silently left. In both cases, I ran away from everyone to my room – my personal temple. And my room was like a mini Disneyland, there were any toys you want. Any child in the nineties would have envied so many toys. Usually I turned on the SEGA and put on headphones with music that muffled everything around. Time passed so quickly that I did not notice how night fell. The main thing was to change my clothes before my mother would come and say good night to me, kiss and hug me tightly.

My grandmothers and grandfathers were friends, and from early childhood they arranged a match between my parents. Unfortunately, mom's parents died early. Therefore, the father's parents decided to fulfill the promise and immediately married my parents. They wanted to be always there and help my parents whenever possible. Since they no longer had other children, they accepted mother as their own daughter. And as soon as I was born, they began to come more often. When we meet, Granny hugged me and kissed on the forehead, and my Grandfather greeted me coldly with a handshake. Looking at my Grandfather it was clear who my father took after. They were exactly the same, only with a difference of twenty-five years. However, Grandfather was always even-tempered and laconic than my father. His straight posture and arms crossed behind betrayed his officer nature. He was a retired General of the Army of the Republic of Kazakhstan. He and his father also had a difficult relationship. But Granny was a ray of light in the whole family. She was always cheerful, constantly joking and cooking really well. Granny is the only person who loved me sincerely for who I am, without trying to change me. Undoubtedly, my mother loved me beyond measure, but for her, I rather was a little silly, who was unable to control himself. She constantly corrected my words and actions, at first I was ok with this. But over time, I stopped resisting and eventually gave up. While Granny treated me as an equal, she was interested in my opinion and brought me back to reality, so that I completely forgot about the games. Fairy tales and life stories told by her were so interesting that I could listen to them for hours with fascination. Thanks to her, it seemed to me that I was much older and smarter for my years. But she could never explain why my parents quarreled all the time. When I asked this question she answered nothing and only smiled awkwardly. She was probably the only person in the world who took me seriously. No, she was not the only one.

Once I found a letter on the table. My name was written on the envelope. I quickly began to open it. Finally, opening the letter, I began eagerly to read:

Hi Damir!

I heard that everything is not so well in your family. Do not be upset... I had the same problems, too. The main thing that you have to know and always remember is that you are LOVED! Sometimes grown-ups get tired and forget to show it and say it.

Do not get carried away by toys, they will not help you in difficult moments.

I want you to know that I will always be here, especially in difficult moments.

Your friend

After reading it the first time, I did not even understand the content. Only after re-reading it several times, I understood the essence and even began to imagine a secret agent under cover or some superhero who takes care about me. But later something happened, that made me completely forget about the letter.

June 1998; Astana was declared the capital of Kazakhstan. Dad was transferred to an even higher position, provided that he moved to Astana. For several days my father considered the proposal and wanted to refuse, but another scandal with my mother effected on his positive response. And

here we are standing at the threshold of the house, seeing off my father. Mom looked discomposedly somewhere afar, and father knelt, hugging me. Then he said to me: “Train more, you will soon become a champion, my invincible Ali” and kissed on forehead. Getting on his feet and looking at mother, he only said: “Do not be offended at me, that’s necessary. This is a job”. Mom stood immovably, father took the bags in his hands and left the house, closing the door behind him. Mom’s face immediately darkened and she burst into tears. She covered her face with her hands and shrank like an embryo on a sofa in the living room.

– “Mom... Mommy... don’t cry, please,” I whispered in her ear. But she didn’t hear me. I tried to do everything possible to bring her to her senses: making laugh, soothing, scolding, but everything was in vain. After another unsuccessful attempt, I completely despaired and give up, silently sitting next to her.

At first, my father often came home, but each time our meetings were rarer and shorter. Every time mom met him as the most honored guest: she cooked him many different delicacies, looked good. But quarrels and rebukes continued anyway. Finally, they made a difficult decision. Mom and Dad knocked on my door. Mother was very upset, so father took the initiative in his own hands and hesitantly started the conversation:

– Sonny, Damir... mother and I love you very much. You are the most valuable that we have. But, you know, sometimes adults can no longer live together. Do not be afraid, I will not leave you. I will buy you gifts as well, and when I come we will walk together, – he looked at me with guilty.

– Yes, son. You and I will move to the apartment, and dad will completely move to another city, – Mom explained to me.

