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NATY  
DAYBS

MUSE  
FOR THE  
ARTIST

Modern novell.

Naty Daybs

**Muse for the artist**

«Издательские решения»

**Daybs N.**

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After a difficult parting with a boyfriend, a young girl Yana accidentally meets an artist who asks to paint her portrait. The girl agrees, but it turns out that being a muse is not so easy for an artist.

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# **Muse for the artist**

**Naty Daybs**

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Muse FOR THE artist

## Preface

I walk along the street along the road all alone. Downtown. It was almost dark now. Probably eight hours. I picked up the phone, but the battery was completely discharged. I didn't know how long I walked. There was emptiness and pain inside. It feels like I was just thrown out like a stray kitten, but it's not. We just parted, this happens to everyone, – I stubbornly repeated to myself. But the pain did not stop, and rare tears still tried to roll out of my eyes. People passing by occasionally looked sideways in my direction, but I did not care, in other matters, like them. The city gradually became empty and dark. As well as my soul at this moment, torn apart into millions of fragments.. On that day, the last hope that Max and I would be together again was destroyed. He took his things and left. I just left. Without even asking how I was doing. «Hello, where are my things?» And «bye» – That's all, I heard today instead of the long-awaited phrase «Sorry, let's start all over again» Of course, I have an apartment, albeit rented, work, friends and I'm only twenty-two. But... Life without him in an empty apartment was unbearable. And dream... I completely stopped sleeping. I woke up every half hour, jumping abruptly in bed, and then tossed and turned for another hour to get at least a little sleep until morning. At first I tried to live with my parents, who, despite my outward calmness, experienced my pain with me. And they tried in every possible way to cheer me up or keep me busy.

But I was terribly drawn home to his things, which are now not in the apartment, to his smell, to his aura, left after. And to my memories. To be honest to myself, I just hoped that he was about to ring the doorbell and we would be together again. So I returned home. And my hope has warmed me to this day. Like the whole environment around me in a small removable studio apartment.

This sofa here. We bought it just six months ago. But we spent so many hot nights together during these six months... And when we were running around the shops in search of this sofa, I wiped both feet in new shoes and Max.. Max carried me in his arms to the apartment... Then he seemed to me so strong, so reliable. The very best. Such a tall, slender blond with blue eyes like the sky and, as it seemed to me, incredibly strong hands. And these memories covered me every time I crossed the threshold of this apartment. Apartments where love and happiness reigned recently. And now only sad memories and broken feelings... And an empty cold city, where I felt like the loneliest person in the world. A city filled with my memories.

And how to get them out of your head? No way. We must accept. The time has come. I continued along the road along the illuminated sidewalk with a wild desire to throw myself under the first oncoming car. But she kept walking. Life goes on, – I convinced myself by ear.

Even after Maxim left, I went to my sister in a neighboring city. I lived there for about a week. But I did not want to cause discomfort to the young family and, despite all Sveta's attempts to leave me for another week, she went home. Say what you like, but the change of scenery helped me at least a little to calm down and look at life differently. Yes, we broke up, but I have friends, parents, a good job and a place to live. And also loneliness. Loneliness eating from the inside every cell of my broken heart.

Also, I often spent the night with a close friend of Rita. When the repairs in our branch ended and I was able to start working again. I just couldn't be alone in the apartment for more than half an hour. Tears rolled in and I was afraid that if I burst into tears, I would not be able to stop. It seemed to me that everything was fine with us... And suddenly it was an SMS with the words «Sorry, don't look for me. Max.» My life turned upside down in a moment and lost its meaning. And no matter how hard I tried to find him, I couldn't yet. Although almost two months have passed since Max's departure. Every day after work, I either went to my friend's house, or just walked around the city. I didn't want to meet new guys, make new friends, start new relationships, as Rita strongly recommended to me.

So I just walked forward. And today, after Max took his last things, I still didn't know what to do with myself. I didn't want to upset my parents with my completely broken appearance, they were worried about me anyway, my friends were all busy that evening and I decided to just go shopping. But, having entered the first one that came across, I realized that I did not want to look at anything and decided to just get some fresh air and think. Finally, I got tired of wandering down the street, and the September evening was getting colder. I went to the nearest cafe just for tea or coffee and cake. Sitting down at the table and opening the menu, I heard a pleasant male voice.

– Girl, can I join you? Why do you look so sad?

The guy looked a little older than me. A handsome, muscular, tall brunette with brown eyes and an extremely expensive suit. But I have repeatedly heard about the divorces of young girls like these males. Yes, however, and Max I was far from dead. And now, near me, though a handsome, but too dangerous for me (in my opinion) type, stood and glared at me.

– Excuse me, young man, I want to be alone, do you mind?

– I object. I just want to buy you something. Girl, why are you looking at me so scared? My name is Mikhail.

– Yana.

– Nice to meet you. I'll order us two coffees and two salads. Do not you mind?

– I can order myself coffee. Thank you.

Mikhail called the waitress. A girl came up. Tall, slender, in a white blouse and a fairly short black skirt.

– What do you want? She asked, looking at the man as if I were not here. Of course, such a tired little girl without hair and makeup can be ignored. I looked so-so. Her dark blond hair was tangled in the wind and looked like straw. Too simple blue skinny jeans And my favorite T-shirt just hung on me like a sack, since lately my appetite has completely left me. I could eat almost nothing for two or three days. I managed only with a glass of tea or coffee and a couple of boiled eggs... Without that, deep-set, my eyes sagged even more, and dark circles from insomnia seemed to now occupy half of my face. But I didn't care.

«Probably, the guy hasn't had sex for a long time, since he sat next to me. Although he is so... Like a magazine cover. Girls have to run in droves.» – I kept thinking, burying my head in the phone and wondering if I would have to run or call the police. Mikhail, meanwhile, looked at the menu and made an order.

– We have two lattes with cream, two vegetable salads and two slices of black bread.

– I'll bring your order now, – said the waiter Karina, as it was written on the badge. She turned around, slightly winked at Mikhail and walked, swinging her hips on her high heels. And ka to her legs do not fall off? – I thought. I always loved sports shoes more and for beauty I chose the maximum, ballet flats. And now I was in them. And also in blue jeans and a pink T-shirt with the words «there is happiness.» I put it on in the hope that when Max comes for things, we will make up, but fate decided differently and Max just left. And I just let him go. No, it's not easy at all...

– Why are you so sad? Someone offended you?

– Not. – I tried to answer as calmly as possible.

– Someone died or got sick?

– Not. – this time the answer was sharper. But the young man did not react in any way to my raised tone.

– Something was stolen from you?

I wanted to say «Yes. Heart, soul and a piece of life» but decided not to open up to the first person I met.

– Not. I am fine. – I already clearly angrily answered the persistent guy.

There was silence for a couple of minutes. I looked out the window and thus tried to ignore such a look of brown attentive eyes.

At this time, the waitress brought coffee. I was hoping that my new, so to speak, acquaintance would be distracted by such an attractive female with long legs, but I was mistaken. The waitress left with a heavy sigh, and Mikhail decided to torture me with questions again.

– So no one has offended you, Yana?

