

The background of the entire image is a night sky filled with stars, with the Milky Way galaxy clearly visible. In the lower portion, there is a silhouette of a mountain range. A person is standing on a prominent peak, holding a flashlight that beams a light upwards towards the stars. The overall mood is one of wonder and exploration.

A. Belyaev

*Head of professor
Douel*

Heavenly guest

"Classics fantasy" 8

A. Belyaev

Classics fantasy – 8

«Издательские решения»

Belyaev A.

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HEAVENLY GUESTTyumenev opened a double star which has to fly by in close proximity to Solar system. When it passes in the next distance from Earth that will tear off a part of the terrestrial atmosphere and several thousands of cubic kilometers of ocean water which have to fall to one of planets of this star.

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Classics fantasy – 8

A. Belyaev

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HEAD OF PROFESSOR DOUEL

I devote to the wife my Margarita Konstantinovna Belyaeva

FIRST MEETING

– I ask to sit down.

Mari Laurent fell to a deep leather chair.

While professor Kern opened an envelope and read the letter, she fluently examined an office.

What gloomy room! But it is good to be engaged here: nothing distracts attention. The lamp with the deaf lamp shade lights only the desk which is filled up with books, manuscripts, proof-sheets. An eye hardly distinguishes solid furniture of a black oak. Dark wall-paper, dark drapr. In the twilight only gold of imprinted covers in heavy cases gleams. The long pendulum of the old wall clock moves measuredly and smoothly.

Having translated a look on the Core, Laurent involuntarily smiled: professor entirely corresponded to style of an office. As if the cut-down from an oak, heavy, severe figure of the Core seemed a part of furniture. Big points in a tortoise frame reminded two dials of hours. As pendulums, moved his eyes of gray-ashy color, passing from a line to a line of the letter. The rectangular nose, a direct section of eyes, a mouth and the square, given forward chin gave to the face a type of the stylized decorative mask molded by the sculptor-cubist.

«To decorate a fireplace with such mask» – Laurent thought.

– The colleague Sabatye spoke already about you. Yes, I need the assistant. You medichka? Perfectly. Forty francs a day. Calculation is weekly. Breakfast, lunch. But I lay down one condition...

Having drummed a dry finger on a table, professor Kern asked an unexpected question:

– You are able to be silent? All women are talkative. You the woman – it is bad. You are beautiful – it is even worse.

– But what relation...

– The closest. The beautiful woman – the woman doubly. Means, doubly possesses also female shortcomings. You can have a husband, the friend, the groom. And then all secrets to hell.

– But...

– No but's! You have to be dumb as a fish. You have to be silent about everything that you will see and you will hear here. You accept this condition? Has to warn: non-execution will cause consequences, extremely unpleasant for you. Extremely unpleasant.

Laurent was confused and interested...

– I agree if I in all this am not present...

– Crimes, you want to tell? You can be absolutely quiet. And you are threatened by no responsibility... Your nerves as it should be?

– I am healthy...

Professor Kern nodded.

– Alcoholics, neurasthenics, epileptics, mentally ill people were not in a sort?

– No.

The core once again nodded.

His dry, sharp finger stuck into the button of an electric call.

The door silently opened.

In the twilight of the room as on the shown photographic plate, Laurent uvidat only whites of the eyes, then patches of light of the shining face of the Black were gradually shown. Black hair and a suit merged with dark door drapr.

– John! Show mademoiselle Loran laboratory.

The Black nodded, suggesting to follow himself, and opened the second door.

Laurent entered absolutely dark room.

The switch clicked, and bright light of four opaque hemispheres filled in the room. Laurent involuntarily covered eyes. After the twilight of a gloomy office the whiteness of walls blinded... Glasses of cases with brilliant surgical instruments sparkled. With cold light steel and aluminum unfamiliar Laurent of devices burned. Warm, yellow patches of light light on the copper polished parts laid down. Pipes, coils, flasks, glass cylinders... Glass, rubber, metal...

In the middle of the room – a big prozektorsky table. Near a table – a glass box; in it human heart pulsed. From heart there were tubes to cylinders.

Laurent turned the head aside and suddenly uvidat something, forced it to shudder, as from electric blow.

The human head – one head without trunk looked at it.

It was attached to a square glass board. The board was supported by four high brilliant metal legs. From the cut arteries and veins, through openings in glass, went, having connected already in pairs, tubes to cylinders. Thicker tube left a throat and was reported with the big cylinder. The cylinder and cylinders were supplied with cranes, manometers, thermometers and unknown Laurent devices.

The head attentively and mournfully looked at Laurent, blinking for centuries. There could not be a doubt: the head lived, separated from a body, independent and adult life.

Despite tremendous impression, Laurent could not but notice that this head is surprisingly similar to the head of recently died famous scientist-surgeon, professor Douel who became famous for the experiences of revival of the bodies which are cut out from a fresh corpse. Laurent was at his brilliant public lectures more than once, and she well remembered this high forehead, a characteristic profile, the wavy, silvered by a gray hair thick fair hair, blue eyes... Yes, it was the head of professor Douel. Only lips and a nose of its steel are thinner, temples and cheeks was pulled in, eyes sank down in orbits more deeply and white skin got a yellow and dark shade of a mummy. But in eyes there was life, there was a thought.

Laurent as captivated could not have a look on these blue eyes glued.

The head silently moved lips.

...It was too for nerves Laurent. It was close to a faint. The Black supported her and brought out of laboratory.

– It is awful, it is awful ... – Laurent repeated, having fallen to a chair.

Professor Kern silently drummed fingers on a table.

– Tell, really it is the head?.

– Professor Douel? Yes, it is his head. Douel's head, my died dear colleague restored by me to life. Unfortunately, I could revive one head. Not everything is given at once. Poor Douel had an illness incurable so far. Dying, he bequeathed the body for scientific experiences which we conducted with it together. «All my life was devoted to science. Let the science will be served also by my death. I prefer that in my corpse the friend scientist dug, but not the sepulchral worm» – here what will made professor Douel. And I received his body. I managed not only to recover his heart, but also to revive consciousness, to revive «soul», speaking to crowd language. What here awful? People considered still awful death. Unless resurrection from the dead was not a thousand-year dream of mankind?

– I would prefer death to such revival.

Professor Kern made uncertain gesture a hand.

– Yes, it has the inconveniences for revived. It would be inconvenient to poor Douel to seem to public in it... an incomplete look. That is why we arrange with a secret this experience. I speak «we» because such is Douel's desire. Besides experience is not finished yet.

– And how professor Douel, that is his head, expressed this desire? The head can speak?

Professor Kern for a moment was confused.

– ... the head of professor Douel does not say no. But she hears, understands and can answer with a facial expression...

And to give the conversation another turn, professor Kern asked:

– So, you accept my offer? Perfectly. I wait for you tomorrow by nine in the morning. But you remember: silence, silence and silence.

MYSTERY OF THE FORBIDDEN CRANE

Mari Laurent hardly was given life. She was seventeen years old when her father died. On Mari's shoulders care of sick mother laid down. The small sums which remained after the father lasted not for long, it was necessary to study and support a family. Several years it worked as the night proofreader in the newspaper. Having been entitled the doctor, vainly tried to find the place. There was an offer to go to godforsaken places of New Guinea where yellow fever raged. Neither to go there with sick mother, nor Mari wanted to be separated from her. The proposal of professor Kern was for it a way out.

Despite all strangeness of work, she agreed almost without fluctuation.

Laurent did not know that professor Kern before accepting her, directed about it careful references.

Two weeks it worked for the Core. Its duties were simple. She had to watch throughout day the devices supporting head life. At night it was replaced by John.

Professor Kern explained to her as it is necessary to handle cranes at cylinders. Having pointed to the big cylinder from which there was a thick tube to a head throat, Kern most strictly forbade it to open the cylinder crane.

– If to turn the crane, the head will be immediately killed. Somehow I will explain you all power supply system of the head and purpose of this cylinder. So far to you the nobility is enough how to handle devices.

The Core, however, did not hurry with the promised explanations.

The small thermometer was deeply inserted into one of nostrils of the head. In certain hours it was necessary to take out it and to write down temperature. Thermometers and manometers supplied also cylinders. Laurent watched temperature of liquids and pressure in cylinders. Well adjusted devices did not bring trouble, operating with a clockwork accuracy. Special sensitivity the device put to a head temple noted a pulsation, mechanically drawing a curve. In a day the tape was replaced. Contents of cylinders were replenished in the absence of Laurent, before her arrival.

Mari gradually got used to the head and even became friends with it.

When Laurent was included in the morning into laboratory with the cheeks which turned pink from walking and fresh air, the head poorly smiled to it and her eyelids shivered as a sign of a greeting.

The head could not speak. But between it and Laurent conditional language, though very limited was established soon. Lowering by the head meant a century «yes», a raising upward – «no». A little also silently moving lips helped.

– How you feel today? – asked Laurent.

The head smiled «suggestion of a smile» and lowered eyelids: «Well, I thank».

– How spent night?

Same mimicry.

Asking questions, Laurent quickly fulfilled morning duties. Checked devices, temperature, pulse. Made log entries. Then with the greatest care washed water with alcohol the person of the head by means of a soft sponge, wiped hygroscopic cotton wool auricles. Removed the cotton wool scrap which hung on eyelashes. Washed out eyes, ears, a nose, a mouth – special tubes were for this purpose entered into a mouth and a nose. Put hair in order.

Her hands quickly and dexterously touched the head. On a face of the head there was an expression of content.

– Today wonderful day – Laurent said. – Blue-blue sky. Clean frosty air. And there is a wish to breathe all breast. You look how the sun brightly shines, absolutely as in spring.

Corners of lips of professor Douel sadly fell. Eyes with melancholy looked in a window and stopped on Laurent.

It reddened from slight disappointment on itself. With an instinct of the sensitive woman Laurent avoided to speak about everything that was unattainable for the head and could remind of poverty of its physical existence once again.

Mari felt some maternal pity to the head, as to the helpless, offended by the nature child.

– Well – with, let's be engaged! – hasty told Laurent to correct a mistake.

In the mornings, before arrival of professor Kern, the head was engaged in reading. Laurent brought lots of the last medical magazines and books and showed them to the head. The head looked through. On the necessary article moved with eyebrows. Laurent put the magazine on a lectern, and the head plunged into reading. Laurent got used, watching head eyes, to guess what line the head reads, and in time to turn pages.

When it was necessary to make a mark in fields, the head did a sign, and Laurent ran a finger over lines, watching eyes of the head and noting a pencil line on fields.

For what the head forced to do marks in fields, Laurent did not understand, by means of their poor mimic language did not hope to receive an explanation and therefore did not ask.

But once, passing through an office of professor Kern in his absence, it uvidat on a desk magazines with the marks made by it according to the indication of the head. And on the sheet of paper the hand of professor Kern rewrote noted places. It set thinking Laurent.

Having remembered it now, Mari did not keep from a question. Perhaps, the head will manage to answer somehow.

– Tell why we note some places in scientific articles?

On a face of professor Douel expression of displeasure and impatience appeared. The head expressively looked at Laurent, then at the crane from which there was a tube to a head throat, and two times raised eyebrows. It meant a request. Laurent understood that the head wants that opened this forbidden crane. Already not for the first time the head addressed to it with such request. But Laurent explained desire of the head in own way: the head, obviously, wants to finish the desolate existence. And Laurent did not decide to open the forbidden crane. She did not want to be guilty in head death, was afraid also of responsibility, was afraid to lose the place.

– No, no – with fear answered Laurent a head request. – If I open this crane, you will die. I do not want, I cannot, I do not dare to kill you.

From impatience and awareness of powerlessness on the person of the head there passed the spasm.

Three times it vigorously raised eyelids and eyes up...

«No, no, no. I will not die!» – so understood Laurent. It fluctuated.

The head began to move silently lips, and Laurent seemed that bays try to tell: «Open. Open. I beg!..»

