

Anastasiia Deniz Mitchell

The Arabian Days

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«Издательские решения»

Mitchell A. D.

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Any person has different feelings, emotions and... fears and complexes. So does the main character of this book, Janet. Moreover, any person has his or her own dreams, as Janet does. She wants to marry a good man, a prince or a knight. She believes in love. But what does life give Janet at first? And what does she receive afterwards? Janet will be grateful for everything that has happened to her. So, read on and take a dive into the midst of Janet's thoughts and emotions.

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Author's note

Any person has different feelings, emotions and... fears and complexes. So does the main character of this book, Janet. Moreover, any person has his or her own dreams, as Janet does. She wants to marry a good man, a prince or a knight. She believes in love. The hardest thing for any girl is to find her special someone, and when they hear words of love, they always believe these words.

But what does life give Janet at first? And what does she receive afterwards? Believe it or not, but Janet will be grateful for everything that has happened to her. So, read on and take a dive into the midst of Janet's thoughts and emotions. You either will or will not understand the main character. Anyway, every person is unique, and aren't you?

Enjoy the book!

Always yours,
Anastasiia Deniz Mitchell

13 September 1972

From: Mohammed
To: Janet

Dear Janet,

I'm so happy to have met you! How are you?

I'm constantly repeating to myself how beautiful you are! Your eyes, your voice, your face... I'm recalling the days we were together, you and me, me and you. When will you come here again? I'm waiting for you! It seems like I've fallen in love with you. No, I really have! I really have! My dear, sweet Janet, for how long shall I wait for you? Maybe I could even come to you, to look into your blue, deep blue eyes?

Please, come here in Agadir as soon as you can!

Oh, my Janet, I'm also waiting for your answer!

With a lot of love,
Mohammed

1.

That was the first letter I received from him. It was so nice! I'd say it was lovely. How I admired him..! And how nicely he was writing!

Well, it seems like I haven't introduced myself so far. My name's Janet Grace...

So, maybe, I'll tell you more things about me a bit later: I'm already being late for my classes!

14 September 1972

I'm a second-year student. A design one. In University of London. On having only one friend, I can say that it's better than none, but still, it's better than a lot of friends. They can be fake anyway. Not false but fake ones. I'm not a translator. Although I'd love to have a degree in Translation and Interpretation, or at least study for it. Why am I a designer student? Because if I were to choose between translation and design, I'd pick the latter. You know how prestigious it is to be a designer nowadays! You can make a lot of money just in a wink!

Mum says I'm not obliged to earn a lot. But I think I am. Again, why? Because how else may you prove you're a good one? And you're not a loser? And you're better than your friends who already have a family, though hypothetically? I wouldn't put up with that.

The classes today were boring. But well, there'll be other ones, much more interesting! It's the design department anyway! The today's lectures were: Art and Design History, Graphic Media, and Architecture History. Only lectures! I wonder what I'll feel like when I have only seminars left!

Anyway, after the classes I got home. I still live at home with my Mum. So what? I'm not able to rent a flat somewhere on the outskirts of London! Or... Well, it takes me a little to get to Mum's house. Thank God for that. To be honest, I don't know how to rent a flat alone or share it with someone Oh, strangers! They can be evil. They can cause harm to me. They can take something from me. Though I hoped they wouldn't kill me because I believe I'm a good person. And I don't cause harm to anyone. I just don't want it.

15 September 1972

What a beautiful city London is! It's a pure enjoyment to view all its landscapes, and every tree, and every building, and every stone... Of course, when you're busy. Because when you're not, you're going to hate it all. And when I'm busy, I start to think about Mohammed. My Mohammed. All the time. Whenever I read his first letter, I'm over the moon. Although how can I go to space? I'm not an astronaut anyway!..

I always recall how I met Mohammed. It was in the summer, in Agadir, Morocco, when Mum and me were off for our holiday.

2.

23 July 1972

Agadir, Morocco

If only you knew how I like holidays! You can relax for the whole holiday period and not even say a word. And the most interesting thing is that no one's going to scold you for that! Holidays are intended for you to relax fully and forget about everything. And forget everything. Even your name...

No studies. No university. Yes, studying's a hard toil. You must make yourself get up early in the morning, for you to arrive at this or that class (note – on time!!!) and show yourself by answering all the teacher's questions. Not during one class – during them all! A hard toil it is, yes.

What about the campus cafeteria? To be honest, I'm greedy enough to spend a pound more than necessary. So, I force myself to economize, whereas other students spend a fortune to dine. I'm jealous because of that.

And now – holidays! No other students! No cafeteria! You can eat everything for free! Wait, not for free – Mum's paid it all. So, I need to economize here as well.

Well, yes, I adore travelling. I remember the day when Mum and me were off for another holiday. It was three years ago from now. We took a bus tour to France.

And there was a man who had a birthday that day. We all clubbed together to buy a cake for him. We needed to please him somehow, especially on that day!

Men love food. They love cakes as much. So we thought it' be a good idea to buy a big cake for him.

And guess what! The cake fell on his head when the bus was jolting along the twist mountain road in France! Fortunately, it was in the box, so he didn't get dirty with the cream. But the cake wasn't the cake already: it was a MASH-mellow..!

So, during the flight to Morocco, I ate the portions for two people. But Mum got her food. It means someone else was left without their portion.

Anyway, we were arriving at the airport. It seemed to me it was really hot even inside the plane.

I saw almost nothing outside the window when flying. Maybe I should've broken the window glass and poked my head out of the window. But if I'd broken the glass, I'd have been considered a law-breaker!

What's more, someone let in a fly when we were getting on the board.

So, it had been travelling with us for the whole flight! A fly traveller! The so-called amateur traveller! It'd go around the world forever... Lucky fly! And my trip would come to an end sooner or later.