– I tell you, no. I'm great. – I said with a certain irony in my voice.

«And you weren't taught that cheating is bad?» Mikhail smiled maliciously. – Yana, you look tear-stained. I can help you. I can make sure that you will always be fine.

«No, thanks. I'll probably refuse.» – got up and was about to leave, but the man also stood up abruptly and in an instant was a couple of centimeters away from me, face to face.

– Excuse me, did I scare you? Please take a seat. Can you listen to me?

– Speak. I'm finishing my coffee now and leaving.

– But you have to eat, Yana, you are so pale.

– Thank you, I'm not hungry.

– Let's agree, you eat salad while listening to me. Otherwise I can hear your stomach screaming with hunger. I understand that you are ignoring me because we do not know each other. But why torture yourself like that?

– Okay. So be it. I'll eat the salad. And I don't torture myself. There is simply no appetite. You will now tell us what you wanted and we will part.

– Good. If you want to part with me, I will take you home.

– -Thank. I was taught not to get into the car with unfamiliar uncles.

– But we have already met) – Mikhail winked at me. You know my name, I am yours.

– This is not a reason to get into your car. Excuse me. This is even uncivilized on my part.

– And on my part it is uncivilized to leave such an interesting girl all alone this evening.

– Say what you want. I'm listening to you.

– I want to draw you, Yana. You have amazing blue eyes! And the lips are just perfect. I am an Artist and I want your beauty to please me always.

– Thank you for the compliment, but I think I will still refuse. My beauty is only my beauty. Otherwise, sell the painting and everyone will stare at me.

– No, Yana, I promise you, just me and you. Nobody else will ever see this picture. Well?

– I'll think about it. Thanks for the suggestion. Although it is unlikely that I will turn to you, I am still broke...

– What do you! I will not take a dime from my muse! – Mikhail handed me a business card.

– You flatter me, Mister... I looked at what was written. – Mikhail Wright. – Mr. Wright.

– For you, I'm just Mikhail. For a long time he lived in another country, returned only last week. And when I saw you, I realized that I had not returned in vain. Fate itself brought me to you so that we could create a masterpiece together!

– It's all very tempting, but I have to go home. I'll call a taxi and thanks for dinner, Mikhail.

– You are already smiling, and this is delightful! Yana, please call me, – he said, putting me in a taxi. Anytime. Yana! You are welcome!

– Okay, Mikhail, maybe we'll have another cup of coffee with you. Goodnight. I closed the taxi door and the car drove off through the bright evening city. Say what you like, but I was hooked by this man. Basically, there is nothing wrong with being drawn. But this is all somehow too... Too intent gaze, too expensive suit... Too quick acquaintance...

## Part 1

A week has passed. I still hoped that my boyfriend. Ex-boyfriend. Will come back. I waited for a call, a message, sat by the phone for hours after work. I went through photos, listened to «our songs», roared at night and sometimes even during the day. But in the meantime, I sometimes remembered Mikhail. I thought it was not worth starting something new yet, when the old still lives in the soul, there is hope. But on Saturday morning I went to the store to look for a birthday present for my friend. Rita is my beloved friend from the first year, the most loyal, reliable and devoted. She is very beautiful and just loves gold. Rita is ready to buy more and more jewelry. I decided to give her a bracelet with white gold trim. When I entered the jewelry department of the shopping center, I couldn't believe my eyes. My boyfriend was standing there. Now definitely an ex-boyfriend. With a little fat woman three times my width. And they chose something. He did not see me, and I dashed from there so that I almost hit the guard. For which he stopped me by the elbow.

– Girl, where are you in such a hurry? So only run from a fire or a grenade.

– Do I look like a terrorist? Sorry for knocking you down. Or nearly hit him. I am there..

– What? You are pale. Maybe an ambulance?

– There is my boyfriend with another.. Ex-boyfriend. I don't want him to see me.. – To be honest, I myself did not understand why I was spreading such personal circumstances to a stranger.

– Well, you are more careful, otherwise it will not take long and break something for yourself.

Although I would give you advice. – the guard looked at me with pity and we understand my speedy escape.

– Sorry, I'm in a hurry.

«Look,» said a guard in his forties or so. «If I were you, I would find a replacement for your boyfriend. I am sure there will be no problems with your external data. You are young, beautiful. Yes, the guys will line up to you, you just have to beckon with your finger. Now go calmly and don't cry.

– Good. Thank. Sorry again.

– Nothing wrong. Good luck to you.

– And you., Mikhail. – I read on the badge and smiled.

«This is definitely some kind of sign. And why am I really upset? I already have a person who liked me. And let My Ex-boyfriend lick his paw and his new... fuuu... glutton.» Thinking so, I took a business card holder out of my purse and, sitting down on a soft sofa in the corner of the shopping center corridor, I dialed Mikhail. Of course, at that moment anger, resentment, jealousy and pain played in me. They played so hard that everything squeezed in my chest, there was a huge snowball in my throat, my heart was pounding furiously, and everything in my head was throbbing as if there was a bomb ready to explode this very second. And this act was clearly too impulsive...

– Yes, I am listening to you – a pleasant voice answered me.

I suddenly felt a little better at once. Although in front of me I still saw Max in his mind with his new cow. And how could he forget me so quickly and exchange for this ... «Well, okay. I have more important things to do now than think about Max» – I persistently convinced myself.

– Good afternoon, Mikhail. This is Yana. We recently met you in a cafe, remember?

– Oh, I'm very glad to hear from you. I thought you had forgotten the poor artist, captivated by your charm.

– Not. I remember.

– Do you want me to draw you?

– To be honest, I would just have coffee with you to start. And we'll see.

– Well. I'm free today. Where can we meet?

– Let's go to the Pizzeria in a couple of hours

– Sorry, Yana, but I would like to invite a beautiful girl to one very beautiful place, if you do not mind. Will the Fantasy restaurant suit you?

– Isn't it too festive for coffee?

– I believe that any communication should start with a pleasant, beautiful environment. Sorry, I just often do business contracts here. This restaurant has excellent service and cuisine.

– Good. I agree.

«Then I'll book a table for three hours. Should I pick you up?»

– No, thank you, I'll come myself.

– Good. What's your favorite number, Yana?

– Five.

– Then the fifth table is ours. See you.

– See you, Mikhail.

I got home and quickly tried to figure out what to wear to the restaurant. And I remembered about the dress that I bought myself for the last corporate party. It is quite suitable for a restaurant. Dark blue, straight to the knees, perfectly emphasizes the figure, but at the same time not defiant. she put on black pumps under it. I let my hair down and put on jewelry that I hardly wear. I slightly updated my makeup and added a semi-sweet perfume. I called a taxi and at ten to three I was at the restaurant. Mikhail was waiting for me at the entrance to the «Fantasy». Seeing me, his eyes became bright and shine appeared in them.

– I suggest you switch to «you» Look amazing!

– Thank. You too.

Misha was in a light gray suit of steel shades. From behind he pulled out a bouquet of five white roses.

– Oh, thanks, you shouldn't have.

– You're wrong! Every girl deserves to receive gifts and attention. Especially beautiful girls receive special gifts.