Curiosity Laurent was excited to extreme degree. She felt that here some secret disappears.

In the opinion of the head the boundless melancholy shone. Eyes asked, begged, demanded. It seemed, all force of a human thought, all tension of will concentrated in this look.

Laurent decided.

Her heart strongly fought, the hand shivered when it carefully slightly opened the crane.

Immediately from a throat of the head hissing was heard. Laurent heard the weak, deaf, cracked voice jingling and hissing as the spoiled record player:

– I thank... you...

The forbidden crane passed the air compressed in the cylinder. Passing through a head throat, air set throat sheaves in motion, and the head had an opportunity to speak. Muscles of a throat and a sheaf could not work already normally: air with hissing passed through a throat and when the head did not speak. And the section of nervous trunks in a neck broke normal muscle work of vocal chords and gave to a voice of the deaf, the jingling timbre.

The person of the head expressed satisfaction.

But at this moment steps from an office and a sound of the opened lock were heard (the door of laboratory was always closed by a key from an office). Laurent hardly managed to close the crane. Hissing in a throat of the head stopped.

Professor Kern entered.

THE HEAD STARTED TALKING

Since Laurent revealed a secret of the forbidden crane, passed about a week.

During this time between Laurent and the head even more friendly relations were established. In those hours when professor Kern went to university or clinic, Laurent opened the crane, sending a small current of air that the head could speak distinct whisper to a head throat. Quietly spoke also Laurent. They were afraid that the Black did not uslykhat their conversation.

Their talk, probably, well affected the head of professor Douel. Eyes became more live, and even mournful wrinkles between eyebrows were smoothed.

The head spoke much and willingly, as if rewarding itself during the compelled silence.

Last night Laurent dreamed the head of professor Douel and, having woken up, thought: Whether «Douel's head has dreams?»

– Dreams ... – were quietly whispered by the head. – Yes, I have dreams. And I do not know what more they deliver to me: grief or joy. I dream myself healthy, full of strength and I wake up twice unfortunate. Disadvantaged both physically, and morally. I am deprived of everything that to well living people. And only ability to think is left to me. «I think. Therefore, I exist» – with a bitter smile the head of the word of the philosopher Descartes quoted. – I exist...

– What do you dream?

– I never before saw myself in my present look. I see myself such what was once... I see the family, friends... Recently saw the late wife and endured with her spring of our love. Bettie once addressed me as the patient, having injured a leg at an exit from the car. Our first acquaintance was in my reception office. We somehow approached at once it. After the fourth visit I suggested it to look at the portrait of my bride lying on a desk. «I marry it if I receive its consent» – I told. It approached a table and uvidat on it a small mirror; having looked at it, she burst out laughing and told: «I think... she will not refuse». In a week she was my wife. This scene rushed before me in a dream recently... Бетти died here, in Paris. You know, I arrived from America as the surgeon here during the European war. Offered me department here, and I remained to live near expensive grave. My wife was the surprising woman...

The person of the head brightened up from memoirs, but was immediately saddened.

– As this time is infinitely far!

The head thought. Air quietly hissed in a throat.

– Last night I dreamed my son. I very much would like to look at it once again. But I do not dare to put it on this trial... For it I died.

– It is the adult? Where it is now?

– Yes, adult. It with you or is a little more senior than nearly one years. Graduated from university. Now has to be in England, at the aunt on mother. No, it is better not to have dreams. But me – the head continued, having kept silent – torment not only dreams. In reality I am tormented by false feelings. Strangely enough, sometimes it seems to me that I feel the body. I suddenly will want to sigh a full breast, to stretch, straighten widely hands as it is done by the sat-up person. And sometimes I feel gouty left leg pain. Isn't that so, ridiculously? Though as to the doctor it has to be clear to you. Pain is so real that I involuntarily look down down and, of course, through glass I see under myself empty space, stone plates of a floor... From time to time it seems to me that now the suffocation attack will begin, and then I am almost happy with the «posthumous existence» saving me at least from asthma... All this purely reflex activity of the brain cages connected once with body life...

– Awfully!. – did not keep Laurent.

– Yes, it is awful... Strange, during lifetime it seemed to me that I lived one brainwork. I, the right, somehow did not notice the body, all shipped in scientific occupations. And, having only lost

a body, I felt what I lost. Now, more than ever for all my life, I think of smells of flowers, fragrant hay somewhere on the fringe of the forest, of distant walks on foot, noise of a sea surf... I did not lose sense of smell, touch and other feelings, but I am cut off from all variety of the world of feelings. The smell of hay is good in the field when it is connected with one thousand other feelings: and with a wood smell, and with beauty of the burning-down dawn, and with songs of forest birds. Artificial smells could not replace to me natural. A smell of perfume «Rose» instead of a flower? It would also satisfy me a little as hungry began to smell paste without paste. Having lost a body, I lost the world – all immense, wonderful world of things which I did not notice, of things which can be taken, to touch, and at the same time to feel the body, myself. Oh, I willingly would give my chimerical existence for one joy to feel weight of a simple cobble-stone in the hand! If you knew what pleasure is given me by a sponge touch when you wash to me a face in the mornings. Touch is the only opportunity for me to feel in the world of real things... Everything that I can make itself, it to touch with a tip of my language edge of my dried-up lips.

That evening Laurent was home disseminated and excited. The old woman mother, as usual, prepared for her tea with cold appetizer, but Mari did not touch sandwiches, hastily drank a glass to tea with a lemon and rose to go to the room. Attentive eyes of mother stopped on her.

– You are upset with something, Mari? – the old woman asked. – Perhaps, troubles on service?

– No, nothing, mother, was simply tired and the head hurts... I will lay down a bit earlier, and everything will pass.

Mother did not detain her, sighed and, having remained one, thought.

Since Mari arrived on service, it very much changed. Became nervous, closed. Mother and the daughter were always great friends. Between them there were no secrets. And now the secret appeared. The old woman Laurent felt that her daughter hides something. Mari answered questions of mother of service very briefly and vaguely.

– Professor Kern has a clinic for especially interesting patients in the medical relation at home. And I look after them.

– What it is patients?

– Different. There are very hard cases ... – Mari frowned and transferred a conversation to other subjects.

The old woman was not satisfied by these answers. And she began even to inquire the party, but she managed to learn nothing except that it was already known from the daughter.

«Whether it is in love in the Core, and, perhaps, hopelessly, without answer from its party?» – the old woman thought. But right there disproved herself: her daughter would not hide from her the feeling. And then, unless Mari not pretty? And Core bachelor. And if only Mari loved it, then, of course, and the Core would not resist. Not to find other such Mari in the whole world. No, here something else... And the old woman long could not fall asleep, turning on highly shaken up feather-beds.

Also Mari did not sleep. Having turned off light that her mother thought that she already sleeps, Mari sat on a bed with widely opened eyes. She remembered each word of the head and tried to imagine herself on its place: quietly concerned language of the lips, the sky, teeth and thought: «All this that the head can do. It is possible to bite lips, a language tip. It is possible to move with eyebrows. To move eyes. To close, open them. Mouth and eyes. It is more than any movement. No, still it is possible to move a little with skin on a forehead. More than anything...»

Mari closed and opened eyes and did grimaces. Oh, if at this moment mother looked at her! The old woman would decide that her daughter went crazy.

Then suddenly Mari began to be enough the shoulders, knees, hands, ironed itself up to a breast, started fingers in a thick hair and whispered:

– My God! As I am happy! As much I have! What I am rich! And I did not know, did not feel it!

The fatigue of a young body prevailed. Mari's eyes were involuntarily closed. And then she saw Douel's head. The head looked at it attentively and mournfully. The head broke from the little table and flew by air. Mari ran ahead of the head. The core as a kite, rushed on the head. Twisting corridors... Hard doors... Mari hurried to open them, but doors did not give in, and the Core made up for the head, the head whistled, hissed already near an ear... Mari felt that she chokes. Heart beats in a breast, its speeded-up blows painfully respond in all body. The cold shiver runs on a back... It opens all new and new doors... Oh, what horror!.

– Mari! Mari! What is with you? Yes wake up, Mari! You groan...

It is not a dream any more. Mother costs at a headboard and with alarm irons her hair.

– Anything, mother. I just saw a nasty dream.

– You too often began to see nasty dreams, my child...

The old woman leaves sighing, and Mari some more time lies with open eyes and strongly fragile heart.

– However my nerves become utterly worthless – she quietly whispers and this time fills up with sound sleep.

DEATH OR MURDER?

Once, glancing before going to bed over medical magazines, Laurent read article of professor Kern about new scientific research. In this article Core referred to works of other scientists in the same area. All these excerpts were taken from scientific magazines and books and in accuracy coincided with those which Laurent according to the indication of the head emphasized during their morning occupations.

The next day, as soon as an opportunity to talk to the head was presented, Laurent asked:

– What professor Kern in laboratory in my absence is engaged in?

After some fluctuation the head answered:

– We with it continue scientific works.

– Means, and you do all these marks for it? But you know that he publishes your work on its own behalf?

– I guessed.

– But it is shocking! How you allow it?

– What can I do?

– If you cannot, then I will be able to make! – angrily Laurent exclaimed.

– More quietly... In vain... Would be ridiculously in my family way to have claims for copyright. Money? On what they to me? Glory? What can the glory give me?. And then... if all this opens, work will not be finished.

And in that it was finished, I am interested. To admit, I want to see results of my works.

Laurent thought.

– Yes, such person as Kern, is capable of everything – she quietly spoke. – Professor Kern spoke to me when I arrived to him on service that you died of an incurable disease and bequeathed the body for scientific works. It is true?

– It is difficult for me to speak about it. I can be mistaken. It, however, but, can be... not all the truth. We worked together with it on revival of the human bodies taken from a fresh corpse. The core was my assistant. At that time I set as an ultimate goal of my works revival of the head of the person cut from a body. I finished all preparatory work. We already recovered the heads of animals, but decided not to disclose our progress until we do not manage to recover and show the human head. Before this last experience which success I did not doubt I transferred to the Core the manuscript with all scientific work done by me for preparation for printing. At the same time we worked on other scientific problem which was also close to permission. At this time to me there was an awful attack of asthma – one of diseases against which I as the scientist tried to win. Between me and it there was an old fight. All question was in time: which of us the first will come out the winner? I knew that the victory can remain on its party. And I really bequeathed the body for anatomic works, though did not expect that exactly my head will be recovered. And so... during this last attack the Core was about me and provided me medical care. It vsprysnut to me adrenaline. Can be... the dose was too big or maybe asthma made the business.

– And then?

