



Vi Kors

The Mist and the Lightning

Part IV

СОДЕРЖИТ
НЕЦЕНЗУРНУЮ
БРАНЬ

18+

Ви Корс

The Mist and the

Lightning. Part IV

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Аннотация

Continuation of the sensational erotic adventure... They are not offspring of Hell; they just lived nearby... Arel Chig is a fallen prince, the only one who dares to break the rules in a society separated by race, language and origin. When he meets Nikto, a strange man of many secrets, Arel's life is going to change. Содержит нецензурную брань.

Today the book tells me terrible things! On a page, accidentally open by me, it says “Demons never lie, but always deceive.

They give you an illusion of independence, like you are the one managing the course of your life.

The main purpose of all demons’ schemes is an attempt to lure you into their world.

Normally, this is how they do it: first they try to “eat” your soul, causing a powerful emotional outburst, and then they’d pull in your lifeless physical body and hide it in one of the remote corners of their world. If you won’t die right away, they will give you their energy and change your energy structure irreversibly.

Even if you find one day your crippled physical body, you would never be able to reunite with it, you will forever be a slave to these horrifying creatures”...

I’m alone again in the room at the top of a tower. The others are as always playing cards, drinking and laughing hard downstairs...

I am just overwhelmed by contradictory feelings...

First of all, of course, towards my scampish brother Arel, as always, and then towards this girl...

Heavens, how gorgeous she is! I can't admire her beauty enough, hoping nobody notices and throwing a glimpse at her.

When she is with him I'm admiring the both of them, I'm not jealous, no, that just can't be!

Could a girl like THIS ever be with me...

She and my brother make a beautiful couple, both tall, lean, with dark hair, only her hair is half as almost half as long as Arel's.

Luckily, they don't notice my glimpses. Nobody does. Who cares about Vil...

But I'm afraid for her...

I'm afraid that Arel might hurt her. She's totally helpless in front of him and his tricks! She's so kind and gentle. My heart was just bleeding while I watched Arel fighting her during the training. Why did he have to push her so hard! Drag her through the dirt to entertain his friends! They got their kicks watching it. I saw how a couple of times her face twisted, she could hardly hold on without showing she's in pain, she turned pale, and Arel

just went on! His cruelty has no boundaries!

Besides, I don't like that he is lying to her, he continues his ungodly relations with Nikto, and poor Carina doesn't know a thing. And how could such a pure creature come up with this thought. She is like an angel!

And my brother soils her, and it's unbearable! What will happen when she finds out how vilely he was deceiving her? And she will find out sooner or later, I have no doubt about it. It will shock her! Karina herself is unable of lying, I'm sure!

She would never play, pretend that everything is unfamiliar to her.

How would it feel for her to understand she was just a toy in Arel's filthy hands?

Of course, she is incapable of vendetta, I'm sure of it, even though her father is a very influential man and could harm us...

Harm us really badly, if he wanted to ...

Arel knows that Carina has a bright soul, so he isn't afraid of anything. He knows that he shouldn't expect a foul play from her, she is being honest with him, and unlike him she told him the

truth about her father. About WHO he is...

Sometimes I have horrific thoughts, I imagine how Arel hurts her right in front of me. I heard of her fight with Enriki, Enriki insulted her, hurt her feelings! Why wasn't I there at the moment!

If Arel will ever hurt her...

Raise his hand on her...

Try to humiliate her, like other girls...

Then I will protect her!

These are horrible thoughts, but I swear to Gods, I will raise my hand on my beloved brother! Kill him, if I have to!

But I will protect Carina! It's my duty!

I recall seeing him for the first time...

I was five years old, or maybe a little younger, but I remember that day clearly...

Mom brought me to the big hall, there was a lady sitting on a throne...

By that time she was completely insane, but I didn't know that, and didn't understand...

She was horrifying! Like the death itself! White face framed by dark hair, high-necked black dress...

And those empty eyes...

They scared me more than anything else!

If my mother wasn't standing right behind my back, I would escape from there right away. But mom told me to come closer...

Luckily, the lady remained indifferent, but the boy sitting in her lap pressed against her and hugging her, lifted his tiny face and looked at me...

It was Arel...

Even back then he already was unbelievably beautiful...

I remember being amazed that he wasn't scared of this terrifying woman, on the contrary, he clung to her with his both hands, like he was afraid to be torn from her.

I handed him a toy, like mom taught me.

It was a plush toy.

I was supposed to give it to him and then invite my little liege to play together. But my tongue froze inside my mouth. I became speechless. However, I'm still not over it, I keep turning speechless in front of Arel.

I blankly handed him the stuffed animal.

He took it.

He didn't smile at me, didn't say anything, just took the toy that was handed to him, while still clinging to his mother with one hand.

And I remember that he didn't toss it away, no, he held it tenderly and tucked his face in its soft fur.

And I turned away, hiding my face in mom's skirt, and she took me away.

That's how our first meeting ended, and our relationship still adjust...

But I still love Arel...

And I know he loved the toy I gave him...

My name is Carina. Carina Kors, but I often call myself Carina Iness. Adding the name of my mother, whom unfortunately I don't remember at all.

It's been about two months since I came to the Castle, came for the Winter festival and stayed. Stayed with the prince and his friends. During this time I got to know them better, learned to find a common language with them, even though it wasn't easy.

Along with them I took part in the response to the Black Bey and his ally. And I saw how Orel and his warriors fight. How they pair up and work in a total harmony with each other. And each one adjust his attacks to another, and puts up a guard if his friend is under attack.

And along with them I've spent some fun nights in "Bakar" at the Lower City, and in Orel's Castle. And I've seen them quarrel, unable to agree. They argue so fiercely, each one tries to convince the others he's right, but at in the end nothing changes, and everyone remains with his own opinion. Their arguments are pointless, they cannot hear each other, and everyone is talking to himself, but cannot hear himself, just as he cannot hear the

others.

Chapter One.

