



Vi Kors
The Mist and the Lightning
Part VIII

СОДЕРЖИТ
НЕЦЕНЗУРНУЮ
БРАНЬ

18+

Ви Корс
The Mist and the
Lightning. Part VIII

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Аннотация

The novel's grand comeback. But the guard didn't finish, blind and weak Nikto at the oblique trajectory cut him from neck to chest. Содержит нецензурную брань.

A little earlier:

“He is alive, sir Kors,” said the overseer, “for three days we kept him in a stone bag and he is alive!”

Kors looked up at him.

“Are you surprised?”

“Allow me to answer?”

“Of course, since I asked you myself!”

“Honestly? Yes, sir, I’m surprised.”

“That means nothing,” Kors smiled slightly at the edges of his lips, “nothing, after a couple of days... He certainly won’t stand it! Without his drugs!”

“Yes, sir, he seems to be unconscious, but breathing, and there is a pulse.”

“It’s not for long, it’s just a matter of time. Four days...”

Kors stumbled half a word. As if in horror, someone knocked on the door.

“Well, who else is there?!”

“Sir Kors! This is Clive Gabriel! Allow to report!” Heliterally burst into the office, without waiting for permission. He was breathing heavily and generally looked out of breath. His eyes seemed to bulge out even harder

“What?!”

“Sir Vitor Kors! I'm just out of court! Karina didn't confirm that Lis was Sigmer!”

“WHAT?!” Kors looked at Clive as if not understanding his words.

“I ran here to report to you. She said: “No, I don't know him! Sigmer has long been dead and you're wrong.”

Kors looked with a distant look at the warden who was just reporting to him about Nikto, and whom he listened with such interest only a couple of minutes ago.

“You are free, I will call you later!”

The guard immediately jumped out the door without any

questions

“How so?” Kors even somehow bewildered, as if looking for help and support from Clive, looked at him.

“I don’t know,” he muttered, he, too, looked bewildered, and also frightened.

“I needed to go with her,” Kors said, reasoning rather than addressing Clive. “But hell! I have a lot to do here! And this demon is not dying!” He paused and looked at Clive again. “Hey, sit down already... And now what?”

“Now? “Clive squirmed in his chair. “Lis was released, the case is closed for lack of other witnesses. And evidence.”

“They’re crazy there!” Kors literally yelled, and Clive staggered back startled.

“Dumb warriors! Gods, how stupid they are! They lethem go! And his confession is not enough for them?!”

“But he did not confess, sir. No matter how they beat him, he didn’t confirm anything.”

“They don’t know how! They don’t know how to work! And

still try! They didn't manage to knock it out of him, to press him to sign... Oh Gods! Why didn't he come to me! Why did these stupid warriors take him from me! Well, that's what they need! And where is he now?"

"I don't know. He was released from the courtroom."

"Why didn't you detain him?!"

"But how? On what basis?"

"Fuck! It was so easy for to invent, he is a man of the prince, which means we have questions for him! Dumbass!"

"Karina! Karina, open the door!" Shouted Vitor Kors, having lost all composure, he violently pounded on locked door:

"Karina, open! Open, you the motherfucker! Oh Gods, forgive me, forgive me, Iness, that I involuntarily offended your memory, but this bitch has driven me to frenzy!"

And Kors kicked the door with force.

Clive huddled beside him, in such fury he had never seen his

boss before.

With a couple of strokes, Kors kicked the door open and burst into the room. Clive was behind him. Karina's apartments were empty, only a dress thrown apparently in a hurry lay on the floor. The dress of black velvet in which she performed in court. Kors picked it up:

"I knew it! I knew that this stupid bitch would run away with him!" He yelled again. "Well, we'll see! I will catch you! I know where you will go..."

"Where?" Literally meowed Clive.

"To the estate of the prince, where else! Now we will go, we will catch up with them, remember the tavern outside the city, in the east?"

"Yes."

"They will have to stop there. At least in order to water the horses! Check out immediately! I will kill Lis! Gods see, in memory of my Iness, I will kill this son of a bitch!"

"Sir Kors!" They heard shouts, this was the overseer of the root part of the prison tower hurrying to them/ "Sir Kors, finally I found

you! We have big problems!”

“What?! Has he died?”

“No! He ran away! He is not in the chamber, and the guard is killed.”

And seeing Kors turning pale right before his eyes, the overseer hastened to add:

“I think he’s still in the tower, it’s not so easy to get out of there, and we raised the alarm...”

Kors looked at Clive, then at the overseer, he clearly didn’t know where to run, where to rush.

“Clive! Go for Lis and Karina! Kill Lis, bring Karinaback! Do you understand? Why are you looking at me like that? Show me what you are capable of!”

“Yes, sir!”

“Act!”

“And I’ll deal with this damn demon, he can’t go far. Did you block all the exits?”

“Yes, sir, all exits are blocked!”

“Follow me!”

Chapter one

What really happened

Karina felt complete devastation and fatigue, it would seem that she should have been happy, because she had done good, and Lis would not be hanged. The crowd in the marketplace will not mock him, and the platform will remain in the full possession of the dancer Norta. But Karina was not at ease, probably she was afraid of her father. Of his reactions. And this fear poisoned and overshadowed all other feelings. It froze everything, leaving only emptiness. She just didn't know what to do! And what she had already done, was that right? Her head was full of confusion, and she really needed to talk with someone, talk about everything and hear some kind of unbiased opinion in response. Maybe hear some practical advice. How to look in the eyes of her father now. What to tell him?

“I need to talk to Nikto! He reasons wisely and he will help me to gather my spirit before meeting with my father! He'll tell me how to behave!”

Nikto has some kind of wholeness that she so lacks. And yet, there is an inner calm in him, which she too is very lacking now!

He told her to stay away from him and not come again, but in

this situation it doesn't matter. No!