– Asphyxia (suffocation), a short agony – and death which for me was only consciousness loss... And then I endured quite strange transitional states. Consciousness very slowly began to come back to me. It seems to me, my consciousness was awakened by acute sense of pain in a neck. Pain gradually calmed down. At that time I did not understand that it means. When we with the Core did experiences of revival of the dog heads cut from a body, we paid attention that dogs feel extremely acute pain after awakening. The head of a dog fought on a dish with such force that sometimes tubes on which nutritious liquid moved dropped out of blood vessels. Then I suggested to anesthetize the place of a cut. That it did not dry up and was not affected by bacteria, the neck of a dog plunged into

special solution of Ringen-Lokk-Douel. This solution contains both the nutritious, and antiseptic, and anesthetizing substances. The cut of my neck was also shipped in such liquid. Without this precautionary measure I could die again very quickly after awakening as the heads of dogs in our first experiences died. But, I repeat, at that moment I did not think of all this. Everything was vague as though somebody woke me after strong intoxication when effect of alcohol did not take place yet. But in my brain nevertheless the joyful thought smoldered that if consciousness, though vague, returned to me, then, so I did not die. Without opening eyes yet, I deliberated over strangeness of the last attack. Ordinary attacks of asthma broke at me suddenly. Sometimes intensity of short wind weakened gradually. But I never before fainted after an attack. It was something new. Also the feeling of severe pain in a neck was new. And one more strangeness: it seemed to me that I did not breathe at all, at the same time and did not test suffocation. I tried to sigh, but could not. It is more than that, I lost feeling of the breast. I could not expand a thorax though strenuously as it seemed to me, strained the pectoral muscles. «Something strange – I thought – or I sleep, or I dream...» Hardly I managed to open eyes. Darkness. In ears vague noise. I closed eyes again... You know that when the person dies, bodies of his feelings die away not at the same time. At first the person loses sense of taste, his sight, then hearing dies away then. Apparently, upside-down there was also their restoration. After a while I raised the eyelids again and saw muddy light. As though I fell to water by very deep water. Then the greenish haze began to disperse, and I vaguely distinguished before myself the person Kerna and at the same time uslykhat already quite distinctly his voice: «Recovered? I am very glad you to see again live». By effort of will I forced my consciousness to clear up rather. I looked down and saw directly under a chin a table – at that time this little table was not yet, and there was a simple table, like kitchen, hastily adapted by Kern for experience. Wanted to look back, but could not turn the head. Near this table, is higher than it, the second table – prozektorskiya was located. On this table someone's beheaded corpse lay. I looked at it, and the corpse seemed to me strange familiar in spite of the fact that it had no head and his thorax was opened. Right there nearby in a glass box someone's human heart fought... I bewildered looked at Kern. I still could not understand in any way why my head towers over a table and why I do not see the body. Wanted to give a hand, but did not feel it. «What is the matter?..» – I wanted to ask Kern and only silently moved lips. And he looked at me and smiled. «You do not learn? – he asked me, having nodded towards a prozektorsky table. – This your body. Now you forever got rid of asthma». He still could joke!. And I understood everything. I confess, the first minute I wanted to shout, break from a little table, to kill myself and Kern... No, absolutely not so. I knew mind that I had to become angry, shout, be indignant, and at the same time was struck with ice tranquility which owned me. Perhaps, I was also indignant, but somehow looking at myself and at the world from outside. In my mentality there were shifts. I only frowned and... was silent. Whether I could worry as worried earlier if now my heart fought in a glass vessel, and the motor was new heart?

Laurent with horror looked at the head.

– And after that... after that you continue to work with it. If not it, you would win against asthma and were a healthy person now... He is a thief and the murderer, and you help it to rise on glory top. You work for him. He as the parasite, eats your brain activity, it made some accumulator of creative thought of your head and earns on it money and glory. And you!. What does it give you? What your life?. You are deprived of everything. You an unfortunate stump in which, on your grief, still there live desires. The whole world stole from you the Core. Forgive me, but I do not understand you. And really you obediently, resignedly work for him?

The head smiled a sad smile.

– Head revolt? It is effective. What could I make? I am deprived even the last human opportunity: to commit suicide.

– But you could refuse to work with it!

– If you want, I passed through it. But my revolt was not caused by the fact that the Core uses my cogitative device. Eventually, what the name of the author matters? It is important that the idea was included into the world and made the business. I revolted only because it was heavy to me to get used to my new existence. I preferred life death... I will tell you one case which happened to me at that time. Somehow I was in laboratory one. Suddenly in a window the big black bug flew. From where it could appear in the center of the enormous city? I do not know. Perhaps, it was delivered by the car which is coming back from a country trip. The bug turned round and round over me and sat down on a glass board of my little table, near me. I mowed an eye and watched this disgusting insect, without having an opportunity to dump it. Pads of a bug slid on glass, and he, rustling with joints, slowly approached my head. I do not know whether you will understand me... I felt always some special fastidiousness, feeling of disgust for such insects. I could never force to touch them a finger. And here I was powerless even before this insignificant enemy. And for it my head was only a convenient springboard for take-off. And it continued to come nearer slowly, rustling with legs. After some efforts it managed to be hooked for beard hair. He long floundered, having got confused in hair, but persistently rose above and above. So it crept on the compressed lips, on the left side of a nose, through the covered left eye until at last, having reached a forehead, fell to glass, and from there to a floor. Empty case. But it made a tremendous impression on me... And when professor Kern came, I refused flatly to continue with him scientific works. I knew that it will not decide to show my head publicly. Without advantage will not begin to hold at itself the head which can be a proof against it. And it will kill me. Such is there was my calculation. Between us fight was started. He resorted to quite cruel measures. Once late at night he entered to me with the electric device, put electrodes to my temples and, without starting up current yet, addressed with the speech. He stood, having crossed hands on a breast, and spoke very tender, soft tone as the real inquisitor. «Dear colleague – began he. – We here one, confidentially, behind thick stone walls. However, if they were more thinly, it does not change business as you cannot shout. You quite within my power. I can cause you the most awful tortures and I will remain unpunished. But why tortures? We are both scientists and we can understand each other. I know, hardly is to you, but in it not my fault. You are necessary to me, and I cannot exempt you from burdensome life, and you are not able to run away from me even to a non-existence. Whether to us business by the world so is better to finish? You will continue our scientific occupations...» I negatively moved eyebrows, and my lips were silently whispered: «Is not present!» – «You very much upset me. Would you like a cigarette? I know that you cannot feel full satisfaction as you have no lungs through which nicotine could be soaked up in blood, but nevertheless familiar feelings...» And he, having taken out two cigarettes from a cigarette case, lit one itself, and inserted another to me into a mouth. With what pleasure I spat out this cigarette! «Well, the colleague – he told by the same polite, unperturbable voice – you force me he let to resort to corrective actions...» And electric current. As though the heated drill penetrated my brain ... «How do you feel? – carefully he asked me, precisely the patient's doctor. – The head hurts? Perhaps, you want to cure it? For this purpose it need to you...» – «Is not present!» – answered my lips. «Very much, it is a pity. It is necessary to strengthen current a little. You very much upset me». And it started up such strong current that it seemed to me, my head ignites. Pain was intolerable. I gritted the teeth. My consciousness was stirred up. As I wanted to lose it! But, unfortunately, did not lose. I only closed eyes and squeezed lips. Kern smoked, starting up me smoke in a face, and continued to roast my head on slow fire. He did not convince me any more. And when I slightly opened an eye, saw that it is enraged by my persistence. «Oh, damn! If your brains were not so necessary to me, I would fry them and today would feed with them the pinscher. Faugh, pighead!» And it inconsiderately broke all wires from my head and was removed. However to me still early was to rejoice. It returned soon and began to let in the solutions feeding my head, the irritating substances which caused in me the most severe painful pains. And when I involuntarily screwed up the face, he asked me: «As, the colleague, you solve? Still not?» I was unshakable. It left even more enraged, showering with me with one

thousand damnations. I triumphed a victory. Several days Kern did not appear in laboratory, and any day I expected the deliverer death. For the fifth day it came indifferently, cheerfully whistling a song. Without looking at me, it began to continue work. Day two or three I observed behind it, without taking in it part. But work could not but interest me. And when it, conducting experiments, made several mistakes which could ruin results of all our efforts, I did not restrain and made to it a sign. «Long ago so!» – he spoke with a pleased smile and started up air through my throat. I explained him mistakes and since then I continue to direct work... He outwitted me.

VICTIMS OF THE BIG CITY

Since Laurent learned the mystery of the head, she began to hate the Core. And this feeling grew every day. She fell asleep with this feeling and woke up with it. She in terrible nightmares dreamed the Core. It was directly sick with hatred. Recently at meetings with the Core it hardly kept not to say to it directly: «Murderer!»

It kept with it unnaturally and cold.

– A core – the terrible criminal! – Mari exclaimed, having remained alone with the head. – I will inform on it... I will shout of its crime, I will not calm down, I will not discredit this stolen glory yet, I will not cut out all his crimes. I will not spare myself.

– Silence!. Calm down – Douel persuaded. – I already said to you that in me there is no feeling of revenge. But if your moral sense is revolted and is eager for punishment, I will not dissuade you... only do not hurry. I ask you to wait until the end of our experiences. And I need the Core now, as well as it me. It without me cannot end work, but also and I without it. And all this that remained to me. Bigger to me not to create, but the begun works have to be ended.

In an office steps were heard.

Laurent quickly closed the crane and took seat with the book in a hand, still indignant. Douel's head lowered eyelids as the person shipped in a somnolence.

Professor Kern entered.

He suspiciously looked at Laurent.

– What is the matter? you are upset with something? Everything is all right?

– There is... nothing... everything is all right... family troubles...

– Give your pulse...

Laurent reluctantly gave a hand.

– Fights it is speeded up... Nerves play pranks... For nervous, perhaps, it is hard work. But I am happy with you. I double to you remuneration.

– It is not necessary for me, I thank you.

– «It is not necessary for me». Who does not need money? You have a family.

Laurent answered nothing.

– Here that. It is necessary to make some preparations. We will place the head of professor Douel in the room behind laboratory... Temporarily, colleague, temporarily. You do not sleep? – he addressed the head. – And here tomorrow will bring two fresh corpses, and we will make of them pair of well talking heads and we will show them in scientific organization. It is time to publish our opening.

And the Core scanned Laurent again. Ahead of time not to find all force of the hostility, Laurent forced itself to take an indifferent form and hurried to ask a question, the first of come to its mind:

– Whose corpses will be brought?

– I do not know, and nobody knows it. Because now it is not corpses, and living and healthy people yet. Healthier us. I can tell it with confidence. I need the heads of absolutely healthy people. But tomorrow they are expected by death. And in an hour, not later, after that they will be here, on a prozektorsky table. I will take care of it.

Laurent which expected from professor Kern of everything, looked at him with such fearful glance that it for a moment mixed up, and then loudly burst out laughing.

– There is nothing more simply. I ordered couple of fresh corpses in a morgue. Business, you see that the city, this modern Moloch, demands the daily human victims. Every day with unalterability of laws of the nature in the city several people, apart from accidents at the plants, factories, constructions perish from traffic. Well and these fateful, cheerful, full of strength and health people will quietly fall asleep today, without knowing what expects them tomorrow. Tomorrow

morning they will get up and, cheerfully singing, will put on to go as they will suspect, work, and actually – towards to the inevitable death. At the same time in other end of the city, also carefree singing, their involuntary executioner will put on: driver or motorman. Then the victim will leave the apartment, the executioner will leave the opposite end of the city from the garage or the tram park. Overcoming a traffic stream, they will persistently come nearer to each other, without knowing each other, to the most fatal point of intersection of their ways. Then for one short moment someone from them will stand gaping – and is ready. On the statistical accounts noting number of the victims of traffic one stone will increase. Thousands of accidents have to lead them to this fatal point of intersection. And nevertheless all this will steadily be made with an accuracy of the clockwork shifting for a moment in one plane two hour hands going with various speed.

Professor Kern was never so talkative with Laurent. And from where it has this unexpected generosity? «I double to you remuneration...»

«He wants to cajole, buy me – Laurent thought. – He, apparently, suspects that I guess or even I know about much. But he will not manage to buy me».

NEW INHABITANTS OF LABORATORY

Next morning on a prozektorsky table of laboratory of professor Kern two fresh corpses really lay.

Two new heads intended for public demonstration should not have known about existence of the head of professor Douel And therefore it was providently moved by professor Kern to the adjacent room.

The men's corpse belonged to the worker of years of thirty who died in a traffic stream. His mighty body was crushed. In the half-open glazed-over eyes the fright stood.

Professor Kern, Laurent and John in white dressing gowns worked on corpses.

– There were some more corpses – professor Kern said. – One worker fell from the woods. Rejected. It could have an injury of a brain from concussion. I rejected and several suicides who got poisoned with poisons. This guy was suitable. Yes this still... night beauty.

He pointed by a nod of the head to the woman's corpse with the beautiful, but faded person. On a face still traces of blush and a make-up pencil remained. The person was quiet. The eyebrows only raised and a half-open mouth expressed some children's surprise.