“The First Time”

“I agree to gamble on the wishes, if whoever loses won’t refuse to fulfill them” – said Tol, picking out of habit his gapped teeth with his fat fingers.

“Yeah”, – Orel nodded, “Screw you and your wishes! You’ll just make the loser lick Asa again.”

Everybody laughed.

“Hey, you didn’t lick her!”– Tol protested with outrage, and everybody roared with laughter.

“So what do you suppose I did?!”

“Poured a bottle of wine into her and took a sip!”

“But she came! The deal was licking her till she comes, it’s not my fault she comes with me faster than she comes with you!”

“Now the loser would lick Tol’s ass” – Lis said, laughing. His black hair framed his pale grey face like dark tangled icicles.

“That’s exactly what I’m talking about”, – Tol agreed, “You wouldn’t, and nobody would!”

“Nikto might!”

“Very funny,” – Nikto grunted. His hand was at Orel’s lap, and he fumbled Nik’s hair involuntarily. His fingers softly untangled thick white strands, all mats and tangles.

“You mean not a single one of you would do it!”

“We could make normal wishes, like to tell something, some interesting life incidents, for example” – Enriki suggested.

“It’s boring!” – Tol whined.

“Not at all! Besides, if Carina wakes up, comes down here and sees all of us fucking Asa, she might not understand it was just a game!”

“For how long can we fuck Asa?” – Orel mumbled, “Aren’t you fuckin’ fed up?”

“We are” – Lis responded. “Tol, we’re fuckin’ fed up with fucking your Asa”.

“So you won’t get her anymore!” – Tol snarled.

“Oh, like she needs your permission to fuck! I personally fucked her, back when you weren’t giving her away to anybody, wouldn’t even let anybody touch your precious Asa.

“Me too”, – Enriki pitched in. “She’s a whore”.

Tol twisted his lips: “No”.

“Should I summon Mina?” – Orel asked.

“We are fed up with her, too! We don’t even have a single normal girls here, Arel!” – Enriki sounded displeased.

“Call your sister then!” – He snarled back.

Everybody froze, and Enriki went pale.

“So, we are going to tell stories” – Tol said gingerly. “Nik, tell us about your Rosa, how did it all happen?” – He added, seeing that everybody are still quiet.

“How did the two of you fuck?” – Lis specified gloomily.

“I didn’t lose yet” – Nikto argued, touching his scarred cheek involuntarily, “and I don’t like reminiscing it”.

“Why didn’t you follow her to the “upper world”, if you are still suffering? What stopped you from going up there and finding her?” – Enriki asked.

“Looking like this?!”

“After all, if your story is true, it was all Rosa’s fault!”

“And if she truly loved you, would she reject you?” – Orel added, “Regardless of what you became.”

“While protecting her!” – Tol added meaningfully.

“And be like an endless reproach to her?”

“I never thought you would sweat it so much!” – Enriki was surprised, “You are now talking as a common man, not even a warrior”.

“Like a weak kid” – Orel said, “I couldn’t let her see me like this! Beaten, mutilated. Who is she, she’s just a woman, and that’s it!”

Nikto was silent.

“You don’t get it” – he finally said. “She was a ‘white’, a genuine ‘white’ “...

“And you are Nikto, right?” – Lis snorted.

“Right”.

“I don’t have any respect for your human part” – Enriki said, – “It would be better if your demon suppressed it completely!”

“Fuck, I don’t understand what’s the deal with still considering Nik a human possessed by a demon” – Orel said grumpily. “It’s so dumb! This bullshit just pisses me off, and you, smart-looking people, insist on thinking of him as of someone redone, undone, possessed! You feeling ok?!”

Enriki blushed: “Fine! And what’s so dumb about it? I don’t see anything dumb here!”

“Andin my opinion, it’s just dumbness! I mean, Nick was living happily in his...what’s it’s called... oh, never mind, and then bam! A demon possessed him! What’s happening?! What for?!”

“Maybe he called the demon himself” – Squint-Eye suggested, “to become more powerful and to get back at his enemies”.

“What enemies?!”

“The Reds”.

“Oh, ok. Only instead of getting back at the Reds, he went straight to the Blacks’ ‘farm!’”

“Well, the demon must have had an agenda of his own”.

“Yes, everybody knows that the demons are just like that. You want something from them, and you end up getting the complete opposite”.

“Well, yes”.

The friends laughed at Orel’s ironic tone.

“I never said the demon possessed him like that” – Enriki tried to argue. “It’s just that if he was sold to a witch as a child, she must have been the one who turned him in to the dark powers. Sacrificed him. You understand what I’m talking about, Arel? Otherwise, why would she need a child? He was meant as a present, a sacrifice to demon from the beginning. Or

maybe she obeyed the demon's command, and he needed a body to penetrate into our world. That's why Nikto's human part is undeveloped and squalid. He is just meant to obey and be passive. That was also done by the witch, to make it easier for the demon. I mean, you guys can't argue that Nikto is obedient most of the time, and resembles a wind-up toy".

"Just like a rabbit with cymbals!" – Tol cried excitedly.

"And Rosa was totally unnecessary to the demon," – Enriki continued, completely ignoring Tol's outburst, as usual, – "on the contrary, she was standing on his way, nearly ruined the whole thing. Made Nikto fall in love, evoked some feelings, he became defiant, but being unexperienced, got jammed up right away and almost screwed up the whole thing. And of course, the buds of his free will were suppressed again, and he went where he had to go. Spreading chaos in our world, east, then west, and now in the very heart at the City.

"You don't mind me being here" – Nikto interrupted. During their conversation he lifted his head from Orel's lap and now was sitting next to him, his face twisted. "Hope I'm not bothering you".

"Not at all" – Lis replied.

“I didn’t mean to hurt your feelings” – Enriki explained. “It’s just my personal opinion, I was just expressing it. Would you prefer me to do it behind your back?”

“He would prefer you not to express it at all” – Lis grinned.