– You're embarrassing me. This coffee is too special for us.

– Why not? Let's go to. It is time.

We went to a restaurant. I've heard a lot about him, but I've never been here. The most expensive restaurant in Little Mountains Oh yeah. Everything was expensive here! Decorations, dishes, even the waiters' clothes. But of course, food and drinks. Coffee here cost ten times more than in a regular cafe. Of course, I took a certain amount with me, but after looking at the menu, I realized that I would stretch the pleasure while drinking coffee. I didn't want to sound like a girl to buy. Therefore, I myself wanted to pay for myself everywhere and always. My friend Rita would most likely jump with happiness higher than the three-meter ceilings of this restaurant. But I almost didn't care. Yes, it was beautiful and very pleasant to be here. In addition, a light melody without words played here, and all this atmosphere evoked calmness and a certain serenity.

Yet it only slightly distracted me from the nightmare I saw in the jewelry department this morning. And I haven't bought Rita's present yet. But nothing. Buy in the late afternoon. I'll pay for the coffee myself. There was still a week before the paycheck, and life without Max was not so easy financially. Thoughts flashed through my head. And I sat perplexedly, staring at one point.

– What do you want to order, besides coffee, Yana? Sorry, are you worried about something? Yana?

– AND? Oh, I'm sorry, I thought for a minute. What did you ask?

– What would you like to order? Well, apart from coffee.

– Thanks, nothing. I had lunch recently.

– If you want, we can drink something. And then you are so tense, as if you came for interrogation.

– No, thanks, I just have coffee. I just remembered that I forgot to buy a present for my best friend. In the morning I just went to the store for a gift, and there.. but oh well. No matter. I'll buy it later. We still meet in the evening.

– It happens. Nothing wrong. But I won't let you leave here hungry. Come on, can I give you a light biscuit dessert with apricots?

We will not leave here until you accept my offer to dine. Again, the cuisine here is excellent.

– Good. But only one dessert. I'm not really hungry.

– Do you want me to draw you, Yana? Honestly?

– I don't know. But what kind of picture are you painting? What is your creative style?

– I like to paint Portraits, emotions. I love expressive eyes. You have an amazing look. So mysterious. But I also like to draw nature. I've been to different cities and beautiful places. But when I came back and met you, I immediately knew what my next picture would be.

– Are you just painting a portrait? I just heard about this style where girls should be, to put it mildly, not quite dressed. – I felt myself start to blush.

– Don't worry, nothing like that will happen.

«Then perhaps I will agree.

If you agree, Yana, let's sign the contract.

– Agreement?

– Well yes. In the modern world, all people must legally fix everything. These are just details.

– Can you show me the contract?

Mikhail put a black folder on the table in front of me.

– Read it, take your time. If everything suits you, sign it with your last name, first name and patronymic.

I began to read out loud.

– I... I agree that I want to belong to art entirely. At the time the artist... Mikhail... works on the creation of paintings, she agrees to voluntarily stay on the territory of his property twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

– What is it? I can't do that. I can't quit my job, move to you... And anyway...! I see you only for the second time in my life!

– Take it easy. And please don't make any noise. I do not oblige you and I do not force you to anything. Yana, be so kind as to read it to the end.

The contract stated that I was to stay with him for twenty-five days. That he pays for all my necessary needs in full, as well as I receive a gift of one hundred thousand Euros.

– Michael? What is all this for? Just for my eyes? Well, no really! It too. I don't believe in such tales. I won't sign, sorry.

– You can provide a future for yourself and your children, Yana. think about it. Take a vacation when you can and just live in my house for twenty-five days. It is very close outside the city.

The waitress brought us coffee and dessert.

– Eat, Yana. We're just having lunch. I know that all this is a little strange for you, but believe me that I am not a maniac, I will not offend you, I will not even touch a finger. It's just... I had a difficult period too. I can see in your eyes that something unpleasant is happening in your life now. I just want to help you get distracted and understand that life does not consist only of troubles and you need to find pleasant moments in it. For example, pleasant communication in a good restaurant. Or a walk in the morning forest outside the city.

It seemed to me that this man had read everything that is in my soul. Everything I feel and what I want. But I was really scared. Now I expected deception everywhere and everywhere and could not trust a stranger.

– And if I need to leave for a couple of days? I asked more gently.

– Not a problem. We will resolve this issue. Just inspiration is such a thing. can come at any time of the day or night. You will just live in my room. You will not be bored with me and I will not kill you. Read, it says, all pictures are painted with the consent of the representative and the representative is guaranteed complete safety from violent actions and harm to health. You will keep one sample of the contract. In which case, you have the right to demand compensation of five hundred thousand euros and even more. Trust me, I can pay you one lump sum.

Yana, just one month! You are welcome! I made this contract exclusively for you. You are a very serious business girl.

– I'll think about it. Three days. Or better a week. Then I'll let you know. And now I'll finish my dinner, pay the price and go buy a present for my friend.

– What did you come up with? The man must always pay. Yana, remember this once and for all. I invited you to a restaurant. And I won't let you pay.

– I don't want to show myself..

– I understand. You are an adult and self-sufficient. But I'll pay it myself. Believe me, it's not difficult for me. Come on, if you want, just talk. I hope that you will get to know me better and will not be afraid of me, like some kind of criminal. «» Mikhail smiled affectionately and for some reason I wanted to trust this man. I wanted somewhere deep inside. But I humbly continued lunch.

– Mikhail, I'm sorry, but I'm not sure yet that we will continue any communication. I do not want you to lure me to your place. I will, of course, think about your proposal. But don't be in vain. You know, you are right about one thing. I have temporary difficulties and am not in the mood for new acquaintances and close communication now. Excuse me. It's not about you at all.

– Are we on you again?

– It's just that I'm not comfortable... This restaurant and this contract.

– I understand, Yana, you want to keep your distance. In part, this is the correct position. But still, I would like us to get to know each other better. And let's still be on you?

– Oh well. Only I really have to go. Thanks for the coffee..

– Do not mention it. Take the contract. I'm not rushing you. And if you want to sign or just chat, I'll be glad to see you. complete safety. And also pleasant impressions and good rest.

– It's very tempting, but I have to go. Otherwise, I may be late for the holiday.

Mikhail accompanied me to the taxi. Of course, he insisted on taking me home in person, but this whole situation bothered me. The restaurant and this strange contract...

On the way home, I dropped by another jewelry store and bought a bracelet for my friend. I was home by six. Rita called me.

– Hi, friend, have you forgotten that I am expecting you at eight? Let's wave karaoke, sing something.

– Hi, sorry, I was busy a little. I ran to the shops. And then I met Max there with some kind of new girlfriend who looks like a fitball. – I described the girl I saw with Max.

– Fuu! And how could he trade you for that?

– I do not know. It doesn't matter.

Can you imagine, I rushed from there that I almost knocked down the guard, who took me for a terrorist or a thief. But I explained to him, he was an understanding man. He said that I was beautiful and so that I would not take a steam bath, but found myself another.

– The case speaks. And then you sour here on Max.

– No longer.

– What, the artist announced?