– If you want you may live here, no one drives you out, – said father to mother.

– I’ve already made a decision. I don’t need anything from you. I have had enough reproaches, I will live in the apartment, which my parents left to me, – mom answered inexorably. Unwittingly, they again were completely wrapped up in their problems and offenses. I remember how I was desperately trying to stop them, so I shouted: “Shut up! Not again!” Parents looked at each other in shock.

– Enough! Why can’t we live together like before? Dad, mom, love each other, – I take their hands and put them together. But they immediately withdrew their hands and began to explain to me that they can no longer live like this and now they are getting divorced. They said that I still was a child and would understand them when I get older. That day I did not give up until the last and begged them to reconcile, but they were unswayed. I probably wept all the tears out and simply could not accept that now “mom” and “dad” are separate. I will always remember this evening, for me it lasted forever.

In the end, as my mother said, we moved into a small apartment. Furthermore, mother refused any “handouts” of father and his parents: home, cars, financial assistance, and any help in general. But my father made sure that my room did not differ from the previous one: it was also filled up with toys and a new batch of gifts. Dad did not spare anything for me, except for the most expensive – time. And my mother, on the contrary, caters to me, spoon-feeds me. After a while, it began to annoy me greatly. Grandparents tried to help Mom and dissuade her from divorce, but Dad forbade them to interfere in their relationship.

Thus our new life began, in which there is no more luxury, no high position in society, and most importantly no father. All my mother’s friends immediately turned away from us as soon as they heard about the parents’ divorce. Now she is no match for them. Mom decided to get a job and still did not accept Dad’s help out of pride. Perhaps in this regard, the next three years were extremely difficult. Mom changed about ten jobs. Finally, she accept the fact that every penny is worth the effort. All these problems left a significant imprint on her appearance. She changed a lot: due to tiredness and sleepless nights she has become very thin, her face has looked drawn and she has had dark circles under her eyes. Mom became a different woman, and I... and I more and more went into my shell. Recently, she found a more or less steady job as an accountant’s assistant and, because

of a lot of work, came home late at night. She paid me attention only with a kiss on the forehead. And I found comfort only in online games and hardly noticed her.

A couple of years later, my father announced that he had married and that I would soon have a little sister. I began to hate him and his new wife, especially when I heard my mother was crying at night. My soul was tearing apart, but how could I help? Besides, my father tried to enroll me in various courses and workshops; he wanted me to follow in his steps. As he says: “You must mean something in this world! You have to be ahead!” But I didn’t want to do anything as a matter of principle! The thought was spinning in my head: “Mind your own family! And don’t touch me!” I think that he understood this and over time began to call less and less. And our calls were reduced to a minimum – only once a year on my birthday.

The First love

Having changed an elite gymnasium school from to an ordinary high school, I was faced with a lot of insults in my address. And my classmates had more than enough reasons for this: I was a fat “nerd”. Yes, I have self-mocking humor.

My mother was completely absorbed in work all this time, so she has no time for me. At that time I was in the seventh grade, just the puberty period. Perhaps that is why the mockery of my classmates had no end; they didn’t even bother and called me either “fatty” or “nerd”. I didn’t have any friends, even the teachers were not very appreciated me, maybe because of my appearance. Therefore, to go there was very difficult for me, they bullied me, hid my things and name-calling constantly. I could not fight them back, just could not, probably, I didn’t have enough courage. All I had to do was to ignore them and silently go to my desk.

But there was one reason for which I did go to school. And the reason was Ms. Ida Swan, a World history teacher: she was a fourth-year student at a pedagogical university. But I fall in love with her not because she was the most beautiful and cutest woman, but after one history lesson. The topic of the lesson was: “The Rulers of the World.” She wrote down the theme on the board and turned to us:

– So, kids, tell me first, what great rulers do you know? – she addressed the class.

All the students began to shout out.

– Genghis Khan? – uncertainly said boy at the third desk.

– Hitler! – exclaimed an A student.

– Stalin, – confidently said the girl, sitting next to the A student.

– Alexander the Great! – shouted from the back a C student.

– Very good! You are right! – she commended, – Now tell me, what do you know about them?

Not as rulers, but as people, their personality traits? – she pointed to one of the “nerds” and waited for his answer. Everybody quieted down.

– They led thousands and millions of people, this can only be done by a person, who possesses tremendous power, – he blabbered confidently.