“Whatever happened to you – it was not your will, nor your fault. It just happened.

“Bad luck” – Squint-Eye said.

“Oh, go to hell! One of you thinks I’m just your reflection, another one – that I’m a rabbit with cymbals! I’m so tired of this shit pouring on me every day! You guys just haven’t heard enough fairytales when you were kids, so you keep telling them now!”

“How terribly you build your sentences!” – Enriki shook his head.

“I’m not like you, and that’s the whole problem, just because I have bright eyes and hair!”

“And every inch of your skin is packed with blasphemous, devilish images!”

Nikto moaned.

“In this world, there are at least couple hundreds half-bloods with bright hair and eyes” – Lis started, “But nobody is dissing them, why is that? Nobody’s dissing Mina, or Morgan Talas, for that matter. He’s not considered to be devil’s spawn, even though he’s a real piece of shit. And he’s definitely a half-blood”.

Nikto was silent.

“And what does it mean, you are just our reflection?”

“Ask him,” – Nikto nodded towards Orel, “If Enriki can still see a human in me, however damaged, Arel thinks I’m only capable of reflecting whatever is being put in me”.

“How is that?” – Lis lit a cigarette, and irritably tossed the box to Squint-Eye, who saw him lighting one and stretched towards him right away.

“Arel wants love, he puts love into me, and I love in response. You want to be first again, and involuntarily put your ambitions in me and think I’m the one craving power. And I, probably thanks to you, become just like that, and we are eternal rivals. “

“Arel came up with it?!”

“Yes.”

Lis stared at Orel, somewhat shocked: “I’m the one craving power? I put it in Nikto?! You should go easy on drugs, honey! They affect you too much. Probably because you were nuts even before!”

“It came up with it as a result of your own words!” – Orel snarled, displeased.

“But I never said anything of a sort!”

“Yes, you did! More than once! You said, ‘If you hurt Nikto, he’ll pay you back with the same coin. That’s why the “impure” do not touch him, do not fight with him anymore’. And I said, ‘Well, you shouldn’t worry about me then, I could never hurt him even if I wanted to, because I love him’. So you calmed down and said that in that case, I was protected. All in all, if you don’t count the small stuff, that was true”.

“Well, that’s not exactly what I meant!”

“And I actually like it” – Enriki noted, – “There is something about it, some sort of logic”.

“So what does he reflect from you?”

“Well, we are not that close with him...”

“Yeah, because I am that close with him!” – Lis noted sarcastically. “Honestly, I could still agree, that Arel is the only one with the input. Something he so pretentiously calls “love”. But in that case, Nikto should be insane, just like Arel, and shameless, and without any restraints.”

“And he’s just like that”, – Squint-Eye snorted.

“He is reflecting everything you say” – Orel turned towards Enriki, “How come you can’t see that?! A weak man imprisoned by a demon, who controls his entire life”.

Enriki went pale: “You think that’s me? I’m possessed by a demon!”

“And probably more than one. Ask Carina, she’ll tell you everything about your demons. It’s just that you don’t want to see them, and me and the others never gave a damn, she was the only one touched by them. Probably because she’s a normal person. I agree, you don’t show them off, unlike me, or Squint-Eye, for example. You push them deeper inside, hide them behind your beloved proprieties, but the demon bursts out anyway, so ugly an inappropriate, right, Rik? And he ruins everything you

worked so hard building around you. Career, personal life, your relationships with people. And eventually, you end up here, with us, in trash.

“You really shouldn’t get high!”

“You’re angry because it’s true. That’s why Nik made you so crazy at the beginning! You couldn’t accept him, just as you can’t accept yourself, your inner ugliness. You were looking at his face and seeing your own insides. You are only handsome from the outside, a perfect front. But you are ugly inside. Now, it seems, you have almost put up with it. Accept yourself as you are, with all your vices” – Orel squeezed Nikto’s face in his palms – look at this! It’s impossible to correct anything, but he is still beautiful!”

Enriki looked down.

“Enough bitching about Nikto!” – Tol began indignantly. “Just going on and on, ugly-beautiful, inside-outside. Nikto is our guy! Ours! And by the way, he loves us all, despite the fact that all of you keep insulting and humiliating him all the time, and generally, are completely unfair towards him! But he doesn’t get angry! I’m sure, he would sacrifice his life for any of you!”

Orel laughed: “Oh, thank you, Tol. I had no idea you loved everybody so much!”

“What does it have to do with me?! I was talking about Nikto just now. Me, personally, I wouldn’t even give a red penny for Lis, for example, not to talk about risking my life! As if! Nikto is the only one not holding grudges, doesn’t matter how much Lis is shitting on him, he still loves him...”

“Oh, here’s another one!” – Orel said, turning towards Vil, who has just entered. Vil froze tensely, as usual.

“Vil, what’s Nik like, in your opinion? Quick, don’t think about it!”

Vil’s eyes went completely round with terror. “Kind...” – he whispered, hardly managing to speak, but not daring to disobey Orel and withhold the answer.

Friends exchanged glimpses, and Nikto laughed.

“And also”, – he said, – “You were saying that I don’t have a single drop of pride or dignity in me. And that I put out my ass for Orel obediently, and resemble a whore more than a warrior. You even put some eyeliner on me. I’m Arel’s slut!”

And Orel, seeing how the faces of his friends twisted in discontent, started laughing, too: “Serves you right! When you’re

shitting on him, you're actually shitting on yourselves! How about that, huh?! Didn't expect that, now, did you? It's a good idea I had, right?!"

"You definitely mustn't get high" – Enriki said firmly.

"Personally, I don't give a damn" – Squint-Eye shrugged, "So he resembles us, so what! But here, we all resemble each other, all of us covered in shit head to toe, that's why we got together in the first place. And I never tried to hide my demon".

"You are bummed because of your eye, and Nikto – because of his scar".

"What do you know about it, anyway!"