– The canary from bar. It was killed on the spot with a stray bullet during the quarrel of drunk apaches. Right in the heart – you see? Purposely so you will not get.

Professor Kern worked quickly and surely. The heads were separated from a body, corpses are carried away.

Some more minutes – and the heads were placed on high little tables. In a throat, tubes are entered into veins and carotids.

Professor Kern was in the pleasant excited state. The moment of its celebration came. He did not doubt success.

Science stars were invited to the forthcoming demonstration and the report of professor Kern in scientific organization. The press run by a skillful hand placed preliminary articles in which extolled the scientific genius of professor Kern. Magazines placed his portraits. Celebrations of national science attached to Kern's performance with his amazing experience of revival of the dead human heads significance.

Cheerfully whistling, professor Kern washed up hands, began to smoke a cigar and fatly looked at the heads facing him.

– He-he! On a dish the head not only Ioann, but also Salome got. Not bad there will be a meeting. It is necessary only to open the crane, and... the dead will recover. Well, mademoiselle? Recover. Open all three cranes. This big cylinder contains compressed air, but not poison, a he-ha...

For Laurent it was not news long ago. But she, on cunning unconscious almost, did not give also a sign.

The core frowned, became suddenly serious. Having approached closely Laurent, it, rapping out each word, told:

– But at professor Douel I ask not to open the air crane. At it... vocal chords are damaged and... Having caught a distrustful look Laurent, he with irritation added:

– Anyway... I forbid you. Be obedient if you do not want to draw upon yourself serious troubles. And, having become cheerful again, he lingeringly sang on motive of the opera «Clowns»:

– So, we begin!

Laurent opened cranes.

The worker's head began to give the first life signs. Hardly considerably eyelids trembled. Pupils became transparent.

– Circulation is. Everything goes well...

Suddenly eyes of the head changed the direction, turned to window light. Slowly consciousness came back.

– Lives! – cheerfully the Core shouted. – Give stronger an air stream.

Laurent opened the crane more. Air zasvistat in a throat.

– What is it?. Where I?. – muffledly the head said.

– In hospital, my friend – told the Core.

– In hospital?. – The head led eyes, lowered them down and saw under itself empty space.

– And where my legs? Where my hands? Where my body?

– It is absent, smart guy. It is smashed. Only the head also escaped, and the trunk had to be cut off.

– How to cut off it? Well is not present, I do not agree. What it

operation? Where I am fit such? You will not earn by one head of a piece of bread. Hands it is necessary to me. Without hands, without legs nobody will hire... You will leave hospital... Fie! And вый – ти there is nothing. How now? It is necessary to drink-eat. Our hospitals are known by me. Take a bit and expel: cured. No, I do not agree – he went on.

His reprimand, wide, suntanned, freckled face, hairstyle, innocent look of blue eyes – everything convicted of it the countryman.

The need tore off it from darling fields, the city tore to pieces a young sound body.

– Perhaps though the grant what will leave?. And where that?. – suddenly he remembered, and his eyes extended.

– Who?

– Yes that... that ran over me... There is a tram, another, the car here here, and it directly on me...

– Do not worry. He will receive the. Number of the truck is written down: four thousand seven hundred eleventh if it interests you. What is your name? – professor Kern asked.

– Me? Thomas was called. Thomas Bush, here it as.

– And so that, Toma... You will not need anything, and will not suffer neither from hunger, nor from cold, nor from thirst. You will not be thrown out on the street, do not worry.

– Well, you will feed with a gift or at fairs for money to show?

– To show we will show, only not at fairs. We will show to scientists. And now have a rest. – And, having looked at the woman's head, the Core anxiously noticed: – Salome keeps itself waiting for something long.

– It is well, too the head without body? – Thomas's head asked.

– As you can see, that it was not boring for you, we took care to invite the young lady in the company... Close, Laurent, his air crane that did not interfere with the chatter.

The core took out the thermometer from nostrils of the head of the woman.

– Temperature is higher cadaveric, but is still low. Revival goes slowly...

Time went. The head of the woman did not come to life. Professor Kern began to worry. He went on laboratory, looked for hours, and each its step on a stone floor was loudly given in the big room.

Thomas's head bewildered looked at him and silently moved lips.

At last the Core approached the head of the woman and attentively examined glass tubules in which the rubber tubes entered into carotids terminated.

– Here where reason. This tube enters too freely and therefore circulation goes slowly. Give a tube more widely.

The core replaced a tube, and in a few minutes the head recovered.

Brike's head – so called the woman – reacted more violently to the revival. When she finally recovered and started talking, began to shout hoarsely, begged better to kill her, but not to leave such freak.

– Ah, ah, ah!. My body... my poor body!. What did you make with me? Save me or kill. I cannot live without body!. Give me though to look at it... is not present, no, it is not necessary. It brainless... what horror!., what horror!.

When she calmed down a little, told:

– You say that you recovered me. I am poorly educated, but I know that the head cannot live without body. What it, miracle or sorcery?

– Neither that, nor another. It is achievement of science.

– If your science is capable to work such wonders, then it has to be able to do also others. Put to me other body. Georges settled made a hole in me a bullet... But many girls blow out the brains. Cut off their body and put to my head. Show me only earlier. It is necessary to choose a beautiful body. And so I cannot... The woman without body. It is worse, than the brainless man.

And, having addressed Laurent, she asked:

– Be so kind as to give me a mirror.

Looking in a mirror, Brike long and seriously studied herself.

– Awfully!. I can ask to do up you hair? I cannot do myself hair...

– At you, Laurent, works increased – the Core grinned. – Also your remuneration will be respectively increased. It is time for me.

He looked at the watch and, having approached is close to Laurent, whispered:

– At their presence – it showed eyes on the heads – words about the head of professor Douel!.

When the Core left laboratory, Laurent went to visit the head of professor Douel.

Douel's eyes looked at her sadly. The sad smile bent lips.

– Poor my, poor ... – Laurent whispered. – But you will be revenged soon!

The head made a sign, Laurent opened the air crane.

– You tell better how there took place experience – the head hissed, poorly smiling.

THE HEADS HAVE A GOOD TIME

It was even more difficult for Thomas and Brike's heads to get used to the new existence, than Douel's head. His brain was engaged now in the same scientific works which interested it earlier. Toma and Brike were people simple, and without body to live the sense was not it. No wonder that they began to miss soon.

– Unless it is life? – Thomas complained. – You stick out as a stub. Missed all walls to holes...

Oppressed mood of «captives of science» as joking their Core called, very much caused anxiety it. The heads could decay from melancholy before day of their demonstration comes.

And professor Kern took great pain to entertain them.

It got a movie camera, and Laurent with John organized in the evenings cinema sessions. As the screen served the white wall of laboratory.

Volumes especially were pleasant to the head comic pictures with Charlie Chaplin and Monty Banks's participation. Looking at their tricks, Thomas forgot for a while about the poor existence. From his throat even something similar escaped on laughter, and on eyes tears navertyvatsya.

But here Banks otprygat, and on a white wall of the room the image of a farm appeared. The little girl feeds chickens. Crested chicken busy treats the baby birds. Against the background of a cowshed the young healthy woman milks a cow, driving away an elbow of a calf which tycht a muzzle in an udder. The shaggy dog ran, cheerfully waving a tail, and after her the farmer seemed. It conducted a horse on a string.

Thomas somehow croaked by extraordinary high pitched, false voice and suddenly shouted:

– It is not necessary! It is not necessary!.

John striving about the device understood not at once in what business.

– Stop demonstration! – shouted Laurent and hurried to turn on the light. The turned pale image still flashed some time and at last disappeared. John stopped operation of the projector.

Laurent looked at Thomas. In the face of it tears were seen, but it were no laughter tears any more. All his chubby face gathered in a grimace as at the offended child, the wry mouth was made.

– As at us... in the village ... – complaining, he said. – Cow... chicken... Was gone, everything was gone now...

At the device already strove Laurent. Light was turned off soon, and on a white wall shadows started gleaming. Harold Lloyd bolted from the policemen pursuing him. But the mood at Thomas was already spoiled. Now the type of moving people began to make up on it still for great melancholy.

– See, rushes like mad – Thomas's head grumbled. – To put him so, would not jump.

Laurent once again tried to change the program. The type of a ball of high society absolutely upset Brike. Beautiful women and their magnificent toilets irritated her.

– It is necessary... I want to watch how others live – she said.

Cinema was removed.

The radio receiver entertained them slightly longer.

Both of them were concerned by music, in particular dance tunes motives, dances.

– My God, as I danced this dance! – Brike exclaimed once, breaking into tears.

It was necessary to pass to other entertainments. Brike was capricious, demanded every minute a mirror, invented new hairstyles, asked to use her eye shadow a pencil, to bleach and rumyanit the person. It was irritated with stupidity Laurent which could not comprehend the mysteries of cosmetics in any way.

– Really you do not see – Brike's head spoke with asperity – that the right eye is brought more darkly than left. Lift a mirror above.

She asked that brought it fashionable magazines and fabrics, and forced to drape a little table on which her head was strengthened.

She reached an eccentricity, having declared suddenly with overdue bashfulness that she cannot sleep in one room with the man.

– Fence off me for the night a screen or, at least, though the book.

And Laurent did «screen» of the big opened book, having established it on a glass board at Brike's head.

Not less trouble was brought also by Thomas.

Once he demanded some wine. And professor Kern was forced to give it pleasure of intoxication, entering into the small doses of the intoxicating substances feeding solutions.

Sometimes Toma and Brike sung a duet. The weakened vocal chords did not obey. It was the awful duet.

– My poor voice... If you could hear how I sang earlier! – spoke to Brike, and her eyebrows sufferingly rose up.

In the evenings they were attacked by thought. Extraordinariness of existence forced even these simple natures to think of a matter of life and death.

Brike believed in immortality. Thomas was a materialist.

– Of course, we are immortal – Brike's head said. – If soul died with a body, it would not return to the head.

– And where your soul sat: in the head or in a body? – maliciously Thomas asked.

– Of course, was obese... was everywhere ... – Brike's head uncertainly answered, suspecting some dirty trick of a question.

– So, soul of your body headless goes in the next world now?

– You headless – Brike took offense.

– I with the head. Only one I also have it – Thomas was not appeased. – And here no shower of your head there was in the next world? On this rubber gut on the earth returned back? No – he said already seriously – we as the car. Started up steam – again earned. And it was smashed – no steam will help...

And everyone was soaked into the thoughts...

SKY AND EARTH

Thomas's arguments did not convince Brike. Despite the careless way of life, she was an isty Catholic. Conducting quite stormy life, it had no time not only to think of existence beyond the grave, but even to go to church. However the religiousness imparted in the childhood strong kept in it. And now, appear, there came the most right moment in order that these seeds of religiousness gave shoots. Her real life was awful, but death – a possibility of the second death – its scarecrow is even more. At night she was tormented by afterlife nightmares.

Languages of an infernal flame seemed to it. She saw how her vile body was already roasted on a huge frying pan.

Brike in horror woke up, knocking teeth and choking. Yes, she definitely felt suffocation. Her excited brain demanded the strengthened oxygen inflow, but it was deprived of heart – that live engine which so ideally regulates delivery of the necessary amount of blood to all body organs. She tried to shout to wake John who was on duty in their room. But John was bothered by frequent calls, and he quietly to have a sleep though several hours, contrary to requirements of professor Kern, switched off sometimes at the heads air cranes. Brike opened a mouth as the fish taken from water and tried to shout, but its shout was not louder than agonal yawning of fish... And about the room black shadows of chimeras continued to wander, the infernal flame lit their faces. They approached her, stretched terrible sharp-clawed paws. Brike closed eyes, but it did not help: she continued to see them. And it is strange: it seemed to it that her heart fades and grows cold with horror.

