

**СБОРНИК  
РАССКАЗОВ НА  
АНГЛИЙСКОМ ЯЗЫКЕ  
МИСТИКА И  
ДЕТЕКТИВЫ**



**INTERMEDIATE**

**ДОМАШНЕЕ ЧТЕНИЕ С  
ЗАДАНИЯМИ И ОТВЕТАМИ**

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16+

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**Сборник рассказов на**  
**английском языке. Мистика**  
**и детективы. Intermediate.**  
**Домашнее чтение с**  
**заданиями и ответами**

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**Аннотация**

Книга для чтения на английском языке включает четыре мистических и детективных рассказа среднего уровня. Пособие рассчитано для широкого круга лиц, изучающих английский язык самостоятельно, также для преподавателей на занятиях по домашнему чтению. Каждый рассказ снабжен обширным набором упражнений с ключами. Все рассказы написаны автором издания, переведены и отредактированы носителем языка в Нью-Йорке. Рассказ «Таинственное исчезновение» стал бронзовым призером на литературном конкурсе «Маленькие шедевры». Автор выражает благодарность преподавателю английского языка Тактайкиной В. В. за участие в разработке упражнений.

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**The Magician**

A travelling circus was giving the first performance of the season in a small country town. The striking billboards invited the townspeople not to miss a fairytale show. The circus tent-pavilion was erected right in the town center. The stage was decorated with colorful fairy lights. The town residents were not spoiled by frequent visits from performing guests like these, so the tickets were instantly sold out five shows ahead. The influx of spectators was so considerable, that the circus manager set up an additional standing-room. The tent was ready, the stage was set,

and a crowd was forming outside. But one hour before the first show, a novice magician went up to a propman and demanded he be given a box for a rabbit to fit in, immediately. He explained that his magical black box got lost somewhere, and he couldn't perform his act without it. The elderly propman pondered a little, and finally promised to find something alike. Ten minutes later, the magician had in his hands a wooden black box. It was a rather old and worn-out prop with faded sides. Unfortunately, the propman didn't have something newer. Having opened the prop, the magician examined it carefully, and was really surprised at finding a mirror attached to the inner side of the lid. The conjuror had a few minutes before his appearance on the stage, so he didn't have enough time to think about the purpose of the mirror.

It should be noted that the novice magician was a budding actor. The circus manager saw a creative personality in him. His repertory did not include a set of trivial tricks. The actor successfully materialized his fantasy on the stage after desperate creative searches and trials. Astonished spectators went into raptures over his honest deception. His bewildered colleagues frequently attacked him with queries such as, How did you manage to perform this trick? What is your secret? The conjuror replied that he drew his inspiration from nature, trying to reveal details that ordinary people were unable to see. And that set the right tone in his work.

The ringmaster had already announced the magician to be on the stage, so he ran into the arena along with his assistants. In

the glare of the circus spotlights, he went ahead with the act. The magician demonstrated intricate tricks, including objects moving in the air. His artistry, agility, and dexterity marveled the public. Manipulation and illusion were elegantly presented, and the virtuosic master received roaring applause more than once. The program should have ended with the above-mentioned box. When the moment came, a pretty assistant showed the empty prop from inside and put it on the table in the center of the arena. Our illusionist announced that a rabbit would appear inside the box from absolutely nowhere. Having said that, he knocked three times on the lid, and opened it. As expected, a white rabbit jumped out. The assistant demonstrated the marvelous result of the trick to the public. Success and tremendous applause! However, the illusionist did not expect any kind of animals to appear at all. At that moment, he felt panic attacking him. After recollecting his self-control, he suppressed the horror that gripped him because of the rabbit's appearance. His face had a kind of contorted smile. He stared at the rabbit and could not believe what had happened. Something went wrong. Backstage, the manager ran up to the actor with the rabbit in his hands, hugged him paternally, and said loudly, "Well done! The public is thrilled to bits! But wait. Where did you get this rabbit from? Changes like these in your program must be coordinated only with me."