"Me- nothing, I'm a gorgeous prince! I'm just saying that everyone's got his share, and you too, and everyone's got their..." – "Here comes Carina", – Lis said quickly, and Orel fell silent right away. Nikto pulled away from him.

Carina came down into the hall and approached them with a smile.

"Hello," – and she graciously lowered herself onto the furs, right next to Orel. He stretched towards her and kissed her.

“Have you rested?”

“I have, what about you?”

“Us too. Want some wine? Vil, get Carina a wineglass!”

“Oh, Vil, no need, I’ll get it myself” – she turned to Orel, “and in the meantime, if you don’t mind, I’ll take a sip from yours”.

“I don’t mind, but I don’t have a glass” – Orel lifted a half-empty heavy bottle.

“A-ah” – she laughed, – “Just be careful!”

He smiled at her too, touched a broken tooth with his finger: “You are talking about this? I’m trying”.

Vil was already fetching a glass.

She took a sip and shook her head: “I’ll become a drunk with you guys, what are you doing? Gambling again?”

“We were”.

“On money?” – She looked at the heaps of golden coins,

sparkling on the thick furs.

“We were gambling on money, but Tol lost everything again”.

“And we decided to gamble on wishes”, – Enriki explained, – whoever loses, has to tell a story about himself.

“Like how he fucked for the first time!” – Tol added. – “Wanna play with us?!”

“Yeah, right! You’ll beat me right away! You play every day, and me – just from time to time!”

“So what! We will also tell our stories if you want, that’s even more fun!” – Tol went on.

“Then what’s the point of winning or losing?”

“No point! Let’s just tell our fuck stories, shall we?!”

“In that case, we don’t have to play at all” – Lis twisted his face. “Just sit around and talk about some bullshit!”

“For you, everything is bullshit!” – Tol said with outrage. – “And I like it! According to you, we should only talk about business all the time! I’m fed up with it!”

“You definitely should have gotten fed up! You are the one talking about business non-stop!”

“Arel! They’ve started again” – Carina laughed.

“Would you tell us what your first time was like?” – Orel asked, and his voice was like velvet.

“You pervert! Fine!” – She looked at her friends, naughty sparkles lit in her brown eyes. – “I’ll tell you! But you go first! I’ll listen to your stories, and then tell you mine”.

“You will lie to us!” – Tol roared, not even hiding his pleasure.

“I promise! I will tell you! Who’d we begin with?”

“With Squint-Eye”, – Orel laughed, – “He’s always the scape goat”.

Everybody laughed, too, and Squint-Eye didn’t even blink.

“I lost my virginity in a brothel”, – he said, – “My brother was the one who took me there”.

“The one who came here? Berk?” – Lis clarified.

“Yes”, – Squint-Eye continued, – “He decided it was about time I knew a woman. She was a regular whore”.

“And the first and the last intercourse in my life” – Lis added, mimicking Squint-Eye’s indifferent voice.

Everybody laughed.

“Almost”, – Squint-Eye replied calmly, – “That’s it.”

“Your brother was better at teaching you how to fight and kill, than how to fuck” – Orel noted. – “I can’t get my head around it, how did he do it? Just a snotty brat himself! And I was trained by seasoned warriors, who didn’t teach me everything he taught you!”

“That’s because he was young and hot-blooded himself” – Lis explained. – “And your experienced teachers didn’t have that ardor in them anymore. That enthusiasm”.

“Next! Lis, you’re up” – Tol interrupted.

“It was a girl from my town, we went to school together,” – Lis began, – “It was the first time for both of us. And we didn’t really understand anything”.

“In my case, it was some made servant,” – Tol said thoughtfully, – “Somehow, I don’t remember shit...”

“Now Asa”.

Lis translated the question for her. She scrunched up her nose in surprise, but replied.

“Anyway, she said it was some ritual festival, she and few more girls were fucked with a special stick by some old lady”.

“Doesn’t sound like much fun”, – Tol saddened, – “Nik?”

“My older step sister taught me everything,” – Nikto replied, – “Witch’s daughter”.

“Better her than the witch herself,” – Enriki sighted with relief, – “Thanks for that, at least!”

“What about you?”

“Fuuuck! My story is crap, Tol!”

“That’s exactly what we want,” – Lis said.

“Not at all!” – Tol sounded offended. – “I wanted a beautiful story! With details! You were the one who said it was interesting, Rik! So, were the hell is it?”

“I was twelve years old, twelve or thirteen...”

“Well?”

“It was winter. So cold”.

“And?”

“She froze in her little bed, kept coming to me. I was warming up her tiny little feet, breathing on her frozen little fingers...”

“She – who?” – Lis asked grimly.

Enriki lingered.

“Mily...”

“That’s it, enough!” – Orel ordered.

“Arel, it’s ok, if you are doing it because of me – it’s not my first day here...”

“Still, that’s enough!”

“Let Vil tell his story,” – Tol laughed, Enriki’s tale didn’t seem to impress him too much, – “And in detail! When? Where? And who with?”

“I also don’t feel so good about it,” – Vil got nervous, his face twitched. – “I’m not even sure if I can talk about it...”

“And what could it possibly be with you! Don’t scare us like that!” – Lis went sour puss, – “Come on, tell us, you newborn pervert!”

“I’m not a pervert! It’s just...I wasn’t alone there...” – Vil was completely lost, as usual, and gave Orel a haunted look. It really was some resemblance between the two, only Vil wasn’t even his image, more of a caricature of his handsome brother.

Orel nodded at him: “Tell them whatever you want, any way you want”, – he said indifferently, – “I don’t give a damn”.

“It... it was a long time ago” – Vil started very gingerly.

“No way! Really?!” – Lis laughed, and the others followed, and Vil shrank even more.

“Come on, Lis, stop embarrassing him”, – Enriki stuck up for him, – “Let him talk, even I got curious by now”.

Orel smiled, he definitely knew what Vil wants to tell them about, and only waited to see how he goes about it.