– Well, does anyone else have a guess? – Ms. Ida Swan turned to the students. They did not know how to answer this question. But the A student sitting at the front desks, began to actively raise her hand. The teacher nodded to her, making it clear that she was waiting for an answer.

– They caused so much grief, both to enemies, and to people living in their countries. And so many people died, they were very cruel, – the girl confidently noticed.

– It’s true, – Ms. Ida Swan confirmed: – Does anyone else want to add something? Come on kids, feel free to express your opinion.

I was bursting from the inside, and I stand up:

– Well, I think, could person who has everything: both family and wealth, sacrifice his people for personal goals? These are unhappy and malignant people who avenge the whole world for childish insults, – I spoke out.

The students were in shock. At first, everyone fall silent, bewildered, and then they laughed at me. Everything was like in slow motion, at the same time my heart sped up. With every particle of my body I felt my nothingness and watched as they making a ‘cuckoo’ sign and laughed, saying “damn loony”, “stupid”. Unable to withstand the pressure, I wanted to escape, but I didn’t feel my legs. Nevertheless, overcoming myself, I slowly headed towards the door. And finally, outside the classroom, I tried to run in any direction. Time gradually began to come to its usual rhythm. It turned out that all this lasted for several minutes, though it seemed to me that it’s been ages. The teacher ran out after me. But I ran so fast that she could not keep pace with me. Finding a hideaway, I hid under the stairs. I burst out crying with shame and injustice. I heard teacher somewhere far away: “Damir!

Wait! Do not run away!” I decided to never leave this place, so that no one would ever laugh at me. But after five minutes, Ms. Swan found me.

– Oh, here you are! Gotcha! Nobody could run away from me yet! – She tried to make me laugh. But I was in the depth of despair.

– Well, okay, they didn’t know what they were saying. Damir, come, – she kept saying, carefully pulling me out from under the stairs.

– No, I will never leave this place again! – I jerked back my hand.

– All right, so may I sit down next to you? – she asked.

– I don’t care, – I turned away.

– You know, I agree with you, – she squatted down beside me.

– What are you talking about? – I was puzzled.

– I mean that each of them was unhappy in his own way. For example, Genghis Khan, as a child, saw his father killed – she carried on the conversation as usual.

– Yes, I know, – I replied to the teacher.

– See how smart you are. And Napoleon? – asked Ms. Swan.

– He was a short man, – I told her.

– Right! Therefore, in order to show to the world that he is worth something, he started the war. While this is a rough allegory, at the moment it is not the point. And now do you believe what classmates said about you? Fine, show me at least one who knows the same thing as you! – she was gently touching my face and wiping tears away. Oh god, my heart messed a bit. She looked into my eyes so soulfully and then hugged me. At that moment, my heart began to pound, my breath was quick and I felt strong affection to this woman. Yes, I was head over heels in love! Finally, she persuaded me to return to class. When we went into the classroom with her, everyone was whooping it up, but after seeing my tear-stained face, they quietened down.

– Guys, I am very dissatisfied with you, – Ms. Ida Swan sternly: – Is it right thing to do it this way? This is your classmate, you spend the whole day together, he is kind of your family member, and you do not even let him express his opinion. I loved your class more than anyone else, and you get in wrong with me. Now, ask Damir for forgiveness!

Only some of the students dryly pronounced: “sorry”, “pardon”.

– I told everyone to ask for forgiveness, – the teacher raised her voice. I looked at her, like “it’s not necessary, enough,” she said out loud: “How long should I wait?”

– Forgive Damir, – the class answered in one voice.

– Ok, Damir, now go to your desk. And if I find out that you are laughing at him, you won’t find it funny – everyone glanced at each other and nodded. But then the bell rang and everyone ran out of the classroom. And I slowly headed for my desk; I already didn’t give a damn about my classmates. My thoughts were occupied only by her. After this incident, I began to run after her, even though there was a difference of eight years between us. I brought sweets and stealthily left them on the table. She always asked who it could be, but I did not dare to confess and only silently watched her joyful face.

Moreover, I tried to separate out: on her lesson I wear old fatherly perfume and put a tie on. Every night before going bed I looked at her picture and wished her good night. I hid it under the pillow so that no one could see it, and I do not care that there were thirty-three more faces on it. It was a photo of the whole class, where I cross out the faces of all but her. Even my face was crossed out, since I did not want to have a single mention of studying in this class.