– Not really. You see, the guard's name is Mikhail and I got overwhelmed that I should call this artist, like it's a sign. Stupid, right?

«Not at all. Fight fire with fire. Moreover, he himself was waiting for your call, he gave you a business card. So how is it? Are you dating now?»

- Not really. He wants to draw me. Took me to Fantasia today.
- Where? Repeat! Am I right?
- Not. I was in the «Fantasy» restaurant.
- You talk about it as if it were something ordinary. How is it there?
- Everything is too expensive there. Coffee and dessert cost a lot of money.
- Wow. You said you were broke now.
- He didn't let me pay. I paid for everything myself.
- Wow! This is a gift of fate!
- He offered me a contract for our joint activities in writing his paintings. A strange contract.

And in general, he himself is strange.

– He's a foreigner, and they are all obsessed with his contracts. Will you send me an e-mail to read it?

Better wait for me, I'll come now and we'll discuss everything. Fuck karaoke. I'll buy a bottle of wine along the way, it's my birthday after all. and there is no one to celebrate except you. So what's next?

– He offers to live with him for a month and pay all expenses. And a hundred thousand dollar fee. For my wasted time.

- All, wait for me, I'll be there soon. And you, friend, will tell me everything!!!
- I'm waiting. Let's order some food. I bought a present too.
- Come on, don't worry. I'm already flying.

A friend arrived in half an hour by taxi.

– Hello, give me your contract!

– Hello. Happy Birthday again! – I hugged Rita and handed her a red box.

– Wow! You shouldn't have gone broke like that, Jan. But thanks anyway! You always know what I want! Give your contract. And while I'm reading, you pour our favorite and cut the cake that I brought.

– Here. Read it. I'll do everything for now.

– Well.

At the end of the reading, my friend was absolutely delighted!

– Listen, can he draw me for that kind of money? I kapets, as it is necessary!

– I'll ask if you want. I do not care.

– What are you saying? You understand that the interest on the deposit from such amounts is greater than our salary taken together!!! And do you prefer to go out on Max. If I were you, I would agree, and then I would arrange a chance meeting for Max and show myself a new one. You passed your license a year ago. A great opportunity to buy a car and arrange repairs from your parents as you wanted. She herself said that it is high time for them to update the furniture and the interior as a whole.

– I do not know, all this is too similar to a fairy tale.. What if he is a maniac? Kill me and that's it, you don't have to pay anything.

Come on, all his passport details are here. Look, I know who can back us up. My uncle is in my organs, remember? He will hit him in the base.

– Well, but only from people with such money, everything in the organs is bought and seized.

– Do not boil, Yanka! If you don't want it, don't! I'll go. I need money. And I'm not afraid of maniacs. They seem to be afraid of me! At least one suggested normal sex or at least a good restaurant.! Impotents are alone and homeless!

– Friend, well, you give! Maybe you're looking in the wrong place?

– It's easy for you to say! You only have a couple of months with a little boyfriend, and I have almost six! I have already registered on all dating sites! And zero sense! Men, like women, began to want only loot and PR. One recently wrote to me. Like, let's swing to Italy. You just buy the vouchers, and as soon as we return from the trip, I will pay for everything. Sure! He will pay! How

is it? Alphonse, damn it. And all dating sites are crammed with such reptiles. Either a bastard or a freak. Such that it is scary to watch, not like meeting.

So choose, Janusik, either you agree now or I take the artist myself.

«I told him I'll think about it for a few days. And we need to resolve the issue of vacation, if I agree.

– Good. We'll wait three days, think about it. We will decide there.

We chatted for a couple of hours and Ritka flew away after another boyfriend called in the hope that she would be lucky at least on her birthday. All these two hours, Rita persistently tortured You should persuade me to sign an agreement or give Mikhail's phone number. I didn't give the number. She said that it would be indecent of me. But she promised to ask Misha if he could draw Rita. Something in me prevented me from simply taking and giving Rita my new acquaintance. Probably just with him I forgot about Max at least for a short time.

I was about to go to bed and saw a message on my phone.

– I wish sweet dreams to my muse. I'm waiting for your decision, Yana. I hope for a positive answer.

– Thank. Good night to you too. The solution will be as agreed. I'll tell.

An emoticon came back with a smile. But I didn't answer.

I could not sleep for another three hours. Too intense events spun in my head. Max, Mikhail... It's all over with Max, now for sure. But without him in this apartment, in this bed, it is still cold and uncomfortable. There was a reminder of him everywhere in the apartment.. I was thinking about how Max might have cheated on me. How he strokes this fat body and he likes it.. Lord, why her? Why is it better? Max always asked me to get better, but I love to take care of myself and I don't want to be like that..

It is obvious that our paths with Max parted completely and irrevocably. But the smell of his perfume still seemed to reign in the apartment. The whole sofa was impregnated with it. No, I can't do this anymore. It is necessary to change the situation. Rita is right, I'm a complete fool. Enough to go out on Max. Most likely I will still sign the contract. Otherwise, I'll just go crazy in this apartment. And even worse – I'll go humiliate myself and ask him to return to me. Or start following him...

After a hard day, my thoughts were confused and I realized that I should at least try to sleep. She turned on the TV, there was some kind of black and white film. After some time, I still fell asleep.

## Part 2

The next day started off quite interesting.

First, I saw a message on the phone from Mikhail. «Good morning and good day to my muse.»

– I thought for a long time what to answer, but then I wrote.

«And have a nice day, Mikhail. I ask you to call me by name if you hope to continue our communication.»

The answer came in five minutes. «I beg your pardon, Yana, I didn't mean to offend you. I like you very much.»

I smiled a little, but it was nice.

«It's okay. I just prefer the name.»

I got a smiley face again with a smile. And a message. «Yana, can I call you?»

– Yes, I answered Mikhail. And then I heard the call.

– Hello, Yana? What are you doing?

– I'm going for a walk.

Keep company?

– No thanks. I like to walk alone in the morning. Helps to collect thoughts.

– You approach the process thoroughly, right?

– Yes I am trying.

– Can't you set aside an hour to go somewhere with me? In the cinema, for example, or in the theater? Or just have a coffee?

– Sorry, I really can't today. I have to be at work in a couple of hours.

– Good. Tell me when can we meet?

– On Tuesday after six I am free. In Mikhail, I want to say about your proposal.. If they give me a vacation, I agree. Only on one condition.

– I am very glad, but what is the condition?

– You won't touch me with your finger without my consent, and more: there should be a window in my room and the room should not be higher than the first floor and be closed from the inside.

– Are you afraid of me?

– It's just my terms. My parents just also have a room on the ground floor with windows to the courtyard. Habit.

«These are reasonable security requirements, Yana. I understand. And to calm you down, I'll tell you that you can invite guests, for example, a friend. But only once a week. I do not like strangers in the house when I work.

– Yes, because it's calmer. Can I come with her. She just read the contract yesterday and she convinced me to agree. I just don't really like this kind of extreme. A close relative of Rita works in the police and if that...

– Yes... You really approach everything thoroughly. But this is correct. And let your friend come with you for a couple of days. This will make you more comfortable.