– My God, My God, really you will not forgive to the slave yours, you are almighty – her lips were silently moved – your kindness is immense. I sinned much, but unless I am guilty? You know how all this left. I do not remember the mother, I could not be taught good... I starved. How many times I asked you to come to the rescue of me. Do not become angry, My God, I do not reproach you – it timidly continued the mute prayer – I want to tell that I am not so guilty. And on the mercy you, perhaps, will send me to a purgatory... Only not to hell! I will die of horror... What I silly, does not die there! – And it began the naive prayers again.

Also Thomas slept badly. But it was not pursued by hell nightmares. It was consumed by melancholy about terrestrial. Only several months ago it left the native village, having left there everything that was expensive to his heart, having taken with itself to the road only a small bag with flat cakes and the dreams – to raise money for purchase of a plot of land in the city. And then he marries red-cheeked, healthy Mari... Oh, then her father will not oppose to their marriage.

And here everything failed... On a white wall of the unexpected prison he saw a farm and saw the cheerful, healthy woman, so similar to Mari milking a cow. But instead of it, Thomas, some other man spent through the yard, by busy chicken with chickens, the horse who gradually was waving away a tail from flies. And it, Toma, is killed, destroyed, and his head is hitched up on a stake as the carrion crows frightened. Where his strong hands, sound body? In Thomas's despair began to creak teeth. Then he quietly began to cry, and tears dripped on a glass support.

– What is it? – with astonishment asked Laurent during morning cleaning. – From where this water?

Though the air crane providently was already switched on by John, but Thomas did not answer. Gloomy and unfriendly he looked at Laurent and when she departed to Brike's head, he quietly croaked it following:

– Murderer! – He already forgot about the driver who crushed it and transferred all the anger to the people surrounding it.

– What did you tell, Toma? – turned back Laurent, turning to him the head. But Thomas's lips were already again strong compressed, and eyes looked at it with undisguised anger.

Laurent was surprised and wanted to ask John on the reason of bad mood, but Brike already captured her attention.

– Be so kind as to scratch to me a nose on the right side. This helplessness is awful... There is no heat-spot there? But why then so scratches? Give me, please, a mirror.

Laurent brought a mirror to Brike's head.

– Turn to the right, I do not see. Still... Here so. The redness is. Perhaps, to spread with a cold cream?

Laurent patiently smeared with cream.

– Here so. Now I ask to powder. I thank you... Laurent, I wanted to ask you about one thing...

– Please.

– Tell me if... very guilty person confesses at the priest and will confess in the sins whether such person can receive an absolution and get to Heaven?

– Of course, maybe – seriously answered Laurent.

– I so am afraid of infernal tortures ... – Brike admitted. – I ask you, invite to me the cure... I want to die the Christian...

And Brike's head with a type of the dying martyr rolled up eyes up. Then she lowered them and exclaimed:

– What interesting style of your dress! It is the latest fashion? You did not bring me fashionable magazines long ago.

Brike's thoughts returned to terrestrial interests.

– Short hem... Beautiful legs are very much won at short skirts. My legs! My unfortunate legs! You saw them? Oh, when I danced, these legs demented men!

The room was entered by professor Kern.

– How are you doing? – he cheerfully asked.

– Listen, mister professor – addressed it Brike – I not can so... you have to attach to me someone's body... I already asked you about it once and now I ask still. I very much ask you. I am sure that if only you want, then you will be able to make it...

«Devil take it, and why is also not present?» – professor Kern thought. Though he appropriated all honor of revival of the human head separated from a body, but in soul understood that this successful experience is entirely a merit of professor Douel. But why not to go further Douel? To make one live of two died people – it would be grandiose! And all honor at good luck of experiment by the right would belong to one Kern. However, some advice of the head of Douel nevertheless could take. Yes, over it resolutely it is necessary to think.

– And you very much want to dance still? – the Core smiled and started up a stream of cigar smoke in Brike's head.

– Would I like? I will dance day and night. I will wave a hand as I a windmill, will flit as a butterfly... Give me a body, a young, beautiful female body!

– But why by all means women's? – playfully asked the Core. – If you only want, I can give you and a male body.

Brike looked at it with surprise and horror.

– Male body? The female head on a male body! No, no, it will be an awful disgrace! It is difficult even to think up a suit...

– But you then will not be a woman any more. You turn into the man. At you moustaches and a beard will grow, also the voice will change. Unless you do not want to turn into the man? Many women regret that they were not born the man.

– These are, probably, such women to whom men did not pay any attention. Such, of course, would benefit from transformation into the man. But I... I do not need it. – And of Brike it is proud hitched up the beautiful eyebrows.

– Well, let will be in your opinion. You will remain a woman. I will try to find to you a suitable body.

– Oh, professor, I will be infinitely grateful to you. It is possible to make it today? I represent what I will have effect when again I return in Shanuar...

– It so does not become soon.

Brike continued to stir, but the Core already departed from her and addressed Thomas:

– How are you, friend?

Thomas did not hear professor's conversation with Brike. Occupied with the thoughts, he gloomy looked on the Core and answered nothing.

Since professor Kern promised Brike to give a new body, her mood abruptly changed. Infernal nightmares did not pursue it any more. She did not think of existence beyond the grave any more. All her thoughts were absorbed by cares of the forthcoming new mortal life. Looking in a mirror, she worried that her face became thin, and skin got a yellowish shade. It exhausted Laurent, forcing to twist itself hair, to do a hair and to direct a make-up at the person.

– Professor, really I will remain such thin and yellow? – with concern she asked the Core.

– You will become more beautiful, than were – it calmed her.

– No, paints you will not help here, it is self-deception – she said after departure of professor. – Mademoiselle Loran, we will do cold washings and massage. Eyes and from a nose to lips at me had new wrinkles. I think if it is good to mass, they will be destroyed. One my friend... Ah yes, I also forgot you to ask whether you found gray to silk on a dress? Gray color very much goes to me. And fashionable magazines brought? Perfectly! What a pity that else it is impossible to do fittings. I do not know what I will have a body. It is good that it got higher than growth, with narrow hips... Develop the magazine.

And it went deep into the mysteries of beauty of dresses. Laurent did not forget about the head of professor Douel. She still looked after the head and in the mornings was engaged in reading, but on a talk there was no time left, and Laurent about much wanted to talk over with Douel. She more and more overtired and was nervous. Brike's head haunted it minutes. Sometimes Laurent interrupted reading and was forced to run on Brike's shout only to correct the gone-down ringlet or to answer whether there was Laurent in linen shop.

– But you do not know the sizes of your body – constraining irritation, Laurent said, hastily corrected a ringlet on Brike's head and hurried to Douel's head.

The thought of production of courageous operation took the Core.

Kern strenuously worked, being prepared for this difficult operation. He was for a long time locked from-headed professor Douel and talked to her. At all desire could not do without Douel Kern's council. Douel pointed to him to a number of difficulties of which Kern did not think and which could affect the result of experience, advised to do several preliminary animal experiments and directed these experiences. And – such is there was force of intelligence of Douel – he extremely became interested in the forthcoming experience. Douel's head as though even freshened up. His thought worked with extraordinary clarity.

The core was happy and dissatisfied with so broad help of Douel. The further work moved, the Core was convinced more that without Douel it would not cope with it.

And it needed to amuse the vanity only with the fact that implementation of this new experience will be made by it.

– You the worthy successor of the late professor Douel – Douel's head with hardly noticeable ironical smile somehow told him. – Ah, if I could take more active part in this work!

It was not either a request, or a hint. Douel's head too well knew that the Core will not want, will not decide to give it a new body.

The core frowned, but pretended that it did not hear this exclamation.

So, experiences with animals were crowned with success – he told. – I operated two dogs. Having beheaded them, sewed the head of one to a trunk another. Both are well, seams on a neck grow together.

– Food? – the head asked.

– Still artificial. Through a mouth I give only disinfecting solution with iodine. But I will pass to normal food soon.

In several days the Core announced:

– Dogs eat normally. Bandagings are removed, and, I think, in a day or two they will be able to run.

– Wait for about a week – the head advised. – Young dogs do the sharp movements by the head, and seams can disperse. Do not force. – «You will manage to reap monasteries» – the head wanted to add, but kept. – And one more: you keep dogs in different rooms. Together they will lift fuss and can damage to themselves.

At last day when professor Kern with a solemn air entered into the room of the head of Douel a dog with the black head and a white trunk came. The dog, probably, felt well. Her eyes were live, she cheerfully wagged a tail. Having seen the head of professor Douel, the dog suddenly tousled wool, grumbled and began a bark by a wild voice. The extraordinary show, probably, struck and frightened her.

– Spend a dog about the room – the head told.

The core walked about the room, leading a dog. Nothing escaped the swept together, sharp-sighted eye of Douel.

– And it that? – Douel asked. – The dog drops to a hind left leg a little. And voice not as it should be.

The core was confused.

– The dog limped also before operation – he told – the leg is overcome.

– Approximately it is not visible to deformation, and I can probe, alas. You could not find couple of healthy dogs? – with doubt in a voice the head asked. – I think, with me it is possible to be quite frank, dear colleague. Likely, long pottered with revival operation and too detained «a mortal pause» of a stop of warm activity and breath, and it as you have to know from my experiences, quite often leads to disorder of functions of nervous system. But calm down, such phenomena can disappear. Try only that your Brike did not limp on both legs.

The core was enraged, but tried not to give a sign. He learned in the head of former professor Douel – direct, exacting and self-confident.

«Shockingly! – the Core thought. – This hissing as the punctured tire, the head continues to teach me and to scoff at my mistakes, and I am forced, precisely the school student, to listen to its lectures... The turn of the crane, and spirit will take off from this rotten pumpkin...» However instead the Core, nothing without giving the mood, with attention listened to some more councils.

– I thank for your instructions – told the Core and, having nodded, left the room. Behind doors it became cheerful again. «No – the Core consoled itself – work is carried out perfectly. It is not so easy to please Douel. The dropping leg and a wild voice of a dog – trifles as compared it is made».

Passing through the room where Brike's head was located, he stopped and, showing on a dog, told:

– Mademoiselle Brike, your desire will be granted soon. You see this doggie? It as well as you, was the head without body, and, look, she lives and runs indifferently.

– I am not a doggie – Brike's head with insult answered.

– But same necessary experience. If the doggie in a new body recovered, then also you will recover.

– I do not understand at what here the doggie – stubborn went on Brike. – I do not care about a doggie. You tell better when I am recovered. Instead of it is recovering rather me, you potter with some dogs.

The core hopelessly waved a hand and, continuing to smile cheerfully, told:

– Now soon. It is only necessary to find a suitable corpse... that is a body, and you will be in a full form, as they say.

Having taken away a dog, the Core returned with centimeter in hands and carefully measured a circle of a neck of the head of Brike.

– Thirty six centimeters – he told.

– My God, really I so lost weight? – Brike's head exclaimed. – At me was thirty eight. And I carry the size of shoes...

But the Core, without listening to it, quickly left to itself. He did not manage to take seat at the table in an office as at a door were knocked.

– Enter.

The door opened. Entered Laurent. She tried to keep quietly, but her face was with emotion.

DEFECT AND VIRTUE

– What is the matter? something happened To the heads? – asked the Core, raising the head from papers.

– Is not present... but I wanted to talk to you, mister professor.

The core leaned back on a chair back.

– I listen to you, mademoiselle Loran.

– Tell, you seriously assume to give to Brike's head a body or only console it?

– Absolutely seriously.

– And you hope for success of this operation?

– Quite. You saw a dog?

– And you do not assume... to put Thomas on legs? – from far away began Laurent.

– Why would be not present? He already asked me about it. Not all at once.

– And Douel ... – Laurent suddenly exorcized quickly and with emotion: – Of course, everyone has the right for life, for normal human life, both Thomas, and Brike. But you, certainly, understand that the value of the head of professor Douel is much higher, than your other heads... And if you want to return to Thomas and Brike's normal existence, then, it is how more important to return the head of professor Douel to the same normal life.

The core frowned. All expression of his face became alerted and rigid.