Each lesson of Ms. Ida Swan was worth its weight in gold. She was the only person with whom I was at ease. Ms. Swan and I talked on various topics, and only she accepted me as an equal. She differed from other teachers: she always listened carefully to me, allowed me to speculate freely, analyze different situations and express my point of view. This concerned not only history, but absolutely any topics.

But after a couple of years, she silently quit, not telling anyone, the whole class was shocked. We were all very attached to her, so we were extremely puzzled by her decision to quit. We all tried to get any information from other teachers: about where she is and what's wrong with her; but no matter how hard we tried, no one said anything. And I was heartbroken. "After all, she didn't even say goodbye to us... to me... and didn't even tell about her future plans. And besides, about the decision to leave. My loved one left me again". I almost stopped eating, slept only for couple of hours a day, and even more get into shell. Mom noticed the changes and could not understand what was happening to me. She tried many times to get out what was happening to me, but all her attempts were in vain – I was unswayed. In the end, she referred to my difficult age and decided to leave me alone.

Virtuality and reality

Finally, I reached the final stage of graduation, I so happy, because I no longer have to see the faces of these teasers. For passed time, I almost did not change in appearance: I just got a little higher, gained weight, grew hair and stubbles, and with a (blurred) vision, I changed my glasses to new one with thicker lenses. The last thing left to no longer be considered a schoolboy – was the UNT (United National Test), aimed for enrolling at the university. I wanted to quickly be through and finally finish school. The teachers and some parents of my classmates terrified us by the exam, saying that in case of failure, we would stay on the street and never get a job, and actually we would not be full-fledged people. Therefore, all graduates gave it a vital meaning and were crazily worried. But I was confident in my knowledge and as a result I got “B”.

And, after all, I was able to relax, because my favorite time of the year had come – summer! Not because it is the season of trips abroad or guitar songs in the yard with friends, but only because I could play all day. Mom also promised me, if I pass the exam well, she will allow me to play as much as I want. I completely was lost in online games. And finally, absolutely no one and nothing bothered me. Putting on the headphones, I was fully absorbed in Counter Strike. Sometimes, with tightly closed windows, I even lost a sense of time. One of these days, I felt some anxiety, something was wrong. At first, I suppressed this feeling in myself, I thought: “what can happen, everything is fine”. But each time this feeling swallowed me up more and more, after a while, it finally hit me...

– Mama! Oh, God... Mom!!! Where is she?! – I cried out with horror, having run around the whole apartment in search of her: – So, calm down... Maybe I’m just overthinking?! She probably works long hours as always... But I’m sure that I haven’t seen her lately – I was panicked. I brokenly began to phone her. A female voice said coldly: “The number you are trying to reach is not available. The phone number is switched off or out of the range. Please call back later”. Not believing, I called back, but the situation has not changed. The answering machine stubbornly did not understand that I urgently needed to find her and that something could happen to her. I called again, but the auto answer stubbornly repeated the same phrase. Then it hit me, her mobile phone could simply have been discharged. And she, probably, is in the office, instantly I looked at the time on the computer screen. “20.23, ugh, exactly she is at work”. At that moment I began to phone to the office.

Finally, instead of answering machine, I heard beeps. For a long time no one answer the phone, but I was persistent and did not intend to give up. And finally a miracle happened, a woman’s voice answered:

– Hello?

– Hello, can I hear Assiya Lee? – I asked.

– Hello, and who asks her? – asked a woman on the other side of the wire.

– Hello. This is her son, Damir, – I answered impatiently.

– Ah, is that you?! Wait... your mom isn’t at work, isn’t she at home? Why is she not contacting us? Do not answer the mobile phone? – she began to ask me around.

– I don’t know, I thought she was still in the office, – I answered with confusion.

– Three days? Are you kidding?! – the woman replied with a grin.

I immediately hung up, well what could I answer. Besides, thoughts were about something else. “Mommy! Where is she?! God, oh God... I am an idiot... Brainless... What now to do? What to do?” Everything shrank in my chest, so that it was difficult to breathe. I was shaking and I wanted to hide from the whole world. “Mom, where are you?” – was forefronted in my mind. At first I wandered around the house from thoughts that tormented me, and then I sat on a pouf in the corridor, thinking what to do next. I sat there for a very long time, staring straight before me. At that moment, I thought about everything and already gradually began to lose my mind. After sitting in this position for a long time, I did not notice how mid-night came.