It is unlikely that it will be comfortable for me to live in the same house with a stranger.

– Why then did you agree?

– We've got rats in the entrance. The house committee called a special service, but they asked to wait two weeks. They have a queue of such applications there. And these creatures ignore mousetraps and even poison and constantly catch my eye.

– Understand. Do not worry. Come with a friend, I'll show you the house. You can go to the sauna or pool. I always have warm water there.

– Do you have a sauna and a swimming pool in your house?

– Yes, you need to somehow relieve stress after work. I write a lot to order, even abroad. Old connections help.

– Clear. Oh well. Then on Tuesday at half past six in the cafe «Our yard». This is about my job.

– Good. I hope you don't change your mind until Tuesday.

– I'll try. Goodbye, Mikhail.

– See you, Yana.

I was partly true about rats. Once I saw a mouse in our entrance. True, that was a long time ago.

On Tuesday I went to work in my burgundy pantsuit, which was complemented by a white blouse. She gathered her hair in a high ponytail and complemented her image of a business woman with a scent with spicy notes. All the same, in the evening I had an important meeting. All day I sat on pins and needles. I almost spoiled the report and kept looking at the clock. They also gave me a vacation. True, at their own expense.

Colleagues at first whispered, and then Masha still asked where I was in such a hurry. I just said that I have an important meeting. And that one of these days I will take a vacation at my own expense and leave the city. I didn't say anything about Mikhail to anyone. In principle, I do not like to lie. And I always tell the truth, but I didn't want to tell anyone but Rita this truth. I needed it. This move for a while, a change of scenery. This is an adventure and extreme. Now I really needed it. And so, my ordeal ended and I exhaled deeply, leaving work. I felt that this decision would somehow change my life. Change finally and irrevocably. I was very scared, but my legs carried me towards the cafe.

Mikhail was waiting for me at the entrance, as usual. And in his hands was another bouquet of five roses, only these were not pure white, but with a pink tint.

– Do you always look that good?

– Not really.

– I do not trust you. You are beautiful, Yana. And this cafe is not for you.

– I like it. Everything is simple and clear here.

– Good. But a guest will join us. This is my notary. In case you want to sign a contract.

– In case I change my mind, will you just let me go?

– Yes. have you finished reading yet? You will still receive a third of the promised amount.

– I read the contract. Just clarifying. But I don't understand why?

– Just. Consider it just an accident. Or imagine winning the lottery. Have you solved your vacation issue?

– Yes. Things are good.

– Well. Read the agreement again and sign if you agree. Evgeny Nikolae HIV will be here soon, he will assure everything as it should be.

In about ten minutes a tall, thin man joined us. We discussed the details of the contract and I am a lawyer convinced me that the contract is very beneficial for me and I have nothing to worry about.

I signed. In addition, Rita still punched Misha through the database. More precisely, it was her uncle who did it. Wright Mikhail Yurievich. Pure as water in holy springs. A friend finally convinced me to accept the artist's proposals and asked me to introduce him.

I wrote an application retroactively at work and tomorrow I am free and can move.

The lawyer left, having done everything necessary.

We agreed that I would move the next day after lunch. A friend will come to me at six and we will go together. She has a day off the day after tomorrow. Mikhail agreed without any problems. He said that Rita could stay for two or even three days. In general, this meeting took place in a light, calm atmosphere. Mikhail talked a little about life abroad. The lawyer also managed to visit some places. They told me interesting stories and I even laughed a little. Mikhail asked me about work, parents, hobbies, even told me a little about his childhood. Then he brought me home and we said goodbye politely. My artist behaved more than culturally and while I did not even know what to think.

Entering the apartment, the first thing I did was dialed to Rita and said that she could live with me for two or three days. A friend of this fact was incredibly happy. She was in a hurry to persuade Mikhail to become the next model and even hinted at paintings with a slight erotic overtones. It even amused me, although, to be honest, it was a little annoying. I only pretend that I don't care. But I like Michael. I like his attention. The next morning after signing the contract, a bouquet of eleven roses was delivered with a note. «I'm really looking forward to this evening and you. Thank you for agreeing. Mikhail»

At the appointed time, Mikhail drove up to pick us up. Seeing a black, just a huge white SUV, Rita broke down and swore loudly right at the entrance. Today Mikhail arrived with a driver who quickly loaded my modest suitcase into the trunk. Rita and I sat in the back seat, and Misha sat in front of the driver.

– You have such an amazing car! – Rita pompously admired. – It's just amazing! Is the leather natural?

– Yes, – Misha answered modestly. – I took this car for safety and comfort.

«Can you really be in danger?» The girlfriend did not calm down.

«The road is full of danger, my lady.

– I'm Margarita. But just call me Rita. Or maybe Margot.

– Okay, Margarita. Don't you drive yourself?

– I don't, but Yanka can do it. She even got her license last year.

– That's great, Yana. – Mikhail winked at me in the mirror. – And what is your car.

– I don't have a car yet.

«Her ex-boyfriend had,» Rita interjected. – An ordinary Russian clunker.

– On this clunker, Rita, we took you out of the club many times.

I have already begun to get angry with my friend for telling me about my past, which I least want to remember. I quietly pinched Rita, but she stubbornly ignored my urge to shut up and continued the conversation with Misha.

– You know, Maxim, well, this is Yana's ex, he was about nothing. He only made himself a prince. But you really look like a real king. This I tell you for sure. This is Yanochka, we are shy. But she's just gold.

– Here I agree with you, Margarita. Yana is just a great girl.

– Thank you, Misha.

I noticed how Mikhail stubbornly called his friend by her full name. As if trying to show the distance between them. But Rita stubbornly wanted to shorten this distance.

– Well, please, Mikhail, let's switch to you. Just call me Rita. We're almost friends already! And in general, I dream that Janusya will get married sooner. Put on a chic white dress and live like a queen.

– Rita! Expensive! Maybe enough? If I get married, it won't be soon, believe me. Plus, I never dreamed of becoming a queen. Just because I don't like dresses and heels.

– Well, the queen is free to wear what she wants. – Michael tried to smooth out the tension that hung between me and Rita. – It seems to me that Margarita just wants to see her best friend happy.

– Of course, Mikhail! I'm sure you're offended by me? – Rita exponentially pouted lips brightly painted with red lipstick.

– No, Rit, it's okay. – I squeezed out of myself and turned to the window.

I will never become like Rita, I thought to myself. She is self-confident, loves bright makeup, knows how to attract the attention of men. And I... a gray mouse that runs into the unknown just to escape from itself. I was silent, and Rita kept asking Mikhail about his house, car and something else.

Misha noticed my mood change and tried to fix it.

– We're almost there. What would you girls like to do in the evening? There is a sauna, swimming pool, billiards, bowling.

– LTD! How delightful it is! I think we should celebrate Yana's Vacation. She's all early going there in a couple of months. And of course our acquaintance!

– Yana, what do you say? – Mikhail looked at me worriedly.

«I just wouldn't mind having dinner.

– Well, you are as always, friend. Modesty itself. Mikhail, do not be offended, but I want to arrange a holiday for my friend, if you don't mind, otherwise she's sour lately, like spoiled sour cream.