And, quickly changing clothes and grabbing her bag, with which she usually went to Nikto (it contained all the passes, medicines and a "stone flower" in a special glass case, it didn't need light, but lit everything around no worse than a candle), Karina rushed along the usual path into the depths of the prison tower.

The guard near his chamber, not at all surprised, already as usual, without question, let her in.

And trembling with excitement, Karina ran to Nikto:

"Nik! Nik! Are you sleeping?"

Nikto didn't answer her. He lay on his side, not moving, holding one arm under him, the other was twisted up, fastened by the handcuffs to a ring in the wall.

"Nik?" She called him again, already scared. He didn't seem to sleep, and there seemed to be something very wrong with him. "Oh Gods!"

Nikto really looked like a corpse now. Not a spot on his pale face, cheekbones very clearly defined, facial features sharpened unhealthy. And the complete absence of at least some reaction to her words...

She tried to moisten his forehead with a damp rag, constantly repeating his name, interspersed with affectionate words, and to her joy he stirred, opened his eyes, but his gaze didn't express anything.

"Nik! Wake up, please! I beg you! I need you!" Unable to

see him in such a deplorable state, so exhausted, Karina burst into tears. She began to lift him, because his unhealthy twisted arm scared her. He sat very slowly, still without making a sound. Karina brought a cup of water to his lips:

“Here it is, drink, you need a drink. What should I inject you? Gods! If you need “black water,” she stopped short, because with these words Nikto flinched and recoiled from her, clinging to the wall. Karina didn’t understand him, she continued:

“If you can't do without it... I will try to get it somehow, steal it from my father’s safe in which he stores material evidence. I think it should be there... Or... I don’t know... I will go to the castle, to Arel, and there I will turn everything upside down and find it. I have nothing to lose! You just tell me where to look?”

Nikto seemed to hear her, he somehow strange, frantically ran his hands over his face, over his eyes, over his scar, lips with rings. And his face twisted in such despair, in such anguish that Karina instantly forgot all her problems and questions.

“Gods! What's the matter? Answer me something?! Don’t act as if you are out of your mind!”

Nikto touched his hair, ran his palm along the entire length of his face, it felt as if he were feeling himself, while his eyes looked into the wall behind Karina’s back, past her, and she realized that he couldn’t see anything.

“Are you okay?! Oh please! Stop it! Gods! He moved off his mind! What to do now?”

Nikto turned his head slightly, as if guided by the sound of

her voice, and shook his head in a negative gesture, this made her unspeakably happy, since it meant he still heard and understood her.

The chain clanged, Nikto ran his hand along the rough wall, then with his free hand down, he felt the floor slabs and straw as if he didn't understand where he was and what was surrounding him.

“Nik! Can you hear me? Tell me something! You scare me very much!”

Nikto froze, and slightly bending his head, slowly ran his fingers over his dry cracked lips, as if crossing them crosswise.

“What does it mean? I don't understand you! Can't you talk? You have a dumb attack, that's why you are called “dumb” in Lower? Not only blindness, but also dumbness happen to you? Fuck!” She remembered how the doctor said something about his cropped vocal cords, she then missed it by her ears. Apparently a stone bag, and the non-regular intake of “restoratives” perceptibly violated something in his body.

“I understand that you have not yet returned to normal, you cannot see and speak. I have understood. Now I'll inject you something, just... Wait!” Karina feverishly began to delve into her purse:

“Here! Hold on!” She put a small little book for notes and a pencil in Nikto's hand:

“Write me as you can. I will understand what to inject!”

Nikto took a pencil and slowly scratched something on the

sheet, his fingers didn't obey him. Karina literally grabbed the notebook from his hands, but instead of the name of the drug and the proportions, it was written on the sheet:

“What is today's date?”

Karina sat and stupidly looked at these curve uncertain words. Then she looked up and said:

“Three and a half days, if I'm not mistaken, you spent in a stone bag. My father told me so.”

Nikto shook his head, and held out his hand, she immediately returned the notebook to him. He wrote only one word: “Date.”

And stunned, Karina, called him that day's date and year.

“By the way,” she said, “to believe my father, today is your birthday,” she tried to smile, forgetting that Nikto couldn't see her smile anyway, and barely said, “congratulations,” and the words got stuck in her throat.

Nikto leaned back against the wall and bowed his head. He didn't move. She, too, was silent, not knowing now what to say, waiting for Nikto to come to his senses and give her a sign. But he seemed to become numb. So minute passed by minute, and nothing happened. They sat together in a dark and moldy prison casemate, and a stone flower, unlike a candle, could dispel the darkness all around forever. Nikto was cringed, cowering in the corner, and Karina sat next to him, just opposite, on a low bench.

“Nik?” She finally called, unable to waste any more time in vain, her father had probably already been informed of her act in court, and he would soon begin to look for her. Of course,

looking for her here would never come into his head, or it would come last, but still...

“Nik?”

He raised his head. And to her disappointment, Karina saw that nothing had changed. His gaze was still frighteningly empty. Only... or it seemed to her in the obscure flickering light of a flower, his eyes shone strangely somehow, and his cheeks were wet.

And Karina couldn't stand it, she rushed to him, hugging him:

“Dear, darling, don't do that... Gods, I can't bear it! Why is my father so cruel to you?! Why does he think you're a demon?! He should have seen you now! It is unbearable! It is inhumane to make you suffer because of idle gossip and speculation!”

Nikto didn't pull away from her embrace, and she put the pencil in his hands again:

“Write me something. Write that everything will be fine!”

Nikto obediently took a pencil in his hand, Karina only now realized that his right hand was fastened to the wall, and he wrote all the time with his left! But it seemed that this didn't bother him and he succeeded.

He handed her a piece of paper.

“I want to die” was written on it.