Finally, the mind cleared up a bit and I began to think rationally: “What to do? So what am I doing when something is not clear? I ask Granny what to do. Exactly, Granny! So, hey, she and grandpa seem to be at a resort abroad. Damn... what now? Whom should I call?? Who else is left... well, he... father. Should I call him?!! Though there’s no alternative”.

Immediately my last conversation with my father came up in my head: “Son, if one day, at any time of the day, you will need me, call me and I come”. This was exactly the case. With trembling hands I dialed my father’s number. Inhale – exhale, inhale – exhale... long beeps... the usual redoubted voice answered on the other end:

– I asked you not to call so late! All business – tomorrow! – father said tartly.

– Da-daddy, it’s me, – I said quietly and uncertainly.

– Sonny? D... Damir... is that you? – father asked half-whispered.

– Yes, I need you! – I said hopefully.

– You have no idea how I wanted to hear it from you, – the father remarked happily, but then his tone changed: – Did something happen?

– Dad! Mom’s lost! I do not know what to do, it is already the third day she is not to be found: neither at home nor at work! What to do?! – I desperately asked him.

– Assiya? This is not like her. Did you call the hospitals? Did you file missing person report? – he asked anxiously, saying in a whisper: – I hope it is not too late.

– Late? Dad! What are you talking about? No, I haven’t called anywhere yet. Come, I need you more than ever! – I shouted into the phone.

– Son, I will fly out to you with the first flight. I’ll immediately let you know as I arrive. Take it easy. Surely everything is fine with her, – my father reassured me: – Until then, before my arrival, call the hospitals and file missing person report, – my father gave me instructions in a cold and reasonable tone.

– But dad! You know! I can’t talk to anyone except my relatives! – I confessed to my father about my problem.

– Sonny, at least we will start the search. I will be there soon. I believe in you, – the father tried to inspire me.

– Okay, I’ll try, – I whispered, feeling bad.

After talking with my father, I sat for a very long time. As well squeezing the phone and realizing that here it is – the reality. The loud tick of the clock, the strong wind sneaking into the room, accompanied my terrifying thoughts. Thoughts... they just tore me from the inside. I probably thought about everything in the world. How I paid no regard for her, pushed her away and even was rude to her... to person who, even after all the insults and quarrels, continued to love me. “She did for me so much, and I... I have no forgiveness”. Gathering my wits, I realized that it was time to do something. When I sat down at the computer, I, with shaking fingers, tapped at a keyboard “directory of hospitals of Almaty”. Finding all the numbers, I took the phone in my hands, took a deep breath and started dialing the first number...

– City Hospital No. 1, – said the woman on the other end of the line.

– Uh... hello? – I zoned out for a while.

– Speak?! – she said with a claim voice.

– My... my mother... she... uh... – I was lost even more.

– Did your mother be admitted to our hospital? – she asked, changing her anger for understanding.

– Yes, – I said with relief.

– Last name and first name? – continued the woman.

– Assiya Lee, – I said.

– Well... wait a minute, – the woman said slowly, I heard how she began to turn over the pages in search of the desired surname: – No, she wasn’t brought to us.

Without answering, I silently hung up. Two opposing feelings were fighting in me: relief, because the conversation was over and a heavy feeling that my mother was not there. So I spend all night, without stopping calling all the hospitals. I prayed the God only about one thing: let everything be fine with her, wherever she is now. But after the next telephone conversation, more and more terrible thoughts came. Desperation devoured me completely. Even though I was always lonely, for the first time I felt that I was left alone with fear... and repeated again and again: “God, please, let everything be fine with mom... I promise I will never ask you again about anything”.

By the morning I did not understand anything, and began on the second round to call those whom I had not been able to reach before.

Half asleep I dialed the number and automatically said:

– Hello, have Assiya Lee been admitted to your hospital?

– Hello, wait, I will look, – the same sleepy voice answered me: – Yes, she was admitted three days ago.

– So wait, where am I calling? – I immediately woke up.

– Well, the Cardiology Center! – the sleepy voice on the other end was indignant.