– Rita, don't. Maybe Mikhail has more important things to do.

– Don't worry, Yana. Things can wait a bit. I also really want to celebrate your arrival. Well, girls, we are there.

...

We entered the house. By the way, the house was surrounded by a high stone fence. You just can't get there.

– It looks like a fortress, said Rita, entering the courtyard. – just a real palace!

– Yana, do you like it? – Mikhail's brown eyes looked straight into the soul, trying to see the answer before I voiced it.

– Very beautiful. And the air is also very beautiful here.

– That is why the house is in the forest. The city is too dusty and noisy.

«You don't like noise?» Rita asked obsessively. – Then you and Yana will definitely make friends. Give her peace and quiet too. You can't even drag her to the club for an hour. Well, Mikhail, you are definitely a prince from a fairy tale, and I would also like to be a princess. As soon as you finish working on Yana's paintings, I will be happy to be your muse.

Misha paid no more attention to my friend than to waiters in a restaurant or cafe. He only promised that he accepted her application and would try to realize her desire in the nearest free time. But not earlier than early next year.

Rita was happy anyway. Her smile now shone as brightly as the white gold on the bracelet I had given him. We drank champagne and ate various snacks. Mikhail talked about different trips and travels. The evening passed unnoticed. The room in Mikhail's house was on the first floor by my order. I haven't even taken things apart yet. I just took out a swimsuit, a bathrobe and a pool towel. Mikhail did not take his brown piercing eyes off me. At times it seemed to me that I was blushing terribly. I tried to wrap myself up in a robe more when I left the pool, so as not to provoke Mikhail to show more vivid feelings. But Rita had a full blast. Taking with her a revealing pink bikini, the girlfriend flaunted her hips while walking by the pool. It even started to annoy me a little, but Mikhail still looked at me all evening, practically without taking his eyes off.

Ritka stayed with me in the room for the night. The bed was huge. And besides, there was a folding chair nearby. But Rita lay down next to me while we chatted, and then we just disconnected from reality and fell asleep.

...

In the morning Mikhail knocked on our bedroom.

– Girls, I brought you coffee and breakfast.

I hurried to open it, putting on my robe. And Rita quickly pulled on my T-shirt, in which I arrived yesterday, remaining under the covers.

– Oh thanks. Very nice. Will you have breakfast with us?

– No, girls, I have things to do now for a couple of hours. Yana, can we start working in the afternoon?

– Yes of course.

– Well. Then the house is at your disposal. And I'm on business. There is security in the yard. Rita, can I give you a ride to town or will you stay with Yana until lunchtime?

– Oh, thanks, if you don't mind I'll stay, otherwise she will be bored here alone. Really, Janok?

– Of course, we'll call a taxi later.

«Ah... can't I stay here one more evening?

– Sorry, Margarita, but I want to start working with Yana today. I understand that this may not be very polite towards you, but I promise you can see Yana next weekend. My guard will be on business at one o'clock. He can lead you where you need to go.

«Okay,» Rita answered with obvious irritation. But you two owe me the same great program next weekend as last night.

– Rita, calm down, I think it's impolite. We are with you.

– Oh, sorry, but Misha himself said: two or three days. and now he is sending me home. And you, Yanochka, could persuade him to leave me for another day.

– I beg your pardon, Margarita, – Mikhail was also obviously irritated by my friend's obsession. You're right, Margarita, I promised two or three days. Perhaps it is already impolite of me to ask you to leave my house earlier. Stay. I just can't work when there are strangers in the house. But nothing, I'll start work a day later.

– Come on, I will not strain the owner of the house. I understand everything, you are a creative person. So do it. And I'm leaving for lunch. – Rita pouted again and made a sad look. Usually on men this look worked flawlessly. But Misha turned out to be an exception and only answered indifferently:

– Okay, rest girls. If you have any questions, please contact the security. There is a coffee machine in the kitchen and all products are in the refrigerator. In the hall on the second floor there is a home theater and a game console.

– Young man, you are so kind, – Ritka yelled – only take care of Yana and don't frighten her. It's hard for her, poor thing, in this life.

– Rita, no lamentations. Everything's fine with me.

Mikhail looked seriously at me, then at Rita.

«She's completely safe here. I will take dust from it.

– Not worth it. I can go to the shower. – I tried to defuse the situation.

– I have to go. I'll see you at lunchtime. Don't be bored here.

«Have a good day,» I said to Mikhail, and he, smiling with satisfaction, left the room.

– This is not a man!!! This is a diamond!!! – Rita said with delight. Look! You are in a fairy tale! People pay crazy money for such a thing, and this is all for you for twenty-five days! Wow!

– I like the house too.

– «I also like the house» – my friend mimicked me. What's your tone? I'm sure he liked you! He hardly looks at me, but does not take his eyes off you! Unscrew it and marry yourself!

– You are crazy? I don't need his money.

– Then why did you go here? AND? Do you think he'll just paint you? Don't be so naive! Yes, he will sleep with you and pay! Well, maybe draw too, of course. But sleep definitely!!!

– But the contract states that any intimate relationship is only on my initiative.

– Well, go ahead? Show initiative!

– No, Rita! I went here only for one simple reason! – I can no longer be at home alone. I see Max everywhere there! I can't eat, sleep there! I just can't, you know? Going to your parents is not an option. I tried it when Max left a note. I thought I'd quit, return to my hometown. But there is rotten stuff. I need this job. Here the salary is not too high, but enough for life. And in their hometown, half of the population is either unemployed or with a minimum salary. And here I can at least help my parents financially. I send them ten thousand a month. Mom needs medicine. And dad often mopes.

– Damn, I'm sorry... You're out of hopelessness, and I'm here, you fool, I'm glad.

– Come on, everything is fine. Let's break through. I'll be a little muse for the artist. And then how it goes. I don't want to guess. Vaughn made a wedding with Max, and he...

– He's a scoundrel and a freak. All, forget about him. Let's go to the console to cut. As in childhood. Did you play console as a child?

– Yes of course. Let's go. Otherwise, Michael will come and I won't see you for a week. Are you coming next weekend?

– I'll try. I will not promise. My name is called on a visit... But I will try. Here is cooler than any expensive hotel and you are nearby

– Thank you, friend, you are the best. Take care of yourself and call. Or write. There seems to be a problem with the connection. Misha said yesterday.

– You, too, call and write.

Then we went and cut into the console, like two youngsters. Mikhail caught us in this fun activity. He joined us for a short while, and then looked at his watch and said that it was time for the guard Igor to go to town. But before that, we'll all have lunch. After a delicious lunch, we said goodbye to Rita and she got into the car.

– Do you like it here? – Michael asked. Nervously pursing his lower lip.

– Yes very.

– I am glad. Can we get started now?

– Sure.

– Then please turn off the phone and put it here. I'll put mine too.

– Good. Come with me.

We went to another room. All the walls were in different colors. In the middle was a comfortable chair and easel, and opposite was a small retro leather sofa. The wall behind the sofa was sky-colored. Mikhail offered to sit comfortably on the sofa. Then he closed the door from the inside.

– Why is it?