"The rabbit should not have appeared!" the pale artist interrupted, screaming at the manager. "I don't understand the

way the rabbit got into the box. There should not have been any kind of trick at all! Do you remember the script? I had to open the empty box without any animals at all, then clowns would run out into the arena and turn it into a farce!”

“Then whose evil joke is this? Maybe the tamer’s? But he works only with predators, so he can’t be responsible,” the manager said thoughtfully, walking away.

The conjuror took the rabbit by the ears and went into the dressing room. He examined the box carefully from every side more than once, but couldn’t find the slightest clue. Tired, he threw it into a corner, and looked at the rabbit. It was snow white, sitting on the table and basking under the lamp, and crunching on a third sweet carrot. At the same time, he was wiggling his ears with pleasure.

Long after midnight, the illusionist was still sitting in a chair in the dressing room, trying to understand. A knock at the door brought him back to reality.

“Who is it?”

The white-haired propman showed his head from behind the door.

“May I come in?”

The actor did not answer, so the propman went in anyway, and went over to the rabbit, and stroked him.

“Well, hello, I do recognize you, Brer Rabbit.”

“What? You rigged all this, didn’t you?!”

“Don’t get so excited. You’d better listen to what I tell you. Just

let it be between you and me. Our circus has a long history, and I've been working here for a long time and seen a lot of things. Forty years ago, I began my career as an assistant magician, so I am a witness to the case, which our troupe is not aware of. What happened to you today in the arena took place forty years ago, but it was the other way around. The illusionist, who I assisted at that time, crafted this same prop. His stage name was Faust. As you can see, the box is rather ordinary, only with a mirror inside. His rabbit did not have to vanish in the box, but it disappeared the first time he did the act, and we've never seen it since. We searched the whole circus, everywhere. After that, Faust swore off not to make any tricks with that prop. He and the circus vowed never to speak of it again, to try and forget. However, I guess this rabbit returned today from somewhere."

"A rabbit doesn't live forty years," the magician said, vaguely.

"But he spent this time somewhere," the propman said, and left the dressing room."

"So, where have you been all this time?" the exhausted actor addressed the rabbit.

The animal, as if realizing the question, ceased to nibble on his goodies, moved his ears, and jumped down on the near couch. An open scientific journal was on it. The panting rabbit settled down on the page so his right paw was clearly pointing at the title of the article, "*Wormwholes.*"

The magician moved the rabbit aside, picked up the journal, and read the beginning of the article:



*Time machines do not exist, but astrophysics proves the existence of wormholes in the Universe, in theory. A wormhole is a hypothetical topological feature of space time. It is much like a tunnel with two ends, each in separate points in space time.*

He looked at the rabbit in amazement.

– ...?

## **Questions and Activities**

*I. Find English equivalents to the following Russian phrases.*

- яркие афиши
- сказочное зрелище
- шатер цирка
- наплыв зрителей
- с выцветшими стенками
- подающий надежды артист
- восторженные зрители
- в свете софитов
- ужас охватил его
- прекратил грызть
- озадаченные коллеги

*II. Translate the following words and word-combinations.*

- a novice magician
- a worn-out prop

- a conjuror
- the repertory
- an honest deception
- a ringmaster
- intricate tricks
- a predator
- agility
- dexterity
- a kind of contorted smile
- the script
- a propman
- a couch
- a wormwhole
- a tamer

*III. Find adverbs in the text. Make up your own sentences with them.*

*IV. Unscramble the words in bold.*

1. A travelling circus was giving the first **mcnproearefe** of the season  
in a small country town.
2. The town residents were not spoiled by **qtrfnuee** visits from performing guests.
3. The **jrocounr** had a few minutes before his appearance on the stage.