– How is she? What with her? – I began to ask.

– I am only a doctor on duty and I don’t know all the details, but all I can say is that her condition is critical but stable and she is unconscious, – the doctor replied.

– I’ll be right there, – I uttered rapidly.

Carefully looking at the address of the center in the directory, I took off like a shot from a gun and found myself in the yard of the house. Run out on the road, I immediately began to look around, not even know what to looking for. By the road, there was a guy with whom we often crossed paths in the yard. He was leaning back against a car and holding keys in his hands. Seeing my scared face, the guy immediately knew what to do.

– Taxi? – he looked at me.

– Yes... exactly! – I answered and tried to get into the back seat.

– Sit down, bro! I’ll quickly take you. Where to go?, – he began to ask, getting into the car and throwing the seat belt over his head.

– Main Cardiology Center, – I replied, and we immediately began to move.

The taxi driver had been looking at me for a long time through the back mirror and finally decided to ask a question:

– What’s up? You are pale as a ghost!

– Mom’s in the hospital, – I replied in a low voice.

– Mama? I hope everything is fine with her. We need to protect them, because they care about us all the time, and we only remember it when something is wrong with them, – he said, moving the conversation on serious topic.

– Exactly, – I whispered, barely audible.

The guy so quickly and recklessly drove round all the traffic jams and locks, that we very quickly got to the address.

– Well, here we are. Remember: mother needs to be taken care of, – the guy said when I got out of the car. But at that moment I did not hear anything, I gave him money and rushed to the center. Then everything was like in a dream, until I got to her ward.

A passing doctor saw me standing in the corridor at the ward and not dare to enter. He began to say and ask something. However, I did not hear anything except a mad heartbeat. It seemed to me that time slowed down. Having recovered myself a little, I began to catch: “... in serious condition, we hope that she will awake soon. We have several variants of diseases which have the similar symptoms. But we must interview her and only then an accurate diagnosis will be made. By the way, we wanted to contact you, but when she felt bad, she fell on the phone. As a result, the phone was broken. In this regard, all attempts to contact the relatives of the patient were impossible. You can spend a little time

with her, but then you will have to leave”. The doctor opened the door for me, and I went into the ward. I was on the verge of tears after seeing her. I wanted to break everything around. But I could not move a finger, I was completely paralyzed. Having recovered myself, I sat down next to my mother and looked at her pale face for a long time and stroked her hand:

– Mommy... darling. It’s me, Damir, your useless son. Forgive me, for being selfish, for not noticing that you were not at home, and for everything, it’s all because of me. You tried for me, but I... did not live up to your expectations. You know, now I will do everything for you! I promise! Just do not die... – I asked in a whisper. I just wanted to howl with pain, which pierced my soul to the bottom. But it didn’t matter how much I asked, she didn’t awake. I do not remember how long I sat there, but after a while the nurse asked me to leave the ward.

Being deeply depressed, I sat crying in the corridor for a long time, left alone with my thoughts. I am separated from the world. My state of weightlessness distracted only by painfully familiar silhouette, which I saw at the end of the corridor. He stared at me and slowly approached. My heart sank, barely breathing, I got up: “My God, how many years have passed...” time seemed to stop. It seemed that everything was like in a slow-motion film... and this silhouette went up to his son and hugged him tightly, saying: “Sonny, I missed you”. But life is not a movie. Having come very close, he did not even recognize me, hell yeah, since more than ten years had passed.

– Dad... – I called to my father.

– Damir? – he forced out, not recognizing his son.

– Yes, Dad, it’s me, – I told him.

– What’s with your mom? – father has addressed to me, still peering at my matured face.

“And about this he asks me after so many years?” My eyes dimmed. He did not even ask: how I lived all this time, how it was difficult for my mother to work round the clock, how we tighten our belts and survived as much as we could.

– They themselves do not really know what’s wrong with her. As soon as mom wakes up – the doctors will interview her and make a diagnosis, – I answered coldly, turning away.

– Good. I will bring in clouds so that they speed up. Sit here for now, – he answered, and hurried off somewhere, scrolling the contacts in his phone. Sitting waiting for my father, I had plenty of time to think and rethink my life. As a result, I realized several things: the first is that virtuality is much better than reality, if only because everything is not really there; the second – someday the reality will come, and it will be merciless, especially to the unprepared person.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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