“I... I will show this sheet to Arel, and he will arrange such a thrashing for you! You mustn't give up!”

Nikto held out his hand, and again receiving a pencil, wrote as if specifying:

“I’m dying.”

“Do you need black water?”

Nikto shook his head.

“Damn, I will find it, inject you, and you will come to your senses! Fuck! Damn! Can you walk? When will your vision be restored? I’ll get you out of here! I will get you out of here, no matter what it costs me, and I will return you to Arel! Safe and sound! I pulled out Lis, and you are my brother, so I’ll get you out too! I have decided!”

Karina jumped up:

“Let’s go!”

Nikto didn’t move.

“Let’s go! Either now or never! You make me commit this madness and betray my father, but I can’t see it! I can’t see you like that! After all, you saved my life. Have you forgotten it?! And you smiled there, in Backara, you were a merry villain, like all your friends! I liked you more like that!”

She drew her sword:

“Move back a little…”

With force she slashed several times along the links of the chain, freeing Nikto’s hand. Fortunately, the chain succumbed. Nikto pressed his freed hand to his chest, as if it were a small wounded animal. And Karina was already pulling his other hand, lifting him from the floor:

“Let’s go! If we don’t do it now, he will put you in this damned coffin forever, and I won’t be able to help you! Neither I, nor

anyone else!”

Nikto didn't get up.

“Nik! For me! For my sake – I'm your sister! And for the sake of Arel and Lis, Enriki, Tol, Squint-Eye, Vil and all your other friends! They need you! Let's go! I beg you! For the sake of your Rosa and our mother, Iness. I beg you, Nikto, let's go!”

Forced by her, Nikto stood up. Without releasing his hands and holding the sword ready, Karina cautiously approached the door and knocked with a special signal. The guard immediately opened. Leaving Nikto for a second, Karina came out first. The guard had not even had time to ask her anything, as she, having invested all her strength, hit him with a sword in the lower abdomen, just there the protective bib ended. She turned the sword, ripping open his stomach. And when he, clutching at the falling out insides, fell to his knees, she hit him in the neck, it certainly was not Arel's crown blow, but very rough and clumsy work, but the guard was huge and healthy, and Karina was small and fragile. And although she didn't take his head off, this was quite enough.

“Dad, I'm sorry,” she whispered, seeing how she had like a butcher finished the guard, who, by the way, covered her all this time.

Well, okay! Well, let it be so!

She returned for Nikto:

“How are your eyes? Can you see anything?”

Nikto shook his head.

“Well! Come on!”

Having left the chamber together with Nikto, she squatted down next to the guard lying prone, unfastened his bandage and his knife.

“Let’s take his sword,” she explained, “suddenly it may come in handy.”

Both the knives and the bandage were stained with blood. She could be accused of murder and imprisoned, this was not a joke and she got into a really bad thing, Karina understood this. But she reasoned so: she will pull out Nikto, sit out somewhere, and then her father could not bear the separation and would call her back. Time will show that she was right and did nothing wrong. Maybe she could even manage to reconcile him with Nikto? And the security guard... well, it could well be self-defense, or she could even blame it on Nikto... For him it already doesn’t make any difference. Having calmed herself in this way, Karina handed a weapon to her plagued brother.

“Here it is, take a sword, it can come in handy.”

But he shook his head.

“Can’t you fight blindly?”

She still hung an additional sword on her back.

“Okay, let’s go!” She pulled Nikto after herself.

Slowly they moved along the low corridor. Karina’s heart was pounding so that it seemed to her that now it would jump out of her throat. It was one thing to go here and get to Nikto secretly, even if they caught her, she was sure that her father would quickly

forgive her, it was an innocent prank, a whim, especially since the doctor himself sent her for the first time here. And it was a completely different thing to wade past posts like this, with blind Nikto who was out of his mind. When any patrol would be a disaster for them. She frantically scrolled various options in her head and realized that her plan, by its lack of thought and stupidity, didn't enter into any framework of sanity.

"I hold your hand. Follow me as quietly as possible, just sneak. If they spot us, I'm not sure that I will handle it!"

Slowly and carefully they walked along the narrow corridor. Karina turned into a low arch, inside of which steps immediately began to go up, and up there... there should have been another guard, no, no, not the last. Just another one. And Karina didn't know how to pass him. And how to pass the rest?

"Wait, who's coming?"

"Karina Kors, I'm leading a convicted person to my father for interrogation!" She replied loudly, suddenly realizing with all clarity why Nikto refused to take the sword.

"Your pass!"

Karina boldly held out the paper, the guard knew her. He glanced at Nikto, perhaps it was worthwhile to put a bag on his head for greater persuasiveness?

"Lady, are you doing this alone? Can I help you?"

"No," Karina answered very quickly and probably too harshly, "I... the soldiers and Nolan will meet me there... and you... you must let me in and not leave your post!"

“I obey, madam!”

Gods! This guard was dumb, and what will happen next? The higher they rise, the more savvy the guards will be. But! In any case, they managed to pass by this one. And some confidence that she was doing everything right settled in the heart of Karina. Nikto slowly, but to pay tribute to him, despite blindness and a lame leg, very quietly, almost silently stepped after her, and she remembered his complaints about how he fell several times on the stairs.

Passing a few more unguarded arches and turns, they entered a rather wide corridor. Just a little more, and narrow loopholes of windows will appear, maybe to get out the window, it will not be very high, the second floor, they can try, and if to cling to the rough masonry of the tower... so what? Once in the prison yard, they will be in full view. Who will open the gates to them? Only if you put everyone down, steal the horses... if Nikto was in good condition... he could “put everyone down”, for some reason she had no doubt about it. “Yes, and I would also help,” she thought, not without pride. Only, they still have to go to the windows, and maybe it’s easier like that – to go through the cordon after cordon, supposedly leading him for interrogation. And to meet with her father at the door of his office, huh...