4. Do you remember the **srtcpi**

5. The white-haired **npramop** showed his head from behind the door.

6. He stared at the **btarib** and could not believe what had happened.

7. But he works only with **prderstao**, so he can't be responsible.

8. His **gaset** name was Faust.

9. A **cokkn** at the door brought him back to reality.

10. A **mwloheor** is a hypothetical topological feature of space time.

*V. Give definitions of the following verbs.*

– to erect

– to spoil

– to demand

– to examine

– to reveal

– to grip

– to stroke

– to craft

– to vanish

– to swear off

– to vow

*VI. Grammar.*

1. Find and translate sentences in the Past Simple Tense.
2. Find and translate a sentence with homogeneous parts.
3. Find and translate one sentence in the Present Perfect Tense.
4. Find and translate one sentence in the Present Perfect Continuous Tense.
5. Find sentences with the direct speech. Change them into the indirect speech.

*VII. Answer the following questions.*

1. What kind of person was the magician?
2. Where did he work?
3. Where was a travelling circus giving the first performance?
4. What did the magician ask the propman for?
5. How did the black box look like?
6. What happened in the arena?
7. What story did the propman tell the conjuror?
8. What is the wormhole?
9. Do you believe in the human ability to travel through time in the future?
10. What is the main message of the story?
11. Which of the tricks do you think would be the most impressive to watch?
12. Have you had any experience of mind-reading or illusions?

Give details.

13. If the magician asked a member of the audience to participate on stage, would you do it?

*VIII. Say whether the following sentences are true, false or not given*

*in the text. Say what is wrong with the false ones.*

1. A travelling circus was giving the second performance.
2. The town residents hated frequent visits of performing guests.
3. A novice magician demanded to be given a box for a hare to fit in.
4. The public was marveled by the performance.
5. The conjuror demonstrated stunts and tight rope walk.
6. The black box vanished with the rabbit inside.
7. The illusionist Faust appeared on the stage with the rabbit.
8. The propman told the story about wormholes.
9. According to the text rabbits live forty years.
10. The animal ceased to nibble on its carrot.

*IX. Speaking.*

1. Describe the magician.
2. Speak about the atmosphere in the town before the show.
3. Describe the performance of the conjuror.
4. Act out the dialogue between the propman and the

magician.

5. Give the summary of the story.

*X. Which of the sayings best summarises the main idea of the story?*

1. The fated thing will happen.

2. There is a time and place for everything.

3. The world is a mere illusion.

*XI. Solve a crossword puzzle.*

*Across:*

2/ A person who performs tricks that seem strange or impossible to believe.

6/ A long pointed orange root vegetable.

8/ A group of people, sometimes with trained animals, who perform acts with skill in a show that travels around to different places.

10/ An individual responsible for objects used by actors during the performance of a play.

11/ The act of performing a play, concert or some other form of entertainment.

14/ A small animal with soft fur, long ears and a short tail.

*Down:*

1/ A large board on the outside of a building or at the side of the road,

used for putting advertisements on.

3/ A person who trains wild animals.

4/ A trick intended to make somebody believe something that is not true.

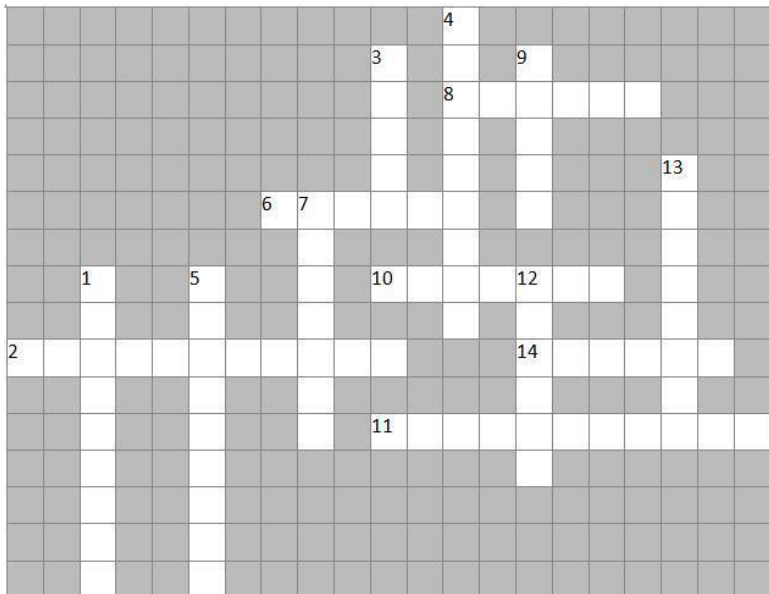
5/ Typical of something in a story about magic for children.