– Professor Douel, is more faithful – his professorial head, found the beautiful defender in your person – he told, ironically smiling. – But in such defender, perhaps, there is no need also, and you in vain get excited and worry. Certainly, I thought also of revival of the head of Douel.

– But why you will not begin experience with it?

– Yes just because Douel's head is more expensive thousands of other human heads. I began with a dog before allocating with a body Brike's head. Brike's head is so more expensive than the head of a dog as far as Douel's head is more expensive than Brike's head.

– Human life and dogs is incomparable, professor...

– As well as Douel and Brike's heads. You have no anything else to tell?

– Nothing, mister professor – Laurent answered, going to a door.

– In that case, mademoiselle, I have to you some questions. Wait, mademoiselle.

Laurent stopped at a door, interrogatively looking on the Core.

– I ask you, approach a table, sit down.

Laurent with vague alarm fell to a deep chair. The person Kerna did not promise anything good. Kern leaned back on a back of a chair and long Laurent searchingly looked in the face until it lowered them. Then he quickly rose in all the high growth, strong rested fists against a table, inclined the head to Laurent and asked quietly and impressively:

– Tell, you did not launch the air crane of the head of Douel in action? You did not talk to him?

Laurent felt that her finger-tips grew cold. Thoughts a whirlwind began to spin in her head. The anger which excited in it the Core bubbled and was ready to break outside.

«To tell or not to tell it the truth?» – fluctuated Laurent. Oh, what pleasure to say directly to this person the word «murderer», but such open attack could spoil everything.

Laurent did not believe that the Core will give to Douel's head a new body. She already knew too much to trust such opportunity. And she dreamed only of one: to discredit the Core which appropriated Douel fruits of labor in the opinion of society and to solve its crime. She knew that the Core will not stop before anything, and, declaring itself his open enemy, she endangered the life. But not the instinct of self-preservation stopped it. She did not want to die before the crime of the Core is not solved. And for this purpose it was necessary to lie. But conscience, all her education did not allow to lie to it. Never before in life she lied and now endured awful nervousness.

The core kept the eyes glued from her face.

– Do not lie – he told derisively – do not burden the conscience a lie sin. You talked to the head, do not open, I know it. John overheard everything...

Laurent, having inclined the head, was silent.

– It is only interesting to me to know about what you talked to the head?

Laurent felt how the rushed-back blood flowed to cheeks. She raised the head and looked fool in the face the Core.

– About everything.

– So – told the Core, without removing hands from a table. – So I also thought. About everything.

There came the pause. Laurent looked down down again and sat with a type of the person waiting for a sentence now.

The core suddenly quickly went to a door and locked it. Walked several times on a soft carpet of an office, having stuffed up hands for a back. Then silently approached Laurent and asked:

– And what you think to undertake, the lovely girl? To prosecute a blood-thirsty monster – the Core? To defame his name? To expose its crime? Douel, probably, asked you about it?

– No, no – having forgotten all the fear, hotly started talking Laurent – I assure you that the head of professor Douel is absolutely deprived of feeling of revenge. Oh, it is noble soul! He even... dissuaded me. This is not what you, it is impossible to judge by himself! – already with a call it finished, having sparkled eyes.

The core grinned and again walked on an office.

– So, so, perfectly. Means, you after all had exposing intentions and if not the head of Douel, then professor Kern would already be imprisoned. If virtue cannot triumph, then, at least, defect has to be punished. So all virtuous novels which you read, isn't that so, the lovely girl terminated?

– And defect will be punished! – she exclaimed, already almost losing will over the feelings.

– Oh yes of course, there, in heaven. – The core looked at the ceiling revetted with large checkers from a black oak. – But here, on the earth and to you it will be known, naive creation, triumphs defect, and only defect! And virtue... Virtue costs with a cap in hand, begging for pennies at defect, or sticks out there – the Core specified towards the room where there was Douel's head – as the carrion crows frightened, reflecting on caducity of all terrestrial.

And, having approached Laurent closely, it, having lowered a voice, told:

– You know, as you, and I can burn Douel's head in a literal sense to ashes, and any soul does not learn about it.

– I know that you are ready for anything...

– Crime? And it is very good that you know it. – The core walked about the room again and by already usual voice continued to speak, as if arguing aloud: – However what you will order to do with you, the beautiful avenger? You, unfortunately, from that breed of people who do not stop before anything and for the sake of the truth are ready to accept a crown of martyrdom. You fragile, nervous, impressionable, but will not intimidate you. To kill you? Today, now? I will manage to cover up murder tracks, but nevertheless it is necessary to tinker with it. And my time is expensive. To bribe you? It is more difficult, than to intimidate you... Well, you say what to do to me with you?

– Leave everything as was... I did not inform on you still.

– Also you will not inform?

Laurent slowed down with the answer, then answered quietly, but is firm:

– I will inform.

The core stamped a leg.

– U-at, the stubborn little girl! And so what I will tell you. You sit down to my desk now... Be not afraid, I am not going neither to smother yet, nor to poison you. Well, you sit down.

Laurent bewildered looked at it, thought and changed a chair at a desk.

– Eventually, you are necessary to me. If I kill you now, I should employ the assistant or the deputy. I am not guaranteed that on your place there will be no blackmailer who, having revealed a secret of the head of Douel, will not begin to exhaust from me money as a result nevertheless to inform on me. I, at least, know you... So, write. «Dear mummy – or how you call the mother there? – the condition of patients whom I look after demands my permanent presence in the house of professor Kern...»

– You want to imprison me? To detain in your house? – indignantly asked Laurent, without beginning to write.

– That's it, my virtuous assistant.

– I will not begin to write such letter – resolutely declared Laurent.

– There is enough! – suddenly the Core so shouted that in hours the spring hooted. – Understand that I have no other exit. Be not, at last, silly.

– I will not remain with you and I will not write this letter!

– Ah, so! Well. You can go wherever one wishes. But, before you will leave from here, you will be a witness to how I will take away life from Douel's head and I will dissolve this head in chemical solution. Go and shout then worldwide that you saw at me Douel's head. Nobody will believe you. Will laugh at you. But take care! I will not leave your denunciation without punishment. Idemte!

Core Laurent grabbed by a hand and entailed to a door. It was too weak physically to show resistance to this rough impact.

The core unlocked a door, quickly passed through Thomas and Brike's room and entered the room where there was a head of professor Douel.

Douel's head bewildered looked at this unexpected visit. And the Core, without paying attention to the head, quickly approached devices and sharply turned the crane from the cylinder giving blood.

Head eyes not knowingly, but quietly turned towards the crane, then the head looked on the Core and confused Laurent. The air crane was not open, and the head could not speak. She only moved lips, and Laurent, got used to a head mimicry, understood: it was the mute question: «End?»

Then the head eyes directed on Laurent began as though to grow dull, and at the same time eyelids widely revealed, eyeballs were made buldge out, and the person began to twitch convulsively. The head endured suffocation torments.

Laurent hysterical shouted. Then, being unsteady, approached the Core, caught his hand and, almost fainting, started talking by the voice which is interrupted, squeezed spazmy:

– Open, open the crane rather... I agree to everything!

With hardly noticeable smile the Core opened the crane. The vivifying stream began to flow on a tube in Douel's head. Convulsive twitchings of the person stopped, eyes accepted normal expression, the look brightened up. The dying-away life returned to Douel's head. Also consciousness because Douel looked on Laurent with expression of bewilderment and as though even at disappointments again returned. Laurent was unsteady for nervousness.

– Allow you to offer a hand – gallantly told the Core, and strange couple was removed.

When Laurent took seat at a table again, the Core indifferently told:

– So on what we stopped? Yes ... «The condition of patients demands my constant – or not, write: permanent stay in the house of professor Kern. Professor Kern was so kind that provided in my order the beautiful room with a window in a garden. Besides, as my working day increased, professor Kern trebled my salary».

Laurent reproachfully looked on the Core.

– It is not a lie – he told. – Need forces me to imprison you, but I have to reward something you. I really increase to you a salary. Write further: «Leaving here fine and though there is a lot of work, but I feel perfectly. To me do not come: professor receives nobody. But do not miss, I will write you...» So. Well and from yourself add still some tendernesses which you usually write that the letter did not excite any suspicions.

And, already as though having forgotten about Laurent, the Core began to reflect aloud:

– Long so, of course, cannot proceed. But, I hope, I long also will not detain you. Our work comes to the end, and then... That is I wanted to tell that the head is short-lived. And when it will finish the existence... Well that there, you know everything. Easier to say, when we will terminate work with Douel, also existence of the head of Douel will terminate. From the head there will be no ashes left even, and then you will be able to return to the dear mother. You will not be dangerous to me any more. And once again: keep in mind if you take in head to stir, I have witnesses who in case of need will swear that mortal remains of professor Douel together with the head, legs and other professorial attributes are burned by me after anatomic opening in a crematorium. For these cases a crematorium – very convenient thing.

The core called. John entered.

– John, you will take away mademoiselle Loran to the white room fronting in a garden. Mademoiselle Loran moves to my house as now a lot of work is necessary. Ask at mademoiselle that it is necessary for it to settle more conveniently, and get all necessary. You can order from my name by phone in shops. I will pay bills. Do not forget to order a lunch for mademoiselle.

And, having taken the leave, the Core left.

John carried out Laurent to the room allocated to it.

The core did not lie: the room was really very good – light, spacious and comfortably arranged. The huge window left in a garden. But the most gloomy prison could not guide at Laurent bigger melancholy, than this cheerful, elegant room. As tyazhelobolny, reached Laurent a window and looked in a garden.

«The second floor... it is high... you will not escape from here...» – she thought. Yes if could escape, would not escape as its flight would be equivalent to a sentence for Douel's head.

Laurent in exhaustion fell by a couch and was lost in heavy thought. It could not define, what is the time was in this state.

– To eat it is given – she as in the sleep heard John's voice and raised tired eyelids.

– I thank you, I am not hungry, clear the table.

The well-trained servant implicitly executed an order and left.

And it was soaked into the thoughts again. When in a window of the opposite house fires flashed, she felt such loneliness that decided to visit immediately the heads. Especially she wanted to see Douel's head.

Unexpected visit Laurent extremely pleased Brike's head.

– At last! – she exclaimed. – Already? Brought?

– What?

– My body – Brike such tone as though the question went about a new dress told.

– No, did not bring yet – involuntarily smiling, Laurent answered. – But will bring soon, now to you not for long to expect.

– Ah, rather!.

– And me will also sew other body? – Thomas asked.

– Yes, certainly – calmed him Laurent. – And you will be same healthy, strong as were. You will collect money, will go to yourself to the village and marry your Mari.

Laurent already knew all concealed desires of the head.

Thomas gave smacking kiss lips.

– It is rather.

Laurent hurried to pass to the room of the head of Douel. As soon as the air crane was open, the head asked Laurent:

– What does all this mean?

Laurent told the head about a conversation with the Core and the conclusion.

– It is shocking! – the head told. – If I could only help you... And I, perhaps, will be able if only you help me...

In the opinion of the head there were an anger and determination.

– Everything is very simple. Close the crane from nutritious tubes, and I will die. Believe that I was even disappointed when the Core reopened the crane and recovered me. I will die, and the Core will allow to go home you.

– I will never come back home such price! – Laurent exclaimed.

– I would like to have all eloquence of Cicero to convince you to make it.

Laurent negatively shook the head.

– Even Cicero would not convince me. I will never decide to stop human life...

– Well, unless I am a person? – with a sad smile the head asked.

– You remember, you repeated Descartes's words: «I think. Therefore, I exist» – Laurent answered.

– Let's put, it so, but then here that. I will cease to instruct the Core. And already any tortures it will not force me to help it. And then he will finish off me.

– No, no, I beg you. – Laurent approached the head. – Listen to me. I thought of revenge earlier, now I think of other. If the Core manages to put a corpse body to Brike's head and operation will take place successfully, that is hope and you to return to life... Not a Core, so another.