Her feverish thoughts were interrupted by the sound of footsteps. Security was checking the floor around the perimeter. The corridor was quite wide and there was nowhere to go. What to do?!

She pushed Nikto around the corner, into some small dead-end arch, and herself darted behind him. Maybe they will not be noticed?

Her back felt a quiet breath. Nikto didn't move, and even his heart seemed to be beating quietly, but her one must have been beating so that the guards could hear it. Their steps were getting closer, closer ...

“Who is there?!”

That was the end. They were noticed...

“I'm Karina Kors, I'm leading a prisoner to my father for interrogation...” She slowly stepped apart from Nobody, came into the light.

“Your pass!”

“Here you are,” Karina glanced at this overseer and understood everything. Slowly, without making any sudden movements, while the overseer was still interested in her pass, she again stepped back a step, pushing Nikto who was still standing in the arch with her back, a little rude, probably as if making it clear: “It's trash!”

“Why are you hiding from us, lady Karina Kors? And where is the escort? Are you alone?!”

“Because the matter is secret, you see! No one should know about this!”

And with relief, Karina felt that Nikto understood her, and slowly, carefully, gently was pulling the sword of the murdered guard from the sheath behind her back.

“A secret matter? Show me your prisoner! Why are you hiding him behind you, behind your back?”

Karina pulled away frowningly.

“Oh! What is with his eyes? The Devil’s son bewitched the daughter of Kors!” They all snapped at once.

“Take...”

But the guard didn’t finish, blind and weak Nikto at the oblique trajectory cut him from neck to chest. Karina drew her sword, too, one of the guards ran away from them, to where there were other corridors to the exit, to where there were windows, and he desperately blew a trumpet, giving out the most vile sound that Karina had ever heard. Karina looked at Nikto, and at the bodies of four guards lying on the floor, only one there was killed by her.

“Well, you're a monster! But what should we do now? Soon my father’s entire army will be here!”

And in confirmation of her words, somewhere up there, the buzzing sounds were heard, a clang was heard, and the ringing of additionally locked doors and bars. The path to the top was cut off. Everything was blocked. They couldn’t walk forward even ten meters. What to do?!

And as if answering this dumb question, Nikto pulled her back.

She ran:

“Run, faster, Nik!”

They had already heard the clatter of guard approaching

behind them. So far, only the nearest patrols were in a hurry to help, but soon there will be many more. The failed fugitives, of course, darted back, but Nikto couldn't run fast, although he tried very hard. At least with one hand, from time to time, he needed to stick to the wall, feeling his way. Here they walked slowly, but now they had to retreat quickly. And she could not even reproach him, because she saw that he was trying very hard and was doing everything in his power. They would be now overtaken by the next group of the fastest soldiers... No! Karina couldn't stand this hell the second time! Moreover, they again descended to the basement level, which meant that the passages there were narrower and narrower. If Nikto waves his sword, then who will give a guarantee that he will not touch her. No! No! No!

She withstood it. Again fiercely defending themselves and retreating, they didn't allow the guard to come to themselves. And again, Nikto, fighting silently and blindly, shocked her, and even scared her to some extent. He never hit her, although there was nowhere to turn around in the narrow corridor. Once again, getting out of this two-minute mess, although it seemed to Karina like an eternity, Karina exhaled convulsively. For her, the first time was enough, how she withstood this tension and was able to repulse the second attack, or rather help Nikto to repulse it. She herself didn't understand how she managed to do it! But what was the use? They had nowhere to run. Only down, which meant that sooner or later they would be caught like rats in a dungeon. There were no exits. The more they resisted, the more corpses

they would leave behind, and the worse it would be... the worse it would be for Nikto. Later.

Because now she knew that everyone would say, and how to justify herself: "He bewitched her." Everything was simple. And very noble in relation to his brother. But it will be later, and now... Now she even regretted that the first guard was so stupid that he let them through, now he only bothered them, and they would have to kill him. To kill again...

Nikto was ahead of her. Having got rid of the guard, almost head over heels they flew down the stairs, from the arch, again to Nikto's chamber. What a pity that nothing came of it, and he will have to be closed there again. And now, of course, he will be executed, because everyone will consider that he bewitched her, and even if she defends him, no one will believe her. After all, she is bewitched!

There was his chamber. But it seemed that Nikto wasn't going to return there at all. He ran, if one could call it that, past, deepening further down the corridor, heading in the opposite direction from all exits.

"Nik! There is a dead end! There are no exits!"

He turned around, and to her horror, he quickly approached her, grabbing her arm. The way he dragged up his leg and his blind eyes, to be honest, frightened her now no less than they frightened the guards.

"Where are you taking me?"

Does he want to take her as a hostage? Well, this is not so

stupid. Only if his voice came back to him, otherwise the notes would hardly work out with the guards. Without letting her come to her senses, Nikto pulled her along, turned somewhere, several times they went down some steep and narrow stairs, as if he knew this road, knew where to go, and there was nobody here. And the guards were already left somewhere behind.

“Wait!”

It was all the same for him, but Karina was afraid to break her legs in the dark, she took out a glass with a “stone flower” from her bag and lit the corridor a little.

It would be better if she didn’t do this, because right there, she saw a door ajar on her left hand, and there she saw a coffin behind this door.

“Gods! This... This is...”

Nikto opened the door and went inside. He held Karina tightly by the hand, and she had no choice but to go in there with him. The flickering greenish light of the flower only exacerbated the situation, making things in the room even more scary than they actually were. Some iron hooks, an object similar to a poker, and...

“That’s it? The very that “stone bag”? Yes?” Karina asked in a whisper. She didn’t hear the chase after them, but it was so quiet there that for some reason she didn’t want to break this silence with the loud sounds of her voice.