7/ The ability to move quickly and easily.

9/ A clever action that somebody performs as a way of entertaining people.

12/ A piece of special flat glass that reflects images.

13/ A person who can do magic tricks.





# The Watchmaker

“I feel I have to admit I’ve always had a keen interest in time,” said an elderly watchmaker taking a break from his sophisticated work.

There was a watch mechanism resting on the table in front of him which he had already been fixing for nearly an hour. The watch was a vintage framed in gold, and the work was extremely delicate. The watchmaker addressed a visitor, who was reading a magazine while waiting patiently in an armchair in the corner of the workshop. He put the magazine aside and said, “The concept of time definitely contains philosophy and mystery, which people are prohibited to perceive by their limited five senses.” Here the visitor paused studying the reactions of the watchmaker and continued, “Otherwise, the scientists have managed to prove that intellect is the human’s sixth sense.”

“Indeed. And interestingly enough, humans can only move forward along the time line, while they cannot go back to the starting point again. At the same time, we can return to the original point if we move in space. What a pleasure to have a philosophic talk when the wise companion understands you.”

“H’m! I would argue with you about the return to the starting time point. You know, there’ve been some instances. And I would not agree with you about the time line too. The time is flowing in the spiral.”

The puzzled watchmaker looked at his strange guest. The man was not tall, medium build, wearing a suit, but without a tie. He had a black wide-brimmed hat on, which for some reason he refused to take off in the room, so the shop owner could not fully discern his facial features. However, he drew particular attention to his prominent, determined chin.

“Your thoughts are really intriguing.”

The tired watchmaker could not have helped but get up groaning and come up to his interlocutor.

“Have a sit,” the guest offered.

The watchmaker sat in the armchair opposite to him and with his back to the working desk. Only then he was able to glance into the eyes of the weird visitor. The watchmaker felt something repellent in his cold stare and he asked shivering: “Who are you?”

“Me? Soon you will understand.”

The old man was frightened to the bits, but gave no sign of it. He did not want to discuss anything more with the stranger and wanted to get rid of him the quicker the better. He returned to the subject of the item being repaired.

“Oh! By the way, your watch. You are the owner of a rare miraculous specimen. You could get for it a decent amount of money at auction. But I cannot understand the cause of the fault. All mechanisms are in good working condition, but the hands refuse to go. I need time to determine the root cause. Will you come back tomorrow?”

“You are wrong. I am not the owner of the watch at all. But

you are,” the guest said meaningfully. “And the hands don’t go just because that your time is up. Look behind.”

The old watchmaker turned his head towards the working desk. In horror he saw himself or, rather, his senseless body with the head resting on the desk right in front of the watch. His numb hands clutched the screwdriver and tweezers. The desk was in the far corner of the room, but the watchmaker felt, with every fiber of his soul, that the second hand of the watch gave a slight tremble. It started moving for a new heart of someone else to beat in the Universe.

## Questions and Activities

*I. Find English equivalents to the following Russian phrases.*

- признаюсь, меня всегда интересовала категория времени.
- коллекционные часы в золотом обрамлении.
- работа тонкая и требовала деликатного обращения.
- в понятии времени определённо существует философия и таинство.
- время развивается по спирали.
- озадаченный часовщик.
- чудесный редкий экземпляр.