– Unfortunately, hope this very weak – Douel answered. – Hardly experience will work well even at the Core. He is an angry and criminal person, vain as one thousand Fame-thirsty persons. But he is a talented surgeon and, perhaps, the most capable of all assistants who I had. If he which took my advices to present day does not make it, then nobody will make. However I doubt that also he performed this unprecedented operation.

– But dogs...

– Dogs – business other. Both dogs, live and healthy, lay on one table before making operation of change of the heads. All this occurred very quickly. And that the Core, apparently, managed to return only one dog to life, otherwise it would bring both of them to me to brag. And the body of a corpse can be brought only in several hours when, perhaps, rotting processes began already. You can judge complexity of the operation as the physician. This is not what to sew the semi-cut-off finger. It is necessary to connect, carefully to sew all arteries, veins and, the main thing, nerves and a spinal cord, differently will turn out the cripple; then to resume blood circulation... No, it is infinitely difficult task, excessive for modern surgeons.

– Really you would not perform such operation?

– I considered everything, already did experiences with dogs and I believe that I would manage it...

The door unexpectedly opened. The Core was on the threshold.

– Meeting of conspirators? I will not disturb you. – And he slammed the door.

DEAD DIANA

It seemed to Brike's head that the new body is as easy to pick up and sew to the head of the person how to try on and sew a new dress. The volume of a neck is removed, it is necessary only to pick up the same volume of a neck at a corpse.

However she was convinced soon that business is not so simple. In the morning in white dressing gowns to it professor Kern, Laurent and John were. Kern disposed that Brike's head was carefully removed from a glass support and is put by the person up so that it was possible to see all cut of a neck. Head food the blood oxygenated did not stop. Kern went deep into studying and measurements.

– At all monotony of human anatomy – said the Core – each body of the person has the specific features. Sometimes difficult happens to distinguish whether the external or internal carotid predlezhit, for example. Also the artery thickness, windpipe width even at people is unequal to the identical volume of a neck. It is necessary to tinker also with nerves much.

– But how you will operate? – asked Laurent. – Having put a neck cut to a trunk cut, you thereby will close all surface of a cut at once.

– That's just the point. We with Douel handled this issue. It is necessary to do a number of longitudinal sections – to go from the center to the periphery. It is very complex work. It is necessary to make fresh sections on a neck of the head and a corpse to reach not died off yet, active cages. But the main difficulty nevertheless not in it. The main thing – how to destroy products of the begun rotting or the place of infectious infection in a corpse body how to clear blood vessels of the turned blood, to fill them with fresh blood and to force to earn organism «motor» – heart... And spinal cord? The slightest touch to it causes the strongest reaction, often with the most serious consequences.

– And how you assume to overcome all these difficulties?

– Oh, it is my secret so far. When experience works well, I will publish all story of revival from the dead. Well, for today enough. Put the head into place. Start up an air stream. How do you feel, mademoiselle? – asked the Core, addressing Brike's head.

– I thank you, well. But listen, mister professor, I am very concerned... You spoke about different unclear things here, but one I understood that you are going to cut to pieces my neck up and down. Same there will be a continuous disgrace. Where I will seem with such neck which will be similar to cutlet?

– I will try that hems were less noticeable. But, certainly, it will not be possible to hide absolutely operation traces. Do not do desperate eyes, mademoiselle, you can carry a velvet ribbon or even a necklace on a neck. Well, I will present it to you in day of your «birth». Yes, here still that. Now your head dried out a little. When you begin to live normal life, the head has to grow stout. To learn your normal volume of a neck, it is necessary «to fatten» you now, otherwise there can be troubles.

– But I cannot eat – the head plaintively answered.

– We will fatten you on a tubule. I prepared special structure – he addressed Laurent. – Besides, it is necessary to strengthen also supply of blood.

– You include fatty substances in nutritious liquid?

The core made uncertain gesture a hand.

– If the head also does not grow fat, then «will bulk up», and it and is necessary to us. So – it finished – there is a most important: you ask god, mademoiselle Brike that rather some beauty who will borrow you after death the fine body died.

– Do not speak so, it is awful! The person has to die that I received a body... And, the doctor, I am afraid. This body of the dead person. And suddenly it will come and will demand to give it the body?

– Who is she?

– Dead.

– But it will have no legs to come – laughing, the Core answered. – And if comes, then you will tell it that you gave to her body the head, but not it to you a body, and she, of course, will be grateful for this gift. I go to be on duty to a morgue. Wish me good luck!

Success of experience in many respects depended on finding perhaps fresh corpse and therefore the Core gave up all affairs and almost moved in a morgue, waiting for a happy occurrence.

With a cigar in a mouth it went on the long building so quietly as though walked on boulevards. Opaque light fell from a ceiling on long lines of marble tables. On each table the corpse which is already washed by a stream of water and undressed lay.

Having stuffed up hands in coat pockets and popykhiv a cigar, the Core bypassed long lines of tables, looked into faces and from time to time lifted leather covers to examine a body.

Together with it also relatives or friends of the died people went. The core showed to them ill-will, being afraid, as if they did not pull out at it a suitable corpse from under hands. It was not so simple to receive a corpse for the Core. Before the expiration of three-day term relatives could raise a claim to each corpse, after three days the semi-decayed corpse was not of any interest to the Core. It needed absolutely fresh, whenever possible even not cooled down corpse.

The core did not stint bribes to have an opportunity to receive a fresh corpse immediately. Number of a corpse could be replaced, and some unlucky person eventually would be registered as «missing».

«However it is hard to find Diana to Brike's taste» – the Core thought, examining wide a foot and calloused hands of corpses. The majority lying here belonged not to those who go by cars. The core passed from the end in the end. During this time several corpses were identified and carried away, and already dragged new on their places. But also among beginners the Core could not find material, suitable for operation. There were brainless corpses, but either improper build, or the having body wounds or, at last, beginning to decay already. Day was on an outcome. The core felt attacks of hunger and with pleasure imagined chicken cutlets in the smoking peas.

«Unsuccessful day» – the Core thought, taking out hours. And it went to an exit among the crowd full of a despair, melancholy and horror moving at corpses. Towards to it employees bore a corpse of the brainless woman. The washed young body shone as white marble.

«Oh, it something suitable» – he thought and went after watchmen. When the corpse was put, the Core fluently examined it and was even more convinced that it found what is necessary. The core already wanted to whisper to employees that they carried away a corpse as suddenly badly dressed old man with long ago not shaven moustaches and a beard approached a corpse.

– Here it, Marta! – he exclaimed and wiped a hand from a forehead sweat.

«The devil brought it!» – the Core swore and, having approached the old man, told:

– You identified a corpse? It brainless.

The old man showed on a big left shoulder birthmark.

– Perceptible – he answered.

The core was surprised that the old man tells so quietly.

– Who is she was? Your wife or daughter?

– God is mercy – the garrulous old man answered. – The niece it to me was and nonnative. From my cousin their three remained – the cousin died, and me them on a neck. At me the four. Need. But what you will make, the sir? Not kittens, under a fence you will not throw. And lived. And there was misfortune. We live in the old house, long ago moved us from it, but where you will get to? And here lived. The roof fell off. Other children got off with bruises, and this absolutely cut off the head. I with the old woman of the house was not, we with her fried chestnuts trade. I came home, and Marta to a morgue was already brought. And why in a morgue? They say, for the company, in other apartments suppressed people too, and some of them lonely were, here all of them here. I home came, to fyuit, and it is impossible to enter as if an earthquake.

«Business suitable» – the Core thought and, having taken the old man aside, told it:

– What happened, will not correct that. You see I am a doctor, and I need a corpse. I will directly speak. You want to receive hundred francs – and you can go home.

– You will clean? – The old man disapprovingly shook the head and thought. – To it, of course, all the same to vanish... We are people the poor... And all not someone else's blood...

– Two hundred.

– And the need is high, kids hungry... but after all it is a pity... The good girl was, very good, very kind, and the person as a rose tree not that this stuff ... – the Old man scornfully waved on tables with corpses.

«Well and old man! He, apparently, begins to praise highly the goods» – the Core thought and decided to change tactics.

– However, as you want – he carelessly told. – There is a lot of corpses, also is your niece is not worse at all. – And the Core departed from the old man.

– Well as so, let think ... – the old man tripped behind it, obviously inclining to the transaction. The core already triumphed, but situation unexpectedly changed once again.

– You already here? – the uneasy aged voice was heard.

The core turned back and saw quickly approaching tolstenky old woman in a clean white cap. The old man at the sight of it involuntarily grunted.

– Found? – the old woman asked, wildly looking around and whispering prayers.

The old man silently showed a hand on a corpse.

– Pigeon you ours, martyr unfortunate! – the old woman began to wail, approaching the beheaded corpse.

The core saw that it will be difficult to cope with the old woman.

– Listen, madam – he told friendly, addressing the old woman. – I talked to your husband here and learned that you very much need.

– We need or not, we do not ask from others – the old woman cut off not without pride.

– Yes, but... you see I am a member of charitable funeral society. I can host a funeral of your niece into the account of society and I will undertake all efforts. If you want, you can charge it to me, and go to the affairs, you are waited by your children and orphans.

– You what here talked a lot of? – the old woman on the husband snatched. And, having turned back to the Core, she told: – I thank you, mister, but I have to execute everything as it is necessary. Somehow we will cope also without your charitable society. What eyes you move? – it passed to usual tone in a conversation with the husband. – Take away the dead woman. Let's go. I also brought a wheelbarrow.

All this was told by such resolute tone that the Core chilly bowed and departed.

«Annoyingly! No, resolutely today unsuccessful day».

He went to an exit and, having taken the gatekeeper aside, said to it in low tones:

– So you look if there is something suitable, immediately you call to me by telephone.

– About the sir, by all means – the gatekeeper who received a good jackpot from the Core began to nod the head.

The core has densely dinner at restaurant and returned to itself.

When it came into Brike's room, she met him by a question usual recently:

– Found?

– It found and is unsuccessful, oh, damn! – he answered. – Suffer.

– But really really nothing suitable was? – Brike was not appeased.

– There were such bandy-legged cuttlefishes. If you want, then I...

– Ah not, better I will suffer. I do not want to be a cuttlefish.

The core decided to go to bed before ordinary a bit earlier to rise and again to go to a morgue. But he did not manage to fall asleep as phone at a bed cracked. The core swore and took the call.

– Hallo! I listen. Yes, professor Kern. What is? Train wreck at the station? Mass of corpses? Well, of course, immediately. I thank you.

The core began to put on quickly, Jonah caused and shouted:

– To Mashin!

In fifteen minutes it already rushed on night streets, hastily.

The gatekeeper did not deceive. This night death reaped a big crop. Corpses were dragged continuously. All tables were filled up. It was necessary to put them on a floor soon. The core was delighted. He blessed destiny for the fact that this accident did not happen in the afternoon. The message about it probably did not extend in the city yet. Strangers in a morgue were not yet. The core considered yet not undressed and not washed corpses. All of them were absolutely fresh. Exclusively successful case. One is bad, as this beneficial case not really reckoned with special requirements

Core. The majority of bodies was crushed or injured in many places. But the Core did not lose hope as corpses everything arrived.

– Show me this – he addressed the employee bearing the girl's corpse in a gray suit. The skull was injured from a nape. Hair are blood-stained, a dress too. But the dress is not crumpled. «Probably, injuries of a body are not big... Goes. The constitution is quite plebeian – it is probable, any lady's maid, but is better such body, than nothing» – the Core thought. – And it? – The core indicated other stretcher. – Yes it is the whole find! Treasure! Devil take it, annoyingly after all, that such woman died!

On a floor lowered a corpse of the young woman with extraordinary beautiful aristocratic face on which only one deep surprise stiffened. It broke a skull above the right ear. Obviously, death came instantly. On a white neck the pearl necklace was seen. The graceful black silk dress was only a little torn in the bottom of and from a collar to a shoulder. On the bared shoulder the birthmark was seen.