“My liege, Orel’s father” – Vil swallowed, finally got his strength together and continued more confidently, – “Summoned me...

I went up into the room...

To tell you the truth, I was really terrified of him, his very voice, which was more of a roar, always made me panic...

So anyway...

I came up running, shivering, and he was standing at the threshold, so huge, he pushed me inside.

And there I saw...

I saw a slave girl, small, no more than fifteen, so thin, just skin and bones, no breasts, nothing...

She had no clothes on, at all, and her hands stuck up and were

twisted in a funny way, cuffed to the bed. The face she had...

And then I saw Arel...

He was shrinking in the corner and didn't even lift his head when I came, and his hair covered his face. He also was completely naked...

It was the first time I saw him like this...

I saw that his arms and legs were all covered in lashing marks. There were old ones, which has almost healed, and really fresh ones. I knew father was disciplining him like that, but seeing it with my own eyes...

The way I felt at that moment...

It's hard to explain with words...

It was so horrible...

And father said, 'Well, come on, Vil, show you're a man, it's time! If my son doesn't want to become one! Show him!'

I could hardly understand what he was saying, what he wanted from me, and he shouted, 'Get undressed! God damn you, and

go to her!’

And I don’t remember how I did all that, I was begging the Gods for only one thing, that he’d be pleased with me, or at least satisfied, and wouldn’t beat me, lock me in a dark room, whatever, I just wanted him to let me go as soon as possible. That slave girl was all shaking in fear as much as I did, I got on top of her somehow, I’ve seen couple of times in the garden during the summer how the servants did it. I was hoping that I understood correctly what he wanted from me...

He said: ‘That’s right, atta-boy!’, and I started poking into her, everything was so terrible...

He was standing and staring...

I just remember thinking with horror, what should I do next, and when will it all end...

First my penis rose, out fear more than desire, I think. And then it fell, I didn’t even feel that I came, didn’t feel that anything oozed from me and into her, that everything was finished.

He said: ‘That’s enough! Get out!’ I bolted, but he held me up, grabbed my shoulder and started staring at me...

It was unbearable, the contempt and disgust he was staring at me with, like at some bed bug. And then he said, ‘My son is good for nothing! Why do I deserve this punishment! And this one’s blood is too dirty, he’s so dirty, punishment from the Gods!’ Started muttering, as usual, about the curse of Gods, and then turned to Arel and yelled at him so terribly... I would die on the spot, but Arel didn’t even move a muscle.

He yelled at Arel: ‘you are going to sit in this room till you become a man!’ And locked them up in there.

And that was it” – Vil froze, looking down.

“Yee-ah... not fun again” – Tol muttered after a while. The friends were silent.

“Well, now we know how Arel became a man” – Enriki finally said. “Who has left?”

“What makes you think it was then that I became a man?” – Orel smiled, like nothing happened. It seemed he was the only one completely unimpressed by Vil’s story, – “Actually, by then I’ve fucked every made and slave girl in that castle about a hundred times”.

“So why the fuck did you...” – Enriki shouted, surprised.

Orel laughed: “Just to piss father off! He thought I was good for nothing, and I didn’t feel like dissuading him.

“You are both sick! Oh, boy! I can’t even wrap my head around it!”

“Standing and watching your son fucking for the first time,” – Tol said, – “I wouldn’t be able to do it!”

“He thought he must control everything” – Orel replied. – “And that’s enough talking about him, he’s not worth it, especially that only Carina is left, and I really want to hear her story”.

“I’m afraid it won’t be happy at all, too”, – Carina noted, – “But all of you were so honest that now I just can’t lie or joke in respond”.

“Go ahead”, – Lis nodded at her.

“I will, I will tell you how it all happened” – Carina circled her friends with her eyes, – “even though it has all began with a card game, and is going to end up with a ruined evening”, – she drew breath, getting her strength together. “I was eighteen years old, and... I was born at the east, I was living there and fighting

the “reds” ...well, you know that...

I was taking part in the battles as well, but usually I was used in another way” ... she paused again, it was obvious how hard this story was for her, her friends were patiently silent, letting her find her courage.

“I was being used as a spy. A young girl, half-blood, there’s a lot of them at the border, at every fortress, every little town. And at every camp of the “reds”, too, lots of made servants, washwomen, scullery maids, whom nobody notices. I wasn’t afraid of anything,

was bold and abrasive, successful at everything I did, got away with everything. And my pride and stupidity took me very far east, I have penetrated into a camp of a very strong and dangerous leader of the “reds” and settled there. How many “blacks” he destroyed, how many lives he took, how much of our land he has burned! Everybody were afraid of him, except for me, of course! I was so confident! And so I’ve started ruining all his plans, he and his commanders just grabbed their heads. Some of the very important operations were ruined thanks to me, their positions were at the edge of doom. And I rejoiced. I was sure they would never make me, and they really weren’t noticing me, they couldn’t even imagine some insignificant kitchen maid was capable of something like that. I wasn’t even nervous when they

came for me, I couldn't believe any of them managed to find out about me. I thought it wasn't a big deal, these are troubled times so they are checking everybody, a couple of standard questions and they will let me go. That's why I was smiling as I went, even when we came down to the basement my heart didn't even twitch, I was so sure of myself. And then I saw him... his eyes... They didn't even ask me any questions... He just hit me... And then his warriors... I would never forget it, that was the first and the only time in my life I was beaten like that, and I'm not sure I would survive a second one... And then he raped me... Right there in the basement, on the dirty, bloody floor. Him first, and then he allowed his warriors... How many of them there were, I don't remember... From time to time they poured water over me, but towards the end I wasn't even regaining consciousness, it all comes to me in flashes... That's what my "first time" was like" – and she went silent, not looking at them.

Everybody else were silent, too.

"Forgive me if I unwittingly evoked some painful memories", – Orel finally said. "It's just that when we dared you to be honest, we couldn't even suspect..."