*II. Translate the following words and word-combinations.*

- the watchmaker
- be keen on
- his sophisticated work
- a vintage
- to perceive
- instance
- puzzled
- a wide-brimmed hat
- the interlocutor
- the weird visitor
- a rare miraculous specimen
- to get rid of
- repellent
- a decent amount of money
- the root cause
- the screwdriver
- the tweezers

*III. Find adjectives in the text. Make up your own sentences with them.*

*IV. Unscramble the words in bold.*

1. There was a watch **hnmieamcs** resting on the table in front of him.
2. The watch was a **vgintae** framed in gold.
3. The **katamwrceh** addressed a visitor.

4. There have been some **tsnasecni**.

5. The concept of time definitely contains **hoolyhipps** and mystery.

6. The time is flowing in the **prsali**

7. You are the owner of a rare miraculous **peesminc**.

8. I need time to determine the **otro** cause.

9. His numb hands clutched the **cevsidrrewr**

10. It started moving for a new life-being of someone else in the **venuseir**

*V. Give definitions of the following verbs.*

– to discern

– to admit

– to comprehend

– to prove

– to prohibit

– to groan

– to clutch

– to perceive

*VI. Grammar.*

1. Find and translate sentences in the Past Simple Tense.

2. Find and translate a sentence with homogeneous parts.

3. Find and translate one sentence in the Present Perfect Tense.

4. Find and translate one sentence in the Past Perfect

Continuous

Tense.

5. Find sentences with the direct speech. Change them into the indirect speech.

*VII. Answer the following questions.*

1. Where did the strange visitor come to?
2. What had the watchmaker been repairing for nearly an hour?
3. What subject has the watchmaker always been keen on?
4. Whose watch did the guest bring to fix?
5. In your opinion, why did the guest refuse to take off his hat inside?
6. What facts did the stranger tell the watchmaker about the time?
7. Will you describe the reaction of the watchmaker to the words of his interlocutor about time?
8. What is the main message of the story?
9. Who do you think the weird guest was?
10. Do you believe in the rebirth of souls?

*VIII. Say whether the following sentences are true, false or not given in the text. Say what is wrong with the false ones.*

1. The watchmaker had been fixing his own vintage watch.
2. The watch was with the golden chain.

3. The visitor wasn't wearing a tie.

4. According to the weird guest, the time is flowing in the celestial spiral.

5. There were many other tools on the desk.

6. The numb hands of the watchmaker clutched the flat screwdriver.

7. The second hand of the watch started moving for a new galaxy

in the Universe.

8. The stranger appeared to be a wizard.

### *IX. Speaking.*

1. Describe the watchmaker and the stranger.

2. Act out the dialogue between the watchmaker and the stranger.

3. What another title of the story would you suggest? Why?

4. Speak about time as a philosophical concept.

5. Give the summary of the story.

### *X. Which of the sayings best summarises the main idea of the story?*

1. There is a time and place for everything.

2. You can't buy an inch of time with an inch of gold.

3. Every seed knows its time.

4. Men fear, but time fears the pyramids.

*XI. Solve a crossword puzzle.*

*Across:*

2/ Very strange or unusual and difficult to explain.

3/ A particular example or case of something.

4/ Having all the best or most typical qualities of something,  
especially  
from the past

8/ What we measure in minutes, hours, days, etc.

10/ A strong feeling of shock or fear.

*Down:*

1/ A tool for turning screws.