The lid was slightly moved, and Karina involuntarily looked down. Goose bumps ran along her back. And what was he like?

Nikto, still palpating objects with his fingers, touched the stone lid. In the light of the “stone flower” Karina saw that his face had not changed expression. It was as if he was looking for something, some reference point. Having stopped at the head of this stone coffin, he seemed to have turned into hearing, listening to something inaudible for Karina. He pulled his nose, as if sniffing, and then went, no longer holding onto the wall, to the left corner, confidently, as if knowing what he was looking for, but Karina had no doubt, he was looking for something, it was there.

He knelt down, there in this corner, began to fumble on the floor with his hands. Karina understood that this was crazy, sooner or later the guards would get here. When her father becomes aware that she is here, he will order to put the whole fucking tower upside down, turn everything upside down, but find them. And Nikto... he scared her. He dealt with the guard so professionally, he can do whatever he wants with her, because she herself gave him a sword! “Ah, poor little brother, how can I help you?” Now he will put her in this coffin, and sorry, goodbye!

Nikto turned to her, or rather, almost to her, because he didn't see her, and she stood silently, but approximately in the direction where she was. He turned around and waved his hand, as if calling her.

At that moment she heard the sounds of the trumpet and the screams of the guard, still far away, it seemed to her that a whole detachment had run over their head. Karina quickly approached

Nikto and saw what he had found. It was a hatch. A small hatch, and a groove to it from a stone coffin. What was supposed to flow into this hatch? Blood? The stool of the unfortunate walled up alive?

In any case, she realized that Nikto was trying to open it, and he needed her help. Together with him she tucked the hatch with a sword:

“Oh no! Nik, a sword can be broken! Wait a minute!”

She remembered a strange thing that reminded her of a poker.

“There it is! Try it, Nik!”

Using the “poker”, or it was some old instrument of torture, Nikto pushed the hatch lid. Karina looked into a narrow black hole. And there, they will be found too, sooner or later.

“There are no exits, Nik. This is not a city sewage system; grilles and wide passages are walled up everywhere. We just get lost there, and die of hunger.”

To her surprise, Nikto shook his head. Then he put his hand to his heart and on, as if he had drawn an arch with both hands. She realized for herself that he was hoping to find a way out.

“Nik, I don’t want to deprive you of hope, but there is no way out...” She said and raised her head unconsciously, crowds of guards rushed over them on the floors.

Nikto took her hand, very gently, making her ashamed of the thought that he would take her hostage or throw her in a stone bag. He made a movement with his other hand, and she understood, gently pulled her fingers out of his hand:

“Now, Nik, hold it,” rummaging in her bag, she handed him a notebook and a pencil.

And crouching on the floor, putting forward one knee, he wrote something and handed it to her.

“I won’t do without you” was written on a piece of paper. And Karina felt ashamed. Didn’t she, just for an hour, or even less, dragged him out of the chamber? She screamed: “I’ll get you out! For the sake of Rosa, for the sake of Iness, let’s go!” So what? She herself was blown away, as always! She forced him to make this escape, blind, after three days in this stone bag, his voice lost, almost driven crazy. No! She pulled him out, and then as soon as the first problems appeared, threw him away. And they should have appeared. Because her plan was spontaneous and ill-conceived. And now, she, like the last bitch, dives into the bushes, with that excuse that she was bewitched! And Karina became so ashamed, especially because he didn’t write to her: “You let me down!” or something worse. And he didn’t suffocate her after everything that happened, but so gently tried to hold her. He is not limp, he is fighting, he has led them to a place where they will not be searched for a long time, he has led her blindly! Just remembering the way he was taken here. He found this hatch. He did everything!

“I will climb first,” said Karina.

Chapter two

In the dungeon

The hatch was very narrow; she, resting her legs and arms, carefully descended lower and lower into a yawning blackness. Nikto was following her. At some point, she was afraid that his shoulders were wider and he would not get into this hole, but he apparently was emaciated, because with great difficulty, but he squeezed there. Soon Karina heard the murmur of water, the pipe ended and she plopped down into the icy water, painfully hurting her knees.

“Watch out! It’s high here,” she cried, barely having time to crawl to the side when Nikto plopped down almost on her. And he again grabbed her hand and pulled her somewhere, as if some unknown seventh feeling was leading him.

“Well, wait, let me at least to take the flower out!”

He obediently stopped, and as soon as she pulled out a long-suffering flower from her bag and put her hand in his one, he immediately rushed deep into these catacombs, squelching through the water, as if not noticing it. And generally not noticing anything around.

“We will get lost here, die from hunger and cold, and they will never find us,” thought Karina. She was scared, not because of Nikto, although he looked creepy and acted like an animal, she was not afraid of him now. Although she clearly understood that he would kill her in a second, even in such a state, blind, she won’t even have time to squeak. “He is really very dangerous, like a sharpened blade. But unlike other girls, I can handle cold weapons,” smiled Karina. Maybe he took her with him in order

to eat her later and to survive here? Sooner or later, get out somewhere on the surface, can this really be possible?

“I’m tired, I can’t stand it anymore,” said Karina after some time, during which they walked and walked, circled, and sometimes crawled into some very narrow skin-scraping hatches. No, they’d never be found there.

Nikto put a finger to his lips and nodded. She didn’t get it. Her feet were wet. In general, she was all dirty.

“Nikto, please, let’s take a break...”

He nods again and... continues to drag her further.

“Nik! I don’t know how you can go so long, and what leads and supports you, but I can’t do it anymore! No matter what you want!” And Karina stopped resolutely, pulling her hand out of his hand.

He shook his head, again showed this strange movement, as if drawing an arch.

“Output? Are you showing the way out?”

Nikto nodded.

“Do you know where it is?”

