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Raisa Karimbayeva

*A fine line*

Adventure, detective



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**Аннотация**

...But not all of the jewels were eggs, some of them were real. But it is very difficult to distinguish them. Untouched, the real ones lay in the ground, waiting for their master. When a car drove up and the people in black were looking for treasure, they found nothing: neither gold, nor a mysterious hole – a door to another world. It is locked for an indefinite time. This thin line between the worlds is very fragile, and you never know when you will inadvertently cross the boundaries.

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# Chapter 1 Finding Under the Bridge

A corpse of a 16-18-year-old girl was found under a large humpbacked bridge thrown over a sprawling branch of railway tracks, not far from the city, about an hour's drive away. She was lying on her back. The arms were spread out to the sides, and one leg was twisted as if it had fallen on its back, tripping over something. His eyes were wide open, almost out of their sockets. It seemed that her glazed gaze captured something shockingly terrible, incomprehensible and amazing at the same time. Armand, who happened to be here by accident, passing through, shivered a little from habit. Unaccustomed to seeing corpses, he almost vomited from the sickeningly sweet smell of a decaying body. It was a suffocating heat, about fifty degrees plus. On such a heat, it is easy to cook fried eggs directly in the sun, without fire and gas, simply by placing the pan directly in the hot, loose sand. The dusty wind did not give any coolness, but, on the contrary, made the day even hotter, even more unbearably stuffy.

Strange, but the corpse was well preserved, as if the unfortunate woman had been killed just yesterday. He didn't even have time to completely decompose. Lifting the head of the unfortunate woman, he noticed a huge, bloody hole in the back of her head. Torn, gaping like a sea cavity deep in the ocean, through which all the insides were visible.

Her brain was drained completely. If it had been done by some animal, and at least by jackals or some other creature that roams around here, it would have torn clothes to pieces, would not have left a living place all over the body.. And here, the clothes are not touched. The girl was in tight Chinese jeans, which are littered with the entire local bazaar, and a T-shirt. But there was no blood near her at all. Although there should be a lot, if she was torn to pieces here, and in addition a bunch of insects – scavengers, and here, almost nothing. Only black crows circled high above their heads and a couple of flies.

Everything indicated that they had killed her not here, but elsewhere. They just threw it out here as unnecessary trash.

It was a strange sensation, it seemed that she was alive. He just lies there, resting, looking with surprise at the clear, cloudless sky. Her golden, coppery curls fell to frame her beautiful, blond face. The mouth was slightly parted and Armand noticed a cleft between the teeth.

– Young man, thank you for letting us know. Then we ourselves. We will need to ask you a few questions, but this is more of a formality. The law requires it. – The policeman who just drove up said. As you say, you were driving along the highway and saw ... – the policeman began, writing something down in his notebook.

– Yes, that's right ... – Armand answered him.

– Was anyone near you?

– No, I was alone.

While the interrogation lasted, a bunch of people and local television reporters came in large numbers. By the way, nobody expected the latter.

The presenter of the local channel, taking a spectacular pose, alike. So that her entire beautiful figure and corpse in the background could be seen, in a hurry, panting, as if she had just run a long cross in a short time, she began to distinctly mint directly into the camera:

– As we have already reported, this is at least the third corpse in the last week. The situation in the city has heated up to the limit! The local police are failing at all! As in previous cases, the victim had a similar laceration on the back of her head, through which the entire brain was eaten. The police believe a large animal or jackal did it. But we, the public, don't think so! And we will find out who did it! All together – we are power! Recall that the previous victim was found not far from this ill-fated place, in the gorge of the local mountains. She was presumed missing for some time until her body was found. Follow the news on our Ret TV. channel and stay up to date with all the latest news. – Finishing the fiery speech, she lifted her head, as if expecting a volley of stunning ovation and lifted her nose proudly upturned to the sky, drawing something in the air.

– Well, how? Have you removed? She asked her partner.

He squinted a little and nodded his head in the affirmative:

– Uh-huh...

– Come on, come on. Get out of here ... – one of the policemen hastened them, trying to expel them from the scene of the crime. – You interfere with our work.