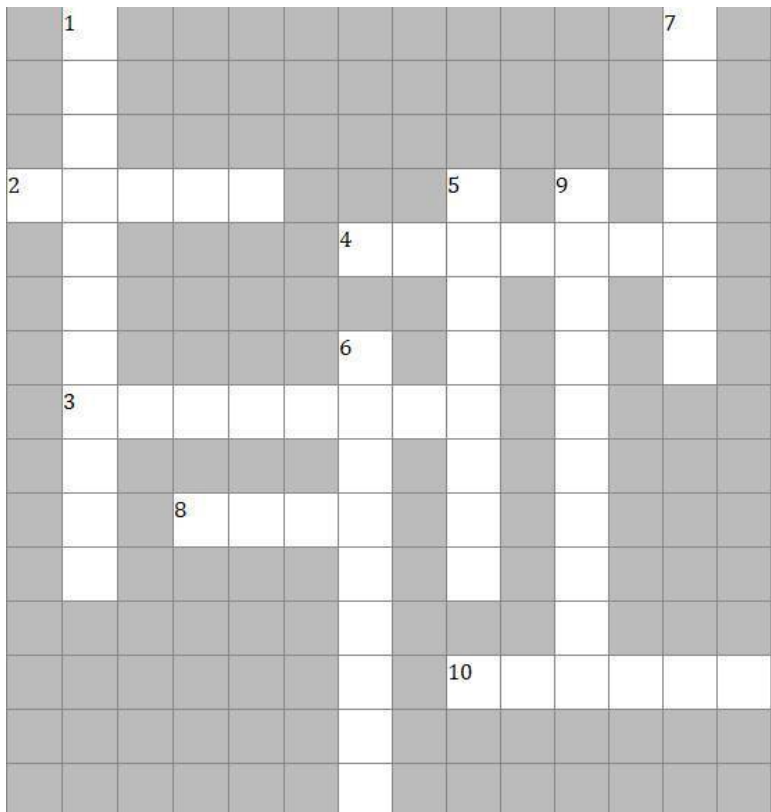
5/ The whole of space and everything in it, including the  
Earth,  
the planets and the stars.

6/ The ability to think in a logical way and understand things.

7/ Something strange or unknown that cannot be explained  
or understood.

9/ A person who makes and repairs watches and clocks as a  
job.





# Mysterious Evanescence

Arthur R. Berg was a very wealthy man. He was a renowned businessman in his field. He achieved his goals by any possible means. Yet, this story is not about how he achieved dizzying success in financial affairs, and his brilliant business acumen, but about the fantastic misadventure caused by his mad passion for painting. This enthusiasm was expressed in collecting original paintings by famous artists. As a person who saw any deal from a commercial point of view, his love for art was automatically considered by others to be an effective investment. But, to Berg, art was more than money framed on a wall. An educated man, perceptive of culture, and a connoisseur of fine arts, he regarded a piece of art to the highest degree of its manifestation. For the past seventeen years, he had gathered an impressive collection. To store it, an enormous mansion-gallery was made available in London, where he spent most of his free time. There, he got an aesthetic pleasure alone with his grand collection. In complete quiet, he wandered from one room to another, beheld full palettes of works by great masters, and admired the elegance of the portraits and the flourish within the landscapes. He could stand for hours in front of a picture of some genius, just getting a grasp at every stroke. For Berg, a picture was like a book to be read, and which he was eager to read over and over again. Sometimes, he got so lost in the exhibits that he daydreamed himself into

scenes from picnics in meadows to cavalry clashes on battlefields. Occasionally, he visited major exhibitions only for the sake of one picture, to understand and meditate about.

One day, in a large antique shop, he saw a picture of medium size, behind the counter, of a young, beautiful lady from what he gathered was a higher secular society in the early nineteenth century. She was in a luxury dress, in a chair. Her features were angel-like. A small table in front of her featured a chessboard. Her opponent was a gentleman in a tuxedo. But he was on the couch opposite, and thoughtfully held the white king in his left hand, pondering and not knowing where to retreat under the pressure of the young socialite. The game was in full swing, and by the position of the pieces on the board it could be judged that the priority in the struggle belonged to the young lady.

The painter managed to capture the gleam in her eyes, on the cusp of victory. Near the chessboard was a bunch of papers that seemed to be financial documents, and it could be assumed the game was not for the curiosity of the onlookers gathered, but for the documents. The bystanders were exclusively men, and the occasion was some dinner party. Berg was almost spellbound by the picture, and said almost aloud, "I'd give anything in the world just to play a game of chess with this stunningly beautiful creature." At that moment, a manager of the shop was passing by, and Berg pulled him by his sleeve nervously and demanded, "How much is this picture? I am buying it now."