Nikto nodded again. This inspired Karina, she seemed to get a second wind, if he knew where the exit was, then there really was no need to sit there to relax, rather they needed to get out!

“Then let’s go!” She held out her hand to him again.

It was not long before he stopped in some rather large hall, in fact it was the largest room that they passed here. It seemed

to her that the room had a round shape, but the flower couldn't illuminate it enough to say with confidence. And to Karina's unspeakable surprise, Nikto let go of her hand and sat on the floor.

“Nik, did you decide to rest? Where is the exit? Are we coming soon?”

Nikto nodded.

“Well,” Karina crouched besides, since the floor in this room was dry. She put a “stone flower” next. It was completely uncomfortable there. How did he manage... In these narrow underground catacombs, Gods knew what for they were intended, all these hatches – not to drain the sewage? So, how did he manage to find there such a large room of some strange round shape and such a high ceiling?

Did he really know where the exit was? Maybe he just lost his mind and was seeing things. Karina looked at Nikto, he closed his eyes, sitting, cringing as if sleeping. In the obscure light of the “stone flower” his hair seemed light green, for some reason, Karina thought it was beautiful. In general, everything in her head mixed up in a heap, and didn't sort out on the shelves. She was unthinkably tired and nervous, and the dumb Nikto couldn't support her, but she went to him for advice! Everything turned completely different. If he knew where the exit was, then why didn't he lead them further? Was he tired? But he didn't collapse in exhaustion, which meant he could still go, she generally had the feeling that Nikto could go for a very long, endlessly long

time.

In his movements, there was nothing superfluous, no fuss, he acted as a mechanism. It forced to respect his strength and endurance, respect him, and at the same time, at some instinctive level, it frightened her, as if there was something alien to human nature in him. She suddenly remembered how easily he had survived a ninety percent fatal wound in his stomach, how he then got up from the floor and went down the stairs, mounted his horse... now the same thing. Maybe her father was right in something? And Karina started shaking. Now his hair no longer seemed beautiful to her, on the contrary, this green shade gave them some ominous color. And he was on his mind, strong, hardy. Did he really need her help? Well, maybe just to get out of the chamber. And then? Why did he follow her if he had a plan in his head? The plan of escape in the exact opposite direction. Why didn't he immediately run to the hatch? Why were all these chases and killings needed? Why did he carry her everywhere with him? "I won't manage without you." And Karina suddenly clearly understood, he would manage, he would open the hatch, and this room... What were they doing in this underground hall? How did he find it? Wasn't he waiting for salvation, for some friend from the other world? No, of course, she didn't believe in the devil and all this nonsense... or she did. In such a gloomy atmosphere, it was not difficult to believe in anything. Why did he bring her here and sat down? What was he waiting for? Karina grabbed the bag, her hands went in a sway. Apparently, having

heard her swarming, Nikto turned his head to her. He was still blind, and strangely enough it reassured her a little.

“I want to give myself an injection,” she explained, “with a restorative, or... my nerves have gone to hell.”

He pointed a finger at himself.

“Well, I'll give it to you too, just write what,” Karina handed him the notebook again, and this time, he wrote what she wanted from him. At last! Not “What day is it today?” or “I want to die.”

Karina was relieved to read the name of his usual “restorative”, which meant that Nobody was recovering.

She pulled out a clean syringe and an ampoule with a rather weak (according to Nikto, Arel, Lis and others) stimulant, Karina with difficulty, and it was terrible (it was good that Nikto couldn't see this disgrace), at third attempt got into her vein, her hands were trembling. Then, hiding, as she decided, “her syringe,” she pulled out, as she thought, “infected” syringe of Nikto. She made a solution for him. He immediately reached out, as if seeing, was he guided by sounds or by smell?

“Do you want to try yourself?”

Nikto nodded, and Karina gave him a syringe. Well, his hands were free, though a heavy handcuff with a chopped chain remained on his right wrist, well, let him try it. If he so wants. He didn't roll up his sleeve, as she expected, and didn't do something else, any preparing. He just put a needle to his neck, somewhere under the collar and... ten seconds hadn't passed when he held out an empty syringe to her.

“You... you... well, cool you are!”

And Nikto, she was ready to argue, tried to smile at her, a little out of the corner of his lips.

Karina felt the trip from the stimulants. They needed to move on, a picture of what to do cleared up in my head. They had to look for a way out. What was he waiting for?

“We have to look for a way out,” said Karina. She got up and went, ran somewhere, faster, or didn’t run. There were some kind of corridors, or she still had visions, and a bright light: “I found a way out! Output!” The light was melting before her eyes, like a mirage in the desert, again a wall, and Karina again wandered through the narrow and dark corridors: “Where is the exit?! Output! Output!” Some strange walls, Karina looked under her feet, near the floor there was something like a thin white strip. Gods! This was not paint, it was a thin slit and bright light was beaming from it, these walls, they were like a curtain around her! She just had to lift it, and everything was so simple, there was freedom! How could she not have guessed before?! Karina already saw the bright green grass of a hilly field, and the blue-blue sky, and the forest near the horizon, and most importantly this fresh wind stupefying with its purity!”

Gathering her last strength into a fist, Karina made a jerk to rip off this dirty curtain, imitating masonry, to run through a meadow, through green grass, fill the lungs with clean air, instead of the musty stale air of the dungeons, and... again appeared in this terrible round room that looked like some ancient temple,

and again saw Nikto sitting nearby. He was sitting next to her, as if he had not changed his posture, and the flower was still illuminating his hair with light green.

The wild disappointment of the first seconds of returning to reality was immediately replaced by fear and anxiety. She was cut off by this fucking stimulant, and it was not known for how long! Yes, she woke up rested and full of strength, only they were still in this underground room. When will it be over!