«As at that – the Core thought. – But it... what beauty! – The core hastily measured a neck. – As by request».

The core broke expensive necklace from the real large pearls, threw it the employee and told:

– I take this corpse. But as I have no time to make here careful survey of corpses, just in case I take also this – he pointed to the first corpse of the girl. – More likely, rather. Wrap up them a canvas and you take out. You hear? The crowd gathers. You should open a morgue, and in a few minutes there will be the real chaos.

Corpses were carried away, laid on the car and quickly delivered to the house of the Core.

All necessary for operation was already in advance prepared. Day, is more right – night of revival of Brike came. The core did not want to lose any minute.

Both corpses were washed and brought to Brike's room wrapped in sheet and laid on the operating table.

Brike's head burned with impatience to look at the new body, but the Core deliberately put a table so that the head did not see corpses, all preparations will not be finished yet.

The core quickly made the section of the heads of corpses. These heads were wrapped in a canvas and taken out by John, edges of a cut and a table are washed up, bodies are put in order.

Once again having critically examined bodies, the Core anxiously shook the head. The body with shoulder birthmark was perfect beauty of forms and especially won in comparison with a body of «lady's maid» – shirokokostny, angular, wrongly cut out, but strong sewed. Brike, of course, will choose this aristocratic Diana's body. However at careful survey of a body the Core noticed at Diana as he called her, some defect: on a foot of the right leg there was a small wound caused by some scrap of iron. It did not constitute big danger. The core прижег a wound, blood poisoning to be afraid there were no bases yet. But nevertheless for success of operation with a body of «lady's maid» it was quieter.

– Turn Brike’s head – told the Core, addressing Laurent. That Brike did not interfere with the garrulity during preparatory work, it shut a mouth, that is the cylinder with compressed air is switched off. – Now it is possible to start up an air stream.

When Brike’s head uvidat corpses, she screamed as if unexpectedly burned. Her eyes extended for horror. One of these corpses has to become her own body. For the first time sharply, to pain she felt all extraordinariness of this operation and began to hesitate.

– Well that you? How it are pleasant to you I rub... these bodies?

– I... am afraid ... – the head croaked. – No, no, I did not think that it is so terrible... I do not want...

– You do not want? In that case I will sew the head to a corpse

Volumes. Toma will become the woman. You want, Toma, now to receive a body?

– No, wait – Brike’s head was frightened. – I agree. I want to have here that body... with shoulder birthmark.

– And I advise you to choose this. It is not so beautiful, but without uniform scratch.

– I am not a laundress, and the actress – is proud Brike’s head noticed. – I want to have a beautiful body. And shoulder birthmark... It so is pleasant to men.

– Let will be in your opinion – the Core answered. – Mademoiselle Loran, transfer the head mademoiselle Brike to the operating table. Make it carefully, artificial blood circulation of the head has to continue till the last moment.

Laurent potted with the last preparations of the head of Brike. On Brike’s face the extreme tension and nervousness were written. When the head was postponed for a table, Brike did not sustain and suddenly cried as she never before shouted:

– I do not want! I do not want! It is not necessary! Kill me better! I am afraid! And – and – and-and!.

Core, without interrupting the work, Laurent sharply shouted:

– Close rather air crane! Enter into nutritious solution gedonat, and she will fall asleep.

– No, no, no!

The crane was closed, the head became silent, but continued to move lips and to look with expression of horror and entreaty.

– Mister professor, whether we can make operation against its will? – asked Laurent.

– Now not time to deal with ethical problems – the Core chilly answered. – She will thank us then. Do the part or you leave and do not disturb me.

But Laurent knew that she cannot leave – without her help the result of operation would be even more doubtful. And it, having overcome itself, continued to help the Core. Brike’s head so fought that tubes nearly left blood vessels. John came to the rescue and held the head with hands. Gradually twitchings of the head stopped, eyes were closed: gedonat made the action.

Professor Kern started operation.

The silence was interrupted only by short orders of the Core demanding this or that surgical instrument. From tension at the Core even veins on a forehead were blown up. It started all the brilliant surgical technique, connecting speed to extraordinary care and care. At all the hatred to the Core Laurent could not but admire it this minute. It worked as the inspired actor. His dexterous sensitive fingers made miracles.

Operation continued hour fifty five minutes.

– It is over – at last told the Core, becoming straight – from now on Brike stopped being the head from a body. It is necessary only to blow it life: to force to be clogged heart, to excite blood circulation. But I will cope with it one. You can have a rest, mademoiselle Loran.

– I still can work – she answered.

Despite fatigue, she very much wanted to look at the last act of this extraordinary operation. But the Core, obviously, did not want to let her into a revival secret. He once again persistently suggested it to have a rest, and Laurent obeyed.

The core caused it in an hour again. It looked even more tired, but his face expressed deep self-satisfaction.

– Try pulse – it offered Laurent.

The girl not without internal shudder took by hand

Brike; by that hand which belonged to a cold corpse only three hours ago. The hand was already warm, and pulsation was probed. The core put a mirror to Brike's face. The surface of a mirror misted over.

– Breathes. Now it is necessary to swaddle our newborn well. Several days it should lie absolutely not movably.

Over bandage the Core imposed a plaster popular print on Brike's neck. All body was спеленато, and the mouth is strong tied.

– That she did not take in head to speak – explained the Core. – The first days we will keep it in somnolence if heart allows.

Brike was transferred to the room adjacent to the room Laurent, carefully put to bed and subjected to an electroanaesthesia.

– We will feed it artificially, yet there will be no union of seams. You should flirt behind it.

Only for the third day the Core allowed Brike «to recover».

There were four o'clock in the afternoon. The slanting beam of the sun cut through the room and lit Brike's face. She easily moved eyebrows and opened eyes. Still vaguely thinking, looked at the lit window, then translated a view of Laurent and at last looked down down. There was no emptiness any more. She saw poorly waving breast and a body, her body covered with a sheet. The weak smile lit her face.

– Do not try to speak and you lie quietly – Laurent told. – Operation took place very well, and now everything depends on how you will behave. The more quietly you will lie, rather will rise to the feet. So far we with you will speak a mimicry. If you lower eyelids down, it will mean «yes», up – «no». You feel pain somewhere? Here. Neck and leg. It will pass. You want to drink? Is?

Brike did not feel hunger, but wanted to drink. Laurent called the Core. It immediately came from the office.

– Well, how the newborn feels? – He examined it and was satisfied. – Everything is safe. Patience, mademoiselle, and you will dance soon. – He made several orders and left.

Days of «recovery» hung for Brike very heavy. She was an approximate patient: constrained the impatience, lay quietly and carried out all orders. Day when it was raspelenat at last came, but did not allow to speak yet.

– Whether you feel the body? – with some nervousness asked the Core.

Brike lowered eyelids.

– Try to move very carefully fingers standing.

Brike, obviously, tried as on her face tension was expressed, but fingers did not move.

– Obviously, functions of the central nervous system were not quite restored – authoritatively told the Core – but I hope that they will be restored soon, and together with them also the movement will be restored. – About himself thought: «As if Brike did not limp really on both legs».

«It will be restored – as this word strange sounds» – Laurent thought, having remembered a cold corpse on the operating table.

Brike had a new care. Now she for hours was engaged in the fact that she tried to move with fingers standing. Laurent nearly with smaller interest watched it.

And once Laurent joyfully screamed:

– Moves! The thumb on the left leg moves.

Further business went quicker. Also other fingers on hands and legs began to move. Brike could already raise a little hands and legs soon.

Laurent was struck. In the face of it the miracle was made.

«How the Core was criminal – she thought – it is an unusual person. However, brainless Douel it would not manage this double revival of the dead. But nevertheless and the Core the talented person – it was approved also by Douel's head. Oh, if the Core revived also it! But is not present, he will not make it».

In several days allowed to speak to Brike. It had quite pleasant voice, but a little breaking timbre.

– It will be corrected – assured the Core. – You will sing still.

And Brike tried to sing soon. Laurent was very struck with this singing. Brike sang the top notes by quite squeaky and not really pleasant voice, on average the register the voice sounded very dimly and even got hoarse. But the lower notes were charming. It was an excellent chest contralto.

«Throat sheaves lie above the place of a cut of a neck and belong to Brike – Laurent thought – from where this double voice, different timbres of the upper and lower case? Physiological riddle. Whether it depends on process of rejuvenation of the head of Brike which is more senior than her new body? Or, perhaps, it is somehow connected with violation of functions of the central nervous system? Absolutely it is unclear... It is interesting to know whose this young, graceful body, to what unfortunate head it belonged...»

Laurent, without telling anything to Brike, began to look through issues of newspapers in which lists of the dead at train wreck were published. Soon a note that the famous Italian actress Anjelica Guy following in the train which crashed disappeared completely got to it. Its corpse was not found, and over permission of this riddle newspaper correspondents exercised the wit. Laurent was almost sure that Brike's head received a body of the died actress.

THE RUN-AWAY EXHIBIT

At last in Brike's life great day came. The last bandage were removed from it, and professor Kern allowed it to get up.

She rose and, leaning on a hand Laurent, walked about the room. Its movements were not sure and a little gusty. Sometimes it did strange gestures by a hand: to the known limit her hand moved smoothly, then the delay and as if the forced movement passing again into smooth followed.

– All this will pass – with conviction told the Core. A little the small wound on Brike's foot disturbed only him. The wound began to live slowly. But over time and it began to live so that Brike did not feel pain, even stepping on a sore leg. And in several days Brike already tried to dance.

– I will not understand in what business – she said – some movements are given me freely, and others are complicated. Possibly, I did not get used to operate the new body yet... And it is magnificent! Look at legs, mademoiselle Loran. And growth excellent. Here only these hems on a neck... It is necessary to close them. But this shoulder birthmark is charming, isn't that so? I will sew a dress of such style that she was visible... No, I am resolutely happy with the body.

«The body! – Laurent thought. – Poor Anjelica Guy!»

Everything that so long constrained in itself Brike, at once broke outside. It threw Laurent requirements, orders, requests for suits, linen, shoes, hats, fashionable magazines, cosmetics accessories.

In a new gray silk dress it was presented by the Core to the head of professor Douel. And as it was the male head, Brike could not but coquet. Also it was very flattered when Douel's head croaked:

– Perfectly! You perfectly coped with the task, the colleague, I congratulate you!

And the Core under a hand with Brike, shining as newly married, left the room.

– You sit down, mademoiselle – the Core when they came to its office gallantly told.

– I do not know how to me to thank you, mister professor – she told, languidly looking down and then having coquettishly looked on the Core. – You made for me very much... And I can reward nothing you.

– It is also not necessary. I am rewarded more, than you think.

– I am very glad. – And Brike took the Core even more radiant view. – And now allow me to leave... to be discharged from hospital.

– How to leave? From what hospital? – at once did not even understand the Core.

– To leave home. I represent what furor will be created by my emergence among girlfriends!

It is going to leave! The core did not allow a thought of it. He did huge work, resolved the most difficult task, made impossible at all not in order that Brike created a furor among the thoughtless girlfriends. He wanted to create a furor Brike's demonstration before scientific society. Subsequently he, maybe, will also give it some freedom, but now there is nothing and to think of it.

– Unfortunately, I cannot release you, mademoiselle Brike. You have to remain still some time in my house, under my observation.

– But what for? I feel perfectly – she objected, playing a hand.

– Yes, but to you can become worse.

– Then I will come to you.

– Allow me to know better when you can leave from here – already sharply told the Core. – Do not forget, than you would be without me.

– I already thanked you for it. But I am not a girl and not the slave and I can dispose of myself!

«Oho and it with character!» – with surprise the Core thought.

– Well, we still will talk about it – he told. – For now all right to go to the room. John probably already brought you broth.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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