«The cleaning lady is coming soon. And now there is no need to clean up.

– Got it. – I tried to calm down. Mikhail, meanwhile, took off his jacket, shirt and remained in only jeans. I blushed a lot.

– I'm sorry, I'm embarrassing you. It's so easy to work with. It's not for five minutes.

– All right that's okay. (The main thing is that he doesn't offer me to undress, I thought to myself)

He sat down and began to paint. I just sat and looked directly at him as he said. His face was covered in paint. His muscles were moderately pumped up and looked unrealistically sexy in the semi-darkness of the room... Misha asked me to sit and just look out the window.

This was the second floor. Outside the window, only a green forest was visible. The window was ajar and a pleasant forest scent enveloped me. Enveloped and soothed.

Misha said that he would paint for exactly two hours. And all this hour I will have to look only out the window. I did just that. But I was thinking about Max. About the entire period of our relationship.

– Now you are as thoughtful as in our first meeting. The same brooding and sad. Are you thinking about your ex-boyfriend?

– No, not at all. Rather, just about life. Let's not talk about what Rita said.

– Sure. We're just working now. But I don't want you to be sad.

– Agreed, I will not.

– And don't be so shy. You look great!

– Well, yes, in a T-shirt and jeans..

– It doesn't matter what you are wearing. You look natural.

At that moment, I caught myself thinking that in the morning I had completely forgotten about makeup. And I was terribly shy about my appearance. there was nothing special about me. blue eyes, light brown hair, medium height, thin arms, thin legs. The chest was really normal. I always wore the second size, but when I lost weight after breaking up with Max, my breasts, against the background of the belly stuck to the spine, now seemed just huge.

Me kaz It seemed that in the twilight of the room my crimson face was not so crimson, but it was self-deception. He really never said anything vulgar, didn't touch me. I just drew. He looked into my face like no other, penetrating the depths of my DNA. Then he just got up, opened the door and said that the first day was the hardest and the work was over for today. He offered to relieve stress and swim in the pool. I agreed. We did a couple of swims and then went to have tea. After that we watched different films, mostly comedies. And they laughed a lot. Mikhail often looked at me, lightly licking his lips, which caused me to be overwhelmed with great excitement. But outwardly his behavior was perfect. he didn't talk about Max or Rita anymore. Only once asked if I was too upset about her departure so early. But I really wasn't upset. Rather, some tiny part of me was happy about my friend's departure. And for this I was ashamed in front of her and in front of me too. In the evening we drank tea on the upper terrace and it was really cool. The evening forest air bewitched with its scent. Many different birds were heard and Misha and I tried to guess what they were singing about. We tried to portray them. And then they laughed for a long time. And when the sun was setting and the sky was covered with a crimson sunset, the view from the terrace was simply indescribable. Like this whole moment. I was happy that Rita was not around. We just sat and enjoyed the silence of this beautiful sunset. Usually in films, kissing begins at such moments. But Mikhail saw or felt that I was not yet ready for a new relationship, and after sunset he simply offered to accompany me to my room, wishing me pleasant dreams. So my first day of vacation passed.

## Part 3

– Knock-knock, can I come to you?

– Yes, come in.

– Good morning, Yana, how did you sleep? – Misha entered the room with a tray in his hands.

On it were two cups of aromatic coffee and rolls.

– Good morning to you too. You shouldn't have been so worried. I can eat in the kitchen too.

– You are my guest. And the guests must be received properly.

– Many thanks. It's just so unexpected.

– Get used to it. While you are here, you will be treated with due hospitality.

– Thank you so much, Mikhail.

– It's my pleasure. Actually, I am extremely surprised that such a beautiful girl has not been brought breakfast in bed before. I thought this should be the norm for you.

– You wrong. I am an ordinary girl and they don't bring me breakfast in bed. I cook them myself.

– Very sorry. Every princess must have its own prince.

– My prince just recently found himself another princess. And let's not talk about it anymore.

– Sorry, I didn't mean to offend you.

«You couldn't do it, another person has already done it.

– I'm sorry.

– Not worth it. This prince did not bring me breakfast in bed, and in general he was not much like a prince. It's just that it was a rather long relationship for me, which led me to the fact that I ended up here.

– Then I'll be your prince for a while, if you don't mind.

– Let's do without nice words. We're just collaborating. If you want, we can become friends, but don't expect more.

– Good. But in this case, I will consider you a friend, and friends in my house should feel free and uninhibited. And even more often to have fun and smile. What would you like to do today?

– I do not know. It's raining outside. I thought you were going to paint.

– Maybe, but later. I don't like painting in the rain. This is not my working mood.

– Clear.

– Do you want to play the console?

– In the console?

– Yes, Jan. Agree. It will be fun!

– No doubt.

– Then let's go.

We went into a room with a huge TV, a set-top box and a soft sofa and spent half a day playing games, burning with laughter, because playing with Misha turned out to be very fun. After that we went to have lunch in the living room.

– Are you cooking yourself?

– Basically, yes. I love this business. But sometimes I hire special people or order food. In general I love to cook.

«You are the dream of any modern girl, Misha,» I said, gobbling up a pork steak with a delicious sauce. – Why are not you married?

– I... I am an artist, Yana. I have a hard temperament. In addition, for a long time I have not met a girl who would catch my heart, like you, Yana. Well, don't think that I didn't have a relationship before you. I just think it will be easier for both of us now to continue living without remembering the past. And you attract me.

– Misha, don't.

– But why? I like you. At least as a friend. And you, apparently, do not really need my money.  
«I don't need them at all. I have a good job, I can support myself. Do you want to know the real reason why I ended up here?

– Only if you say it yourself. I will not insist.

– Just promise that you won't feel sorry for me or laugh.

– I give you my word.

– Well.

– In general, I need a timeout.

– In terms of?

– Well, after my, let's say, half-prince leaves, I cannot be alone in the apartment. There are simply too many memories.

– I understand you perfectly and you did the right thing. A change of scenery will greatly help you to rest and recuperate. To be honest, I understand you much more than you can imagine.

Misha's look suddenly became extremely sad. I realized that our destinies are somehow similar. And this is probably why they are related. I wanted to cheer this man up as he cheers me up.

– So I thought so too. And my friend insisted very much, otherwise she threatened to hand me over to a psychiatric hospital if I stay in the apartment and refuse your offer.

«But your friend needs money. I knew it right away.

– But how?

– Very easy. Yana, I drew more than one girl and many were eager to stay with me for the sake of money, to undress for the sake of money and even more for the sake of money. Someone spoke openly, someone hid it, but not you. I see honesty in your eyes and this is the most important thing why the amount that I offered you is ten times the amount that I offered to the last girl. Because paintings are sold at a much higher price. but few people know about it.

– Do not judge strictly. Many people need money simply because they need it and that's it. My friend is also not in the best position right now. But she has no one to help.

– If you want, I will lend her money in installments at the right time, but only at your request. Tell me, how much does she need?

– Fifty thousand.

– Dollars?

– What are you, Misha? Rubles, of course!

– But this is a trifle!