“Fuck, Nik! How much did I sleep like that? Why didn’t you wake me up? Stop sitting here, we have to go!”

And as if in confirmation of Karina’s words, they heard distant voices and signal sounds of horns. The soldiers found the hatch!

“They will find us now, Nik, we have to run!” Karina tried to pull Nikto’s hand, he reluctantly got up, as if obeying, but obviously was not going to go anywhere.

“They will find us sooner or later, don't you understand that?! We need to do something!” He didn’t react to her words, Karina pulled him along, and then... he didn’t follow her, he rested, and besides, grabbing her arm, he pulled her sharply to him, pressed her back to his chest and gripped her wrist with force. At that moment, when she realized that he didn’t want to let her go, Karina was covered by such a panic as she didn’t expect from herself, considering herself bold and cold-blooded. Suddenly all the warnings of her father surfaced and became so clear and understandable. “He fooled you! The demon in human form, the son of the devil!”

Nikto was waiting for something in this place, for something or someone. After all, he had many “unclean” friends who could make their way everywhere if they wanted. What about his servant with a dog’s head! From one memory of this creature, Karina felt sick, and the earth seemed to shake under her feet, no, the earth really seemed to sway. Gods! No, here it no longer smelled like “unclean” friends, but really by Dad himself!

“Gods!” Karina looked under her feet round-eyed, because the stone floor was trembling. It vibrated as if somewhere far away, someone was wielding a powerful jackhammer. At first, these waves were shaking at intervals, but very quickly they merged into one. “Now he will sacrifice me,” Karina thought somehow calmly and doomedly, this cannot be, but it will happen. He lured her here, deceived her.

“You could have done without me,” said Karina, angry at Nobody and her impotence. “Why do you need me?”

Nikto shook his head in a negative gesture. His face, eyes, the steel grip with which he held her hand. “But I, unlike other girls, can handle cold weapons,” she thought some time ago, ha, what arrogance! As if in response to her panicky thoughts, they again heard the screams and signals of a hearth echoing among themselves among the guards. “They’ll get me out!” – it flashed through her head, like salvation, and she screamed, or rather, tried to scream with all her power.

Her scream was immediately drowned out by Nikto’s palm, he clasped her with his arms, clutching to him and clutching

her hand with one hand, and holding her mouth with the other. It seemed to Karina that the revolving walls were added to the trembling floor. Her eyes darkened, everything around her started spinning and turning around, she felt only Nikto's body, his steel grip, his icy palm on her lips, and lightheadedness, as if she was being turned inside out. Now I will die, flashed through her mind, and yes, Nikto let me down. As my father said. He needed her to open the chamber door, take off the shackles, and he pretended to be weak and miserable. But he was not like that, now she understood it, these suspicions crept into her even earlier, when he so famously cracked down on the guards. She got caught, caught, and he was a demon. But why did he follow her if he had his own escape plan? Why did he need her? Maybe to take revenge on her father? This thought literally pierced her through, and she jerked so hard, trying to break out of her steel embrace, at some point she even thought that Nikto was forced to loosen his grip, it seemed she still managed to scream before losing consciousness.

Chapter three

The ring and the mask

Kors was sitting at the table, looking at the things lying in front of him. The mask and the ring. The mask made of a strange material a bit like suede leather, worn and scratched in many places, it could be seen that it had been used for a long time and often, and a men's ring with a dark blue sapphire, Kors took it

away from Arel. And Nikto gave it to Arel. Nikto... And this was his mask lying on the table in front of Kors, and he was looking at it with an empty gaze.

Everything turned out to be completely different from what he had expected; quite, completely different. And Kors again and again sorted through scraps of memory and tried to understand why? Why?! Why everything happened as it happened? He searched and found no answers.

Nikto deprived him of everything: Iness, the son to whom he never managed to come up with a name, and now he couldn't, so he left him nameless, calling him just a son, not daring to name him, like the others, Nikto. To some extent, agreeing that it was so, he was not named, not accepted and has not become a full-fledged person due to the sharing of essence from the lower plan. So for himself Kors called it. Therefore, Nikto had the correct name, it reflected the essence, probably... Or maybe it was too cruel.

In any case, now the demon living in him deprived Kors of his last joy, his Karina. He took her, took her away, and Kors had no doubt Karina died. The demon will destroy her, crush her and deprive her of will, as he did before with Arel, and even with Lis, whom neither the "reds" nor the "blacks" could break. But Nikto broke him the ridge. And him, Kors, too...

Arel, the unfortunate Arel, with a black tattoo on half of his cheek, starting from the corner of the eye and ending under the chin. Arel with one eye already redone too. Arel, also squinting

from the light and turning away from the window. And there were the rings thick like little fingers inserted in his ears and nipples.

Lis was in a collar, and Kors suspected that this was only the beginning. And now Karina. What will the demon do to her? He will take her to his other slaves, and what Arel and Lis will do to her? Lis, scars made by whom have already remained on the body of his poor Karina. His beloved daughter, who is now in fucking hell. He understood this, he never had any illusions about this world, she lived in illusions, and the more painful it would be for her. He recalled their punctured hands, Nikto's and now Prince Arel's too. Yes, and Lis probably also had there traces of injections. But Kors knew very well that Arel had never injected himself before. Squint-Eye, but not Arel. Now his veins were festering from the infection no worse than Nikto's. And thinking about it, at such moments, Kors wanted only one thing, no matter how terrible it might sound, so that his girl would die as soon as possible, so as not to reach the state that his son had reached, and to which Arel was approaching.