"And what happened then? Afterwards?" – Tol interrupted, – "You managed to escape, didn't you? You took your revenge on him, right?"

“Afterwards? Afterwards, I came to and realized that I’m going to die, if not this time, the next one. I’ll die if I don’t come up with something. And I did... Now I realize it wasn’t really... But back then... I just wanted to survive, all the rest came second. And the next time he came to interrogate me, I started pretending... That I like him... That I fell in love... I started obeying him... looking at him with devotion and admiration. And he

ordered his warriors not to touch me anymore. Even though they were asking to. Then he moved me from the basement to a better cell. Then started taking me to his rooms at night. At first he was really careful, of course, used to tie me up and watch me like a hawk, but I wasn’t trying to escape, even though he tried to trick me a couple of times, like I had a chance to get away. But I didn’t take the bait, I was all about

loving him and wanting to be with him, I betrayed the “blacks” for him. And even though he was very crooked, didn’t believe anybody and didn’t let anybody close, I managed to convince him in my devotion. “– Carina went silent again, sinking deep in thought for a long time.

“We were together for more than a year”, – she finally continued, – “Always close. He loved me with all his soul, his eyes lit up whenever he saw me, his cold heart softened at my

smile. He used to say I was the only joy and happiness in his gloomy life, full of blood and murder. And then one night I took a knife... and stabbed him in the heart. And escaped', – and seeing that everybody are still silent, Carina shouted "That's it, end of story! Come on, say something, don't shut up like that!

"Did he die?" – Tol asked.

"No. He woke up a second before my blow, and he always wore a ring with "black water" inside on his finger, just in case, he poured the water right into the wound and survived. But I found out much later.

"You stayed with him more than a year, pretending to love him and knowing you're going to kill him?" – Orel asked. – "But you are a monster, Carina, worse than us, or at least worth us!"

"He was an enemy", – Carina said quietly, – "And I couldn't betray my people..."

"That's fucking cold!" – Tol roared. – "Me likey! Waiting till he falls in love! Atta-girl! Now, that's a revenge! And what's going on with this "red" right now, any idea?

"Like I said, he survived, but his luck turned away from him, he started losing, defeat after defeat, total doom.

"Serves him right! I hate the 'reds'! All the pain they caused

us!" – Tol went on and on.

"He wasn't a complete "red", he was a half-blood".

"Obviously, the "half-bloods" are even worse than the "reds", just like our Lis! By the way, he might have known him, what was that commander's name?"

"His name was Sigmer" – Carina said slowly, – "The 'blacks' used to call him Sigmer-Death."

Orel squeezed his temples within his palms, as if he suddenly got a headache.

"Shit, totally forgot, I've got something important to do..." – Enriki mumbled indistinctly, and without even finishing the sentence hurried towards the stairs to the second floor. Squint-Eye was right behind him, not even bothering to make up an excuse.

"We must go, too" – Orel said. "It's time we attend to business. Tol!" – he called, giving Tol a meaningful stare.

"What business, in the middle of the night" – Tol muttered grumpily, it didn't seem like he's about to go anywhere, even though he took Orel's hint.

"To-o-ol!"

"Yes, I'm coming, I'm coming, why do you have to yell?! I got it. Bye, Lis. Bye, Carina. Good luck..."

"T-o-o-l!"

Carina and Lis were left alone. Lis was sitting in front of her, he didn't change his stature. Didn't try to leave, oh no. Finally, he slowly lifted his dark head, hair parted right in the middle, and looked at her, and Carina thought that Arel has left her alone again.

Alone with Lis. She looked into his eyes and didn't recognize him, it's a different glance, completely different. A glance of a very mature person, of an old man. He really did get old, or maybe it's that dye made him look older, and the black hair. What does his face look like without this dye, are his cheeks and nose still covered in freckles, or maybe they're gone, just like the light from his eyes. So silly... And he was almost a king, a king of the "reds" in this world. But he lost everything. Became a slave. Because of her.

"Why didn't you tell them yourself?" – she finally asked the question that was taunting her all this time. Why didn't he tell

Orel, why did he keep quiet, covering for her. And if she hasn't told them, would he just keep quiet?

"I was waiting for you to do it".

"And you weren't even scared".

"No. This doesn't change anything. You saw how Arel took it".

"I did".

She looked at him, right into his yellow, slightly slanting eyes, eyes so different from those of the "blacks", the strange eyes of another world's dweller. "I couldn't do it differently back then..."

He just grinned, opening his jacket and exposing his chest: "You see, not even a scar left. You might have known and even killed some 'red' half-blood Sigmer. But Atley Alis has never met you before."

"That's true. You know, when I first saw you... I didn't recognize you! You have really changed," – she paused, – "Changed a lot. Why are you with them? Grey and black just like them!"

"A slave to Arel".

"Why?!"

Lis shrugged: "That was his condition, and I didn't have a choice back then".

"Arel is insane, totally insane, actually. For real. This honesty of his... He's not even afraid to be weak."

"He's only honest with those he considers close, and he isn't afraid to appear weak, because he is very strong".

"And you?"

"I'm not like that. Once in a lifetime I also wasn't afraid to be weak, dared to open up, exposed myself, my heart...and got a knife in it. No nobody else will ever be able to get so deep inside of me. To know my weaknesses, to know me. You think that I'm crushed, that I'm lonely, but no, not at all. There's no one in this world, whom I would want to enter my heart again, open all my doors towards. I love Arel a lot, but that's different. We don't need this all-consuming closeness. For him, wherever I let him – it's enough. Generally, Arel never pries, it's very easy with him in this sense. And you can't defeat him like me. You are walking around so pleased, thinking you've got him in your staunch paws, but you are mistaken. You succeeded with me, and

you would with anybody else, but not with Arel. Me, I'm a regular guy, with a regular way of thinking, and my feelings are pretty primal, as well. I'm just a bit more attentive than others, a bit more hardworking, not as lazy as most people. And you are also regular, you may not flatter yourself. That's why it all worked with me. But Arel is different, you could never understand him, and so you could never defeat him. His heart will forever be unavailable for you; you don't have the key. You may be grinning inside right now, thinking 'how come not, but he's with me', but soon you will realize you were mistaken. I was mistaken the exact same way. I also used to think that Arel was with me. Everybody think Arel is with them. And he is with everybody, and with nobody. All this time you were staring at me like this, you think I'm miserable, but you don't get it, I like it here, I'm good. I'm among my own kind. And you, you are all alone, just like before, not a single loving soul by your side..."