«A few words, please,» the reporter began again. – Give your comments...

But the policeman didn't listen to her anymore and they had to leave.

The rest of the day passed as usual. Armand continued on his way. Returning home in the evening, he said nothing to his family about the strange find. I just went to bed. He had been driving since Dzhabul and was very tired. The road is long, bumpy, exhausting, and then there's this...

But no matter how hard he tried, he could not sleep. Everything turned over from side to side. This girl and everything said by the reporter did not leave his mind. Every now and then he represented an innocent victim. Who is she? What happened to her?

## Chapter 2 Dream

At night Armand had a strange, wonderful dream. As if he was standing on the highway late at night and catching a ride to get to the regional city. We suck at an unfamiliar place. How he got here, he doesn't know. He knows one thing that he needs to get there, but, as evil, not a single car. The night wind blew through him. Chilled to the bone, spitting on everything, went on foot. After walking a couple of kilometers, I was exhausted. Stopped to rest. Suddenly, a car drove out from around the corner. What kind of car it was, he did not understand, but it was very large, with big bright headlights drilling into it so that he closed his eyes. Seeing the ride, he almost jumped for joy and began desperately gesticulating, waving his arms, trying to stop her. But the car sped past... through him! As through a ghost! Armand even felt a fleeting, sharp pain piercing him right to the bone! Not understanding anything, he, that there is strength, turned and looked after her. Not having passed even a couple of hundred meters, she also suddenly stopped and a girl jumped out of her. It seems that something happened there, and they had a fight, because Armand heard snatches of phrases that did not say anything to him and swearing. This was the one. Which was found under the bridge, but in a dream she was alive. Armand followed her. The landscape has changed beyond recognition. He saw a picture, like on a computer screen,

bright, beautiful. The place was both familiar and unfamiliar to him. Like the same chamomile, dandelions, but brighter and the smells are sweeter, honey, like after rain. The girl, sensing that she was being watched, stopped and turned around. Armand barely managed to hide behind the nearest bush, bending down strongly and trying not to breathe. Fearing to betray himself, he froze for a moment, but this moment seemed to him an eternity. Almost immediately, his legs and back ached and he, staggering, almost fell, but in time he grabbed a thorny branch. «What kind of trees are they here, so thorny?» – he thought, examining the long scratch on his hand. She was a little sick. – Ay, okay ...»

The girl still stood, peering into the darkness. For some reason it seemed to him that she noticed him, and he even began to scold himself and this unfortunate bush, but in vain. The girl did not notice anyone, reassuring herself that they were just mice or marmots, and continued on her way.

Here Armand's back completely ached, and he crouched, turning away from her and losing sight of her, and when he looked again in the direction where she should have been, he saw a bright, dazzling light, even more powerful than from that very truck that drove right through him. Something large, like a luminous sphere, blinded his eyes. The sphere hung motionless in the air, a couple of hundred meters from the ground. The spectacle was very beautiful, iridescent. Enchanted, Armand looked at her, forgetting about everything. And then everything disappeared, as if they just turned off the light in the

room, unscrewed the light bulb. No girl, no glowing ball, or anything. Only dark, dull, not translucent, shaky, deep darkness, mercilessly sucking him into his womb.

...Armand woke up in his bed. It was already late in the morning and he was completely late for work and now he will have to come up with excuses to justify himself to the authorities. He worked in a carriage depot, as a simple worker, although he had a higher education.

There is no work, I took on any work that just turned up.

Armand quickly pulled on his pants, and, having somehow washed himself, jumped out into the entrance. On the way, he noticed that his right hand was itching desperately and ached a little. Coming out of the ride, he casually looked at her and noticed a red, thin furrow, similar to a scratch, which he had already combed.

## Chapter 3 Wagon Depot

Work was in full swing on the territory of the depot. Thousands of people in red vests swarmed like ants, tapping around the carriages. Arman noticed his boss from afar, standing right in his path. He was looking somewhere to the side and shouting something to someone, trying to shout down the noise that reigned here.