"Sorry, but this picture isn't for sale," the manager replied

coldly.

“What do you mean, not for sale? Then why is it on the display?”

“You are not the first person in our antique shop who would like to see this work of art in a collection. This picture is not for sale. Let me explain: The picture is our charm. It has been here since we started this business. As long as we have it, we believe our family business will only thrive. So, no,” the manager said in a cool tone.

“Who started your business? I want to see him and have a talk,” Berg almost screamed, as a man not accustomed to the word “no”.

“To see her,” the manager corrected, and pointed to the lady in the picture. “Baroness von N is the founder of our antique trading house.”

“Now I see,” Berg said.

“This is the only image of her. The artist is unknown.” With that, the manager moved on.

Berg left the shop in deep thought. For the rest of the night, the picture haunted his mind. The next morning he came back to the shop, still trying to persuade the manager, this time in his office.

“Look, if I can’t buy this painting, can it be rented for a certain period of time? For the period it’s leased, the picture will be insured. I guarantee one hundred percent prepayment. You are a businessman, and I offer the most preferential terms. I believe nothing will happen to your family business if this ‘charm’ is out

of your respected shop. Give me a week, or a month. Unlike what you think, the painting's absence will bring you only a good profit. What do you say to my proposal?"

"H'm, I find this deal rather strange. You are the first person to offer to rent a picture from our antique shop. I'd understand it if you were a museum, but you, it seems, are not going to set it to any display, I hope? The manager looked at Berg rather queerly.

"I assure you, I'm not. I need it only to satisfy my own aesthetic needs." Berg smiled. After a short but agonizing silence, the manager said, "Well, the transaction will be forwarded to our legal department. But" – he pointed out expressly – "the lease term is one week. One hundred percent down payment, insurance at your expense. And, yet, I find your proposal extremely eccentric."

"Maybe you're right. But I love art," a contented Berg replied.

The transaction was executed properly, and a week later the painting was hung in the living room of Berg's country mansion. For the past five days, the admirer of fine arts spent all of his free time with the painting. He fell in love with the image of the lady, and sometimes he even talked to her. It came to a point where a similar chair and a table with a chessboard were brought to the same living room. All of Berg's thoughts were devoted to the beautiful lady in the picture.

On the sixth day, Berg returned late to his country house after a hectic day, and sent away all the staff and security guards for the weekend. After dinner, he went to the living room to wish

*“Good night”* to his beloved, as he’d done in the five previous days. He felt a deep melancholy. He did not want to part with her, but kept in mind that according to the contract, the picture should be returned to the owner the following day. The clock struck midnight. He went closer to the picture, and started to examine the very familiar features of the baroness’ beautiful face. All of a sudden, a thud on the windowpane brought him back to reality with a fright. What on earth? Alarmed, he went to the window. Drawing open the blind, Berg saw in the moonlight only dark trunks of trees in the grounds, and a cloudless sky lit with bright stars. Not a soul. Perhaps it was a bird, he assured himself. What a beautiful full moon. There he was standing, admiring the moon and contemplating the night quietness for about five minutes, when suddenly he heard a low, velvet voice from behind his back:

“Would you like a game of chess?”

It was a feminine voice. Inhuman panic and fear gripped Berg. He was too scared to turn around.

“Would you like a game of chess?” the voice insisted.

Berg slowly turned around, and saw the replica chair was occupied by Baroness von N in the same dress from the picture. Smiling, she invited him by pointing to the table with the chessboard. The chess pieces had been placed. Automatically, he glanced at the picture – the chair was empty there. “You have little time. Either you play, or I’m leaving,” the baroness said. Berg was horrified. His heart was beating faster, and his face was

sweating. He wiped his face fiercely, and slowly walked over to the couch opposite the chair, sat on the edge of it, and stared at the guest. His trembling hand made the first moves of white pawn from the king one square forward.

Under the terms of the lease agreement, Berg returned the painting to the antique shop on the seventh day. He was also ...  
*different*

# Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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