"I truly am sorry..."

"What is it that you want? You came to finish whatever you couldn't do back then? Why didn't you tell them that you hand shook and your blow wasn't exactly to the heart? I know, don't answer that, you didn't tell them because you were afraid, afraid to appear weak. Because they might have thought that you too, fell in love with him, with your enemy.

“Tell them”.

“Why should I, I don't need it all the more. I don't care! It would be better if everything happened just like you said. And would be better if I died back then!”

“I caused you pain...”

“None of this matters.”

“Why did you stay in the castle, if you think that I came for you?”

“I have nowhere else to run, I told you, here is my real home, my family, which I didn't have otherwise. Not with my mother, not with my father, not with you...”

“Don't say that!”

“I've been through a lot, and I've had everything, even love”.

“No!”

“I will go to a slaughter like a ship”.

“Stop it!”

“Go to sleep in peace, Carina, I won’t escape from you”.

“Lis...”

“Go away already! Don’t you see that everything has finished a long time ago? I don’t give a damn what you do. With Arel or with anybody else. As far as I’m concerned, you can fuck all of them, if Arel will share you around, just like his other girls! I will fuck you like the rest. I warned you!”

Carina’s face changed, they really had nothing to talk about anymore, he became as damaged as everybody else in this god damned castle, he is right, there’s nothing left in him from the great Sigmer, he really was a different person. Arel’s person. Arel’s slave. She got up: “Good night!”

Why do her legs feel like wood?

When her footsteps died down upstairs, Lis kept sitting without moving for a while, staring on the flames in the fireplace. Then he suddenly fell upon the furs, tucking his face in the pelage. And just lay like this, face down, on the old furs, alone in a huge empty hall, and the glare of the fire have tried unsuccessfully to dye his hair red.

Chapter Two.

Who is he?

“What else did you realize for yourself?” – Lis asked. “Tell me”.

“What’s in it for you? It’s all just small talk” – Orel said, lighting a cigarette.

“You think outside the box, and I’m curious”.

Orel laughed: “Is this a complement? Did you just praise a ‘silly pretty prince’?”

“Think whatever you want! I’ve always considered you rather sharp, just somewhat crass. As for your smarts, you have to agree, Arel, you never even really learned how to read, or write, or count. You’re not silly, of course, but you are uneducated and illiterate”.

“I know all that stuff” – Orel shook his hair.

“You’re a child! It’s ridiculous! You are almost thirty years old! Even if a miracle occurs, and you die a natural death, in your own bed, even though it’s unlikely, even in the very best case it will happen within fifteen years tops! And the “blacks” usually

live till hundred years easily! You understand that?”

“Yes”.

“Did you already catch the liver infection?”

“Yes...”

“What were you thinking?! Are you still going to claim you’re not stupid?”

Orel was silent.

“How much time did you spend in prison?”

“Two”.

“Two and a half, to be accurate. Best years of your youth! Only fools, like you and Squint-Eye, serve time in prison! Or even get there!”

Once again, Orel didn’t answer.

“Do you know why I like you, Arel? You never make excuses, you take all my mockery quietly. And I mock you in a mean way, it hurts me that such an interesting thoughts come into your

head instead of mine. Even though I am the one who always kept searching for the answers, and still do”.

“But I told you, you were the one who gave me the basic idea. You were the one who said, ‘He is a nobody. He actually doesn’t exist! And you get from him whatever you bring in”.

“Well, you’re basically right, I said something like this, but I wasn’t the one who gave it the final shape, it was you”.

“You suppose my theory is final? It’s only one of the ideas”.

“There’s more?!”

“Yes.”

“?!”

“There is the feedback. The feedback we get from him”.

“Your slave girl? Shela, whom he supposedly killed to get back at me. I got you”.

“The black-braided. Yes, it’s possible. Shit, why do I keep forgetting her name!”

“Never mind. You also got something? You love him, after all!”

“I got some. Big time! I got no less than Enriki, and definitely no less than you! I’m almost ruined!”

“But what for? And wait, what does Rik have to do with it?”

“Squint-Eye and Enriki, the two miserable ones, they really do resemble each other. Only Squint-Eye doesn’t deny his own nature, and Enriki would give up his hands, just not to touch the abomination that lives inside him. Eventually, it all ended up the same for both of them, they have both punished themselves. Only one of them cuts his own veins and mutilates himself almost consciously. And the other doesn’t. I had beaten Nikto for that, I was sure it was him...” – and, upon seeing the misunderstanding in Lis’s eyes, Orel shook his head violently.

“Try to understand! I’m trying to convey this to you now the best I can”.

“I’m trying,” – Lis nodded, extinguishing his finished cigarette, but only after lighting a new one from it, that was probably the fifth time he did it: “Let’s go through this. Why did you decide all Enriki’s troubles were Nikto’s fault?”

“If we go through this, first I’ve realized he was punishing me, or at least that’s what I thought. I’m going to tell you first now, I never told this to anybody. He has actually knocked my eye out”.

“What?!”

“Yep. He’s knocked out my eye back then. I have a crooked eye. I was the first one to catch it in the head, even before Enriki, and that’s despite all my love towards him. Well, you received a warning in a shape of a killed slave, and I felt it all on my own flesh. By the way, Lis, it’s all about the womans with you, I wonder why? There, now Carina is torturing you”.