As soon as Armand thought about how to slip past his superiors imperceptibly, he had already made a couple of steps when he heard a stern, withdrawing voice behind his back:

– Urumbaev! Why are we late? Do you even know what time it is?!

– I AM.... Hmmm ... – Armand hesitated, tearing his cap. He could not come up with anything worthwhile to justify himself and now did not know how to be and just stared blankly at the floor, looking at the curves, small crevices.

– Eh-eh... Youth... youth ... – the chief sighed and, smiling, added – Over the weekend I had a great walk, I suppose, eh? – With malice he looked at Armand, screwing up his left eye.

– Well... there was a case ... – Arman hesitated, blushing, feeling like a schoolboy, having played a trick on the break and caught red-handed.

– Eh.. youth.. youth ... – the chief smiled, still looking at him with some malice, but already kindly, somehow in a fatherly way.

The good-natured boss was a pensioner without a week. There were only a couple of months left, and he would go on a well-deserved rest. The fat good-natured person already imagined himself with a fishing rod in his hands somewhere on the river bank. It was rumored that near the reservoir there is a very good bite and you can catch a big fish that you can't even grasp with your hands. It's so big! – Okay, go ... – the boss nodded approvingly.

Armand sighed with relief, realizing that this time he was carried away, passed by. Taking his tools, he set to work.

For lunch he went to the canteen at the depot. The dining room was on the first floor of a two-story building. It was housed in a large, spacious room. There were always a lot of people here. The sweet, fresh smells of freshly cooked food wafted far beyond. Going inside, Armand even swallowed saliva. Having made an order, he sat down on an empty table and looked around. People discussed and argued about something, and it gave, it almost came to a fight, but the two-meter big man stopped the fighters in time, scattering them like toys in different corners. On the opposite side of the entrance, just under the ceiling, hung a small one. Black TV. Local news was broadcast.

It was about the fact that during the construction of the road, which was supposed to connect the west and east of the country, when taking soil from the hills near the local cemetery, three numb, blackened corpses were discovered at once.

The hall became silent. Armand listened to the news out of the

corner of his ear, without turning to the screen.

A young waitress brought the order, and he eagerly began to devour the food. Then his tenacious ear caught the following, which attracted his attention so much that he turned and looked at the screen:

– If you know anything about this girl – a photo appeared on the screen, by which Arman recognized the girl who was found under the bridge – please inform us or call «02». The photo flashed on the screen for another three minutes before the announcer replaced it.

«They are still looking for...» Armand said quietly and sighed.

– ABOUT! – suddenly came a lively, fervent, tipsy voice. – Yes, this Christinka!

Armand looked back at the voice and saw a boy in a robe standing at the window and propping up the wall. He had not been here before, it looks like he just entered.

The boy looked closely at the photo again, squinting strongly, and then gave out in the affirmative:

– Well yes! Exactly, she! Brush! – taking a bottle of milk, he sat down at the table at which Armand was already sitting, since it was the only free table.

– What did you study together? – asked Armand the boy.

– AND? – asked the boy, not understanding what it was about.

– I'm talking about a girl who was just shown on TV...

– Uh-huh.. – the boy said after drinking a little. – We are classmates. This is Kristinka, Degtyareva. Wow, beauty! Until

the 8th we studied together, and then I dropped out of school.

– Looks like not a local, since they are looking for...

– Of course! – the boy grinned. – From Kyzalkum.

– Where is it? Far away from here?

– Why do you need it?

– Maybe I'll go and look around. They say the places there are beautiful...

– AND! Well yes. Dunes, they are beautiful at dawn.

– You tell the police, tell them, they say, so and so, I know her. – Arman started

– Nah! – he flatly refused. – I don't betray mine!

– Yes, you ate a lot in the morning, as I see...

– She... The heat has done its job, and I just sipped a little beer and that's it.

– Well, come on. ... Think. ... And I went, work is in full swing. – Armand has already finished his lunch and got up from the table. After patting him on the shoulder, he left the dining room.

The next weekend Arman left for Kyzylkum.