His son, a living corpse, a walking dead devoid of eyes, the ability to speak and see. And the worst thing that Kors understood now was that his son still really lived in this body, but Kors already didn't know how to help him. He wanted to take revenge on the demon, humiliated him and tormented him, but it turned out that he humiliated and rejected his son too. What did he do wrong?! What did he need to do, what to do? At that moment when he saw Nikto, yes, he believed that it

was his son, he really was very similar to Iness, very much. His bright eyes in fluffy dark eyelashes, pale skin and a little childishly puffy lips. And also... and Karina could not know this, but, Nikto looked like Kors himself, when he was twenty and when he made this fatal mistake, leaving Iness unattended. Kors seemed to see himself in his youth and... still Nikto was not more a human. Only the outer shell, the shell, which was used, but not spared. Not at all. And this killed Kors most of all, the way the demon was ungrateful and careless, but rather even intentionally sadistically used the human physical shell, mutilating and distorting it. And by the will of fate this man, this carrier of sharing essence, turned out to be his second child. Because, having killed Iness, they sold the baby to the witch, and she performed this terrible ritual.

And now Kors was sure that from the very beginning Nikto-demon knew who was in front of him. He knew that Kors was the father of the shell, and cynically used it, pretending to be a lamb, pushing on paternal feelings of Kors, and inside mocking how Kors behaved. How he felt, seeing his boy, his eyes down, a little naive, but sincerely trying to answer the questions. And he was already sitting on a chair at the table, already smoking a cigarette. What next? If Kors really believed him and admitted his son, he would open, hug him with tears. What would happen then? He didn't know, and this question tormented him. Where did he make a mistake? Then, when he entered into open confrontation? Not succumbed, and moreover,

answered with a blow? What would happen to Karina now if he tried to find some compromise, tried to negotiate with the demon, maybe make a deal, in exchange for the safety of his girl? He was too confident in his strength, and Nikto looked so weak, humble and submissive. And Niko deceived him and struck with a death blow. With this blow he killed both Karina and Kors himself. And Kors didn't know what to do.

In front of him was the mask of Nikto and the ring of the Kors family.

Chapter four

Forest

Karina opened her eyes because the wind blew around her face. Recovering, she jumped up, looking around in surprise, and not believing her eyes. They were in the forest. Karina stood on the ground with young green grass, and the setting sun beautifully illuminated a small, cozy forest lake.

“Portal... Nik! Was it a Portal? Gods! How did you manage to find it? Feel? Open finally! Or does it open there itself periodically? You didn't seem to do anything... Although, if to believe this story with Rosa, you have already dealt with Portals...”

Nikto was sitting nearby on the grass, as if stunned, the last rays of the setting sun hit him directly in the eye, but he didn't

squint or turn away, didn't try to move aside. From this Karina made a disappointing conclusion that he was still blind.

“Gods! Well, when will you normalize? When will you recover?!”

He shook his head in the negative and lay down on the grass.

This gesture scared her:

“Will you stay that way?! Don't scare me like that, brother! Arel will kill me if I don't return you safe and sound! We need to understand where to move now...”

Seeing a small hill nearby, Karina decided to climb it and look around if possible. It was not clear where they this portal threw them. Was it generally not harmful to the body? She heard somewhere that people were going crazy using portals, dying of a broken heart. What if they're generally somewhere in the western limit, where there are a lot of “unclean” colonies, or forests for many kilometers around! And Nikto gotnumb not in time!

“I'll go, look around a bit,” she announced to him her actions. He didn't even move, continuing to lie on the ground on his side, his eyelids with traces of a black paint half-covered. Oh, how out of place and unsuccessfully all this happened to him! Karina

didn't even want to think about the fact that he might not recover and will remain so.

She climbed a pine-covered hill and was relieved to see the pointed spires of the town in the distance. Well, they were at a safe distance, but not as far as she was afraid. Apparently, the stimulant introduced by her continued its action, because Karina was overcome by a thirst for further activity.

Going down the hill, she began to collect dry branches along the way, intending to light a fire.

"I want to make a fire," she said to Nikto, still not getting any reaction in return. He wasn't sleeping, she saw his eyelids tremble when he blinked, and the expression on his face... he had such a sad, sad face, lips, his mouth so beautiful, had the corners down, he was so sad. She went to him, sat down next to him:

"My dear," she touched his hair, straightened the lock that fell on his face, "well, don't be sad! We got out!"

He was sweet and miserable, lying quietly looking with his blind eyes into nowhere, and a lump came to Karina's throat, she forgot all her recent fears and thoughts about him. "He is a child, a miserable tormented child."

“You know... if I didn't know that today... well, or it was yesterday, I've completely lost time, you turned 25 years old... as my father says, I would never have believed! You are like a little one, and your facial expression is like that of an offended child. Well, or a teenager, well, not of an adult man! And you know... I don't regret that I did so. That I helped you. Well... here, write me something? I can't talk alone all the time.”

He obediently got up and picked up the already familiar notebook, which lately only served as a bridge of understanding between them. He handed her what was written:

“I need you.”

“My dear!” Karina laughed. “I'm not going anywhere and will be with you, you know, you are very, very pretty, you look like our mother, you generally look like a girl,” she laughed. “A guy cannot be so cute, it'snot surprising that both Lis and Arel molested you, they are off their minds, I would have molested you myself ...if you had not been my brother.”

And he smiled at her, practically laughed. She managed to stir him up, cheer him up! She managed to pull him out, she saved him! She encouraged him now, and therefore, she will be able to restore him. Everything will be fine!

Karina lit a small fire.

“I need to collect more firewood before dark, and wash my clothes in this lake, and wash myself, my hair stinks of shit, I apologize for such details. It’s good that I have a bar of soap with me in my bag, I need to wash myself,” she looked at Nikto, “and wash you too.”

From the improvised means, Karina twisted something like a washcloth, without taking off her leather pants and jacket, (it was more convenient) she wiped all the dirt from her clothes. Then she forced Nikto to rise and go to the water’s edge, too, wiped him off, forced him to go into the water to wash his boots. He meekly followed her instructions.

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