“Don’t get destructed, keep talking”.

“He knocked my eye out, irretrievably, intentionally or not – I don’t know. I recalled all our conversations, looking for a reason, why would he treat me this way. And I remembered how I reproached him for changing his eyes. He adjusted them for the ‘unclean’ and almost turned blind. Or at least that’s what I thought back then. I used to say: ‘What an idiot you must be to change your own eyes! Not to see anything during the day! The world in all its’ splendor!’ I was probably wrong, after all, I have no idea how he really sees everything, maybe it’s not all grey and white, maybe it’s not that bad. He told me the world wasn’t any worse at night. I didn’t believe him. And now I know it’s

actually true. Because he has planted an eye of the “unclean” in me, and I see in the dark with it”.

“Are you kidding me right now?! Please tell me it was just a joke!”

“No. What jokes, the jokes ended long time ago. I’m telling you, he altered me! I have his black tattoos on my arms and legs, and his jewelry in my ears and on my chest!”

“And what about Enriki?” – Lis said hardly, slowly.

“Enriki, Enriki always smack-talked and despised him, once he was braze enough to drop that it’s better not to have fingers at all, than such an embarrassing hands like Nikto’s. And then it dawned to me. I’ve decided that it was Nik punishing him for these words, letting him feel what it’s like to have no fingers. But Nikto tells me it was not his fault, on the contrary, he was trying to help Enriki however he could. He employed all his knowledge, everything the witch and his sister taught him about doctoring. And they are both great healers. And it was just the same with me. After all, my eye was impossible to return, and he didn’t want to leave me mutilated”.

“Whatever he says, you don’t even have to tell me! So at first,

he punished and mutilated you. And then graciously helped you, but altered everything his way”.

“That’s what I thought, but he denies it. He says he has nothing to do with it, that we are punishing ourselves. Just like Squint-Eye, when he cuts his veins. That’s what I told you about in the beginning. By the way, to Squint-Eye he didn’t do anything. Because he does everything by himself”.

“And Tol”.

“Well, Tol isn’t even a person, just instincts, without thinking”.

“And that’s what saves him” – Lis said. – “And me?”

“You? You are staring at Carina every day, remembering how you used to love her and how you got a knife in your heart from her!”

“I wanted to it. I wanted to do it to Nikto. Stick a knife in his heart while he was in coma”.

“I know”.

“You know?! And you keep quiet about it? You didn’t raise stink, didn’t even talk to me!”

Orel shrugged: "What's the point now. I wanted to, at first, but Nik talked me out of it, he said it wasn't so simple to eliminate him. Of course I was enraged, and now I'm more worried about you, you're acting silly and walking on the edge".

"Carina is here to finish me off. Where did she come from?! And him! Where did he come from on our heads! Who he even is?!"

"What difference does it make?! Who he is, what he is. Remember, you said once, in the beginning, that we jumped into the abyss, and now it's too late, no going back. It's impossible."

"Oh yeah..."

"You know what's the funniest part, though?"

Lis lifted his head and looked at Orel, waiting.

"It fits him all, all the theories, all the ideas. From the most complicated one to the dumbest. Anything you can think of, it's possible. He could summon the demon himself, just like Squint-Eye said, and pay for it. Or maybe he's not paying for his deed at all. Serving his master loyally, by mutual agreement, and everything goes as it should. Why have we decided the demon was torturing him so much? And what if he actually protects him

and gives him unlimited powers? Huh?

And maybe it's not like that, and the witch turned him over to serve the demon, his own will had nothing to do with it. He was just a victim. A body they didn't even bother to give a human name to. That's also possible, and then Enriki isn't so wrong.

And my theory also fits. He is reflecting our wishes and ambitions, and giving back to us. And look, he totally could hurt us, punish us for treating him badly, or simply for our wicked deeds".

"He could".

"And it's also possible that he didn't do it, we could just get into a scrape on our own. Me, for example, I got smacked in the eye with my own ring, for my own lust!"

"So we still don't know anything about him!"

"Exactly! Maybe one of the theories is right, and maybe nothing is! Maybe he was sent by the gods, or by the demons, or maybe he is just a human being!"

"So what should we do? We are doomed if we don't find a solution! Me for sure! He left me for dessert. I already imagine

myself dangling on the rope, at the square!" – Lis yelled.

Orel was silent, deep in thought.

"Look, Arel, Squint-Eye is as good as dead. They will lock him up, and even if they don't execute him as well, within a year he will either loose his mind, or kill himself, or die of his diseases. What, you think I'm wrong?"

"No".

"Enriki can't escape either this time, Carina and her daddy will see to that."

"Yes, Kors has been holding grudge against him, Enriki was fooling everybody for too long, shamelessly".

"Can you imagine what will happen to Enriki in a solitary cell, without 'water'? Or with 'water', which is even worse!"

"I can. Stop smoking, Lis, you scare me".

"Well, it's all clear with me, a bit of Carina's testimony, and I won't linger in this life."

"She is your only living witness, that's amusing... Was it worth

killing all the rest, just to leave her? A witness like that!"

"Don't..."

"You shouldn't panic in advance! Why have you decided that she will do it? Maybe she won't testify against you! And other than that, they don't have anything serious. No murders, like me and Squint-Eye, no bribery and forgery, like Enriki. They don't have anything on you!"

"They have Carina! And she will finish what she started. It's a matter of principal. I've seen her eyes."

"She loves you!"

"Cut the crap! She might feel some pity for me. But justice is above pity and above personal affections. The justice must prevail, the culprit must be punished as he deserves. She will fulfill her duty, she won't betray her country, her people. Who am I? Arel, don't you get it? It's only for you I am Lis, a close person, as I hope, the one you know and even love a little bit. But that's just for you!"

"You are my family!"

"But you see me in a wrong way! I'm a war criminal! I'm your

enemy! You can't even imagine how many "blacks" I've killed, your countrymen. I'm an occupant!"

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