## Chapter 4 Kyzylkum

Kyzyl Kum is a desert in the Kyzylorda region.

When they drove up, it was dawn and the sands shone in the sun, changing their shades from white to pinkish-gray to almost purple and blue. Beauty! It takes your breath away! It was cold. Rare islands of white saxaul and sandy sedge were visible here and there. And not a gram of water, not a seedy stream in the area, nothing.

Having traveled enough kilometers, the bus on which Arman was traveling entered the nearest village.

«We've arrived. – thought Armand. He looked again at the address given to him by the same boy and nodded in the affirmative. – It is the most!»

The bus stopped and Armand, taking his backpack, got out, the bus swaying along the bumpy, bumpy road, drove on.

The aul was small. Life was in full swing here.

Near the aul there was a small reservoir overgrown with reeds and cattails. The wind fiddled with the panicles of the reed and, picking up the light, airy fluff of the cattail, cheerfully carried away upward. Armana looked up at the sky. There, in the heights, birds flew high overhead. Beauty!

## Chapter 5 Abandoned House

– Here are the ones. I didn't even have time to ask. – Armand scratched his head when he saw three cyclists passing by, and, putting his cap on his forehead, taking his backpack, went about his business. The backpack was lightweight and did not stretch the shoulders at all. I could even do without it, but I didn't know why, so, just in case, threw in something to eat on the road, and a bottle of water, matches, a couple of towels, and a knife to open canned food. I already drank water, there is almost no food, until I got to Kyzylkum I quietly ate everything, dragging one by one. Armand walked where his eyes were looking, not knowing at all what to do now. The empty, narrow, crooked, dusty streets of the aul twisted, forming a large, tangled ball of threads. Realizing that he was completely lost, Armand looked around, trying to find at least someone to ask, if not about Kristinka and her parents, then at least how to get out of here and get out as soon as possible. The heat wore him down greatly. A hot, blazing, blinding sun hung directly over the crown of his head. Not a single seedy tree, not even a column to drink. Everything seemed to have died out. Small, flattened to the ground, rickety houses coexisted side by side with large, spacious, rich mansions, near which green palm trees and small flowering lawns bloomed with might and main. Unless there were no fountains. But in vain! They would greatly decorate

the landscape, creating the impression of a cool, salutary oasis in the middle of the sands... But there, at the end of the street, stood an abandoned, large mansion that did not fit into the general atmosphere at all with the remains of its former grandeur. Dilapidated, with windows completely boarded up, it still attracted attention. The former, once blooming garden near him, was mercilessly burned out by the scorching sun so that only stunted, naked, completely without leaves, trees sticking out from the ground with charred, crooked sticks here and there were left of it. The sultry wind filled him with sand almost right up to the second floor. Driven by irrepressible curiosity, Armand, not knowing how, found himself at the very front door. Fortunately (or unfortunately?) The window, located a meter away from the door, was not boarded up, only covered with half-rotten plywood. Pushing it aside, he climbed inside. Cool twilight in frightening silence added to the picture of crying horror. Once in the spacious hall, Armand, turning on the flashlight, went up to the second floor. Walking down a narrow corridor, he saw a door leading into a room. He touched her, but she did not give in. Having understood. That it was locked with a key, he went to another door, but that one was also locked tightly. Then Armand went downstairs and noticed a small pedestal with a mirror. Digging through it, he found a small key. Taking it, he went up to the second floor again, trying to open the doors. But the key did not fit any of them. – «Strange,» thought Armand. Going downstairs, he again approached the curbstone

and began to scour its womb., Hoping to find something else. But I found nothing but a huge black spider with a cross on its back, hiding in one of the boxes. He was about to leave, when one strange object, which could be seen under the curbstone in a heap of sand, attracted his attention. Armand bent down and picked him up. This was a diary page:

«She talks to herself all day and hasn't left her room for a week. I don't know what to do... I tried to talk to her, but she doesn't answer. Maybe call the doctor again? Will it only help? The last time he left with nothing ... »— it was written in diligent, but slightly fluffed, uneven handwriting, showing the excitement of the person who wrote this.

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