– Only for those who have such a sum, but she does not have enough to study. And if she does not find this amount in a month, then the long four and a half years of study will go to smark. A year of study costs more than a hundred thousand, but she only raised seventy. She got loans, but she has nowhere else to get money.

– Do you know your girlfriend's bank card number?

– Misha, don't, what are you?

«I don't give money to you or her either.» Consider it avan catfish.

– I don't need an advance, Misha. If you want to become my friend, I will not take money from you.

– Call your friend and invite her here on the day off. We will discuss the terms of the deal with her. I will offer her money for her studies in installments for five years without any interest.

– Are you serious?

– Yes. Your friends are my friends. Since you cannot help her, I can.

– Thank you so much! I don't even know how to thank you.

– The rain is over. Maybe we can take a walk? The air is so fresh now.

– Of course, I would love to.

We walked for three hours, no less. The air was really magical and we talked a lot about my life and a little about Mishina.

– Are you hungry?

– Yes there is a bit.

– What would you like to eat?

– I do not care.

– Would you mind sandwiches with caviar? It's just that my housekeeper went to her grandchildren for a couple of days.

– Of course not. I can cook something myself.

«Thanks for the offer, but that's not why you're here. I'd rather order food than have the guests cook.

«I don't mind the sandwiches at all.

«Okay, then we'll have a bite to eat and do a little work, if you don't mind.

– I don't mind. do you mind if I help you with sandwiches?

– I can't refuse my guest.

We had a snack, drank tea and went to the room to work on the painting.

– You're smiling today. you will come out very nicely.

– Good.

– I will finish one painting today. Last time I missed your smile and did not complete the image.

An hour or more later, Mikhail announced that he had finished the first test painting. And if I like his style, then we will draw a few more.

– I have not seen myself like that even in the photo! It's very beautiful, thank you, Misha.

– You are welcome. One of the paintings will belong to you. And then you will choose which one. I'll sell the rest.

– But you said that the picture will be for me, and not for sale?

– Together we will attend the exhibition of your paintings.

– But how?

– You'll find out soon.

– And if I don't want to sell them?

– I doubt it. Such beauty should not be hiding in one room. It needs to be published!

– I'll think about it, thanks.

«If you don't want, I'll give you everything except one.» You will give me this picture, okay?

– Okay, I'll give this one, I promise.

– That's agreed. Believe me, not one picture will leave the walls of this house without your written official permission! Are you calm now?

– Yes.

– Well. Too late. We should have a little dinner and rest.

– Good. I guess I'll just have some tea.

«But I'll add a little low-calorie dessert to your tea, if you don't mind. And... we can watch a movie.

«Not a bad idea, in my opinion. Although I understood that Mikhail was looking for an excuse to be closer to me, this did not give me much discomfort. Rather the opposite. It was easy and calm with him. As if we knew each other for a long time. Mikhail tactfully kept his distance. Perhaps he himself was afraid or simply did not want a new relationship. And his light flirtation is just a manifestation of a man's nature.

It got dark outside. The guards and the servants went to bed, and we went to the home theater and chose a light comedy. I even completely forgot about the fact that I promised to call Rita and my parents and report that everything is fine with me. We agreed with not that we will call each other every day for the sake of her and my peace of mind. But this evening I just sent her an SMS and

promised to call in the morning. And with my parents, I just called up every evening. But I didn't want to worry them yet. They are unlikely to approve of such a strange impulsive act. I told them that everything was as usual with me, and from Rita I took an oath promise to be silent.

...

Do you like me, Yana? – Mikhail asked in confusion as I stared thoughtfully at the end credits.

– Yes of course. Thank you, I really haven't rested like that for a long time. I just thought about the pictures. I don't know if I want unknown people to look at me, discuss...

Don't worry, I just thought you might want to sell the paintings. This is a lot of money. Life is long and if you don't need them today, then no one knows what will happen tomorrow. Unfortunately, fate sometimes drives you into a dead end. That's what Rita did, right?

– I'll think about it. Probably you are right. You are a great painter and your talent should not be wasted.

– As well as your beauty.

– You confuse me. Perhaps I should go to bed.

– As you say. Good night, Yana.

– And you.

I went to my room, took a shower and sent a friend an invitation to visit for the weekend.

– Call me! Well, please! – such a pleading message from a friend left me no choice and I still dialed her number.

I couldn't postpone the conversation until the morning.

– Good evening, Rit. So, will you come?

– I would love to, but I have to work hard.

– No longer. I solved your learning problem.

– You slept with him???? – A friend of surprise screamed into the phone.

– Not.

– Did you promise to sleep?

– Not

– Then where does the money come from? Stole it?

– Not. You are crazy? You will come and find out everything.

– Then wait for me on Saturday at lunchtime. And yet, friend, inject! What have you got with him?

– Nothing. We just hit it off. You know. people sometimes have mutual understanding no.

– Well, yes, of course... Listen, how will I get there? Does the bus go there? Or should I call a taxi?

– You will be picked up by Misha's driver, with whom you were leaving that time.

– AAA, cool! Thanks, friend! You are my gold!

– You too. I am having a great rest here. Michael doesn't even bother. And in general, he is very tactful.

– Maybe impotent?

– What difference does it make to me, Rit. Now I don't think about a new relationship at all. just resting here and that's it. And further. One picture is already ready. Misha is an amazing artist!

– And how did he draw you?

– I just drew and that's it. I sat on the couch and looked out the window.

– Is that all? so simple?

– Yes. And that suits me perfectly. Although it is not so easy to sit in the same position for two hours.

– This is clear. What were you wearing?

– In a regular T-shirt and jeans.

– Seriously? Do they paint in this?

– Yes.

– I just thought he would ask you to undress, well, like in one movie, I don't remember the name.

– No, nothing like that. And I am very glad. You know, that's what I was afraid of. But nothing happened.

– I'm happy for you. Forgot your freak?

– Not yet.

– Damn it!

– No need to say. Listen, I really want to sleep. Let's call each other tomorrow. Good night to you.

– And you.

I fell asleep very pleased with myself. Especially because she was able to help her friend. I slept very well that night, much better than at home. Here I did not remember my ex-prince, but simply relaxed.

## Part 4

The next morning I received a text message from my ex. «We need to meet and talk»

«No need» – I replied with a message.

– Can you explain?

– Not.

Within a minute, he called me. He hasn't called me since the day he took his last things.

– Hello. What are you doing?

– Time eight in the morning, Maxim, I just woke up.

– Aren't you at work?

«I'm on vacation, Max.

– You wanted to go on vacation later?

– I took it at my own expense. And anyway, what do you care where I am?

– Just. I decided to ask how you are doing. Can't you?

«Everything's fine, don't worry, Max. Do not call me more.

– Yana, I want to talk to you personally when we meet.

– When I return from vacation, we'll see. Maybe we can talk to you, Max. And now I have things to do.

I said it as seriously as possible, although I was still basking under the covers in my favorite soft lilac pajamas.

– What's up, Yana, where are you, anyway? I have come to you more than once.

– I'm visiting the country. I won't be back soon. Goodbye, Maxim.

– So Rita told the truth?

– What did Rita say?

– That you found yourself a rich daddy who now provides for you.

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