So hot outside! I wanted to take off my T-shirt. But Mum said, «You have nothing put on you but this T-shirt.» Indeed! I had to put up with the high temperature of both the air and my body. I hoped I wasn't ill.

Our hotel was called «Paradise». What does it mean? It means it's not like a paradise but something similar. I had to look more closely into it. Maybe it was really a paradise.

And it really was! The shining hall walls. The magnificent rooms. And I'd have it all for two weeks!

We got our keys and came into the lift.

The first thing I wanted to do after I took a shower was to go to the beach. And so we did. Mum wanted this as well. Especially if I hadn't been to the beach for more than a year.

Last year, we travelled to Torquay. It wasn't that hot there. Neither was there a lot of sun. It was near to impossible to sunbathe there, so I got almost no tan.

But this year, it'd be vice versa. I'd get tanned (I hope not sunburned). And the main thing's that I'd be swimming a lot. I hope there'll be no sharks. I've heard they're quite dangerous. Can they eat a person? Or even two? Or three..?

Anyway, after we took a shower, we went to the beach. Fortunately, it wasn't three miles away from our hotel, as it happens sometimes. It was located... right within the hotel territory! What a good luck!

I like swimming. I like swimming a lot and looking at the fish. I like looking at the corals deep down at the bottom of the sea. Of course, I wear special glasses. So I did now.

But wait, where was all the flora and fauna? Or had I brought all my equipment here in vain? That just couldn't be.

I wanted to talk to a fish. And what'd I do now? Talk to the empty water?

I'd like to make some friends. Talking friends. Talking fish. But it seems like no one in the water would like to talk to me. Pity.

In the films and cartoons, they show how the main characters make fish friends. And what about me..?

No animal wants to make friends with me. Well, then, I want to make friends with no animal!

(And I'd never wanted to make friends with animals since they don't want to make friends with me!)

When I was 13, Mum took me to the zoo. There were so many people! And so many animals! I wonder how they weren't fed up with each other, but I already felt they'd been fed up with me, even if I had just appeared in the zoo. A bird was looking at me so angrily I wanted to go back home. Mum asked what the matter was, for she noticed nothing wrong with the bird. Maybe he was in a bad mood. Maybe he'd had a bad day, or something had happened to his birdie friend. A birdie friend! She was a birdie indeed! And not just a birdie, but even a smarty! Another one looking at me angrily! Actually, that is the reason why I don't like animals.

Anyway... Who's that man looking at me? He's so nice, and... handsome! A lifeguard. Yes, he is. Sitting in the observation tower. Big round brown eyes, muscles all over his body, the sun having tanned his skin. A Greek god, not a man!

I swam a little bit and got back to shore. Our deck chair was placed near that lifeguard, so he was literally staring at me while I was sitting there.

It seemed like I fell in love.

I thought: «Is he married..?»

I hoped he wasn't.

3.

26 July 1972

Agadir, Morocco

And so, we went to the beach every day. Four days passed. No, not four. Maybe five. Or six. I don't remember.

I noticed that I began to feel shy when coming up to this man. I started to avoid him. And he looked so surprised when I did that. I think he even was about to laugh at me!

How unfair. No man can laugh at me. Just because I'm a good person. I'm not a bad girl. I'm not that kind of girl either.

So, I showed him my tongue. Let him know I'm a good one. Now, he literally laughed at me. Mum asked what the matter was. I explained that this man was too cheeky with me and that he'd been laughing at me all the time. But she said I had an inferiority complex.

27 July 1972

Agadir, Morocco

I didn't sleep for the whole night. Thinking about this man. Taking into account that Mum and me were in ONE room (we didn't have that much money for TWO ones), she was angry at my rolling over in my bed for the whole night. At 6 a. m., she asked what had happened. I answered nothing. When she tried to fall asleep for the second time, I started rolling over again.

In the morning, I looked in the mirror. How horrible! Pouches under my eyes and pale skin. As if I'd been ill.

Of course, I didn't want to go to the beach with looks like that. So, Mum asked what'd happened. I answered nothing. She suspected that something was wrong with me, but I didn't want to tell her what the matter really was.

So, I began to cry. Mum started to worry about me. And she also started to keep an eye on me. It seemed like she guessed the reasons of my behaviour perfectly.

So, she said she wouldn't let me out without herself. Although I'm already an adult.

Well, I understand her really well. She loves me and meant only well to me. But she'd laugh at me if I told her the truth!

Yes. I wanted to see him. That man. The lifeguard. I wanted him to marry me. I wanted him to live with me for the rest of my life and take care of me. I wanted him to call me the best girl ever. The most beautiful girl ever.

I wanted him to look at me for all the time.

Is there anything bad in these wishes? No, I think there isn't. People around me may think (and they actually do!) there is. But what..?

I started to make up an escape plan.

4.

28 July 1972

Agadir, Morocco

In fact, I like going outside. Especially when it's sunny. The same here, in Agadir. The only exception is that I couldn't go outside our hotel: the evil locals would finish me off because I was a white person and because I wore open clothes: my head, hands and legs were uncovered. And they despise such people. But maybe they just didn't like me..?

So, that day, I decided to run away for an hour. Just. For. One. Hour. To. See. Him.

I hoped Mum didn't see me get out of the window. Our room was on the ground floor, so it didn't cost me much effort. She was in the shower at the time.

I put on my swimming suit and escaped, looking back. Fortunately, there was nobody around. I strolled towards the beach.

And there he was – this man, looking at the sea! How romantic!

I decided to have a swim. I didn't want to COME UP to him anyway. I just wished to SEE him. Well, it's rather impolite to approach the man first. It's him that must take the initiative, isn't it?

And he didn't even look at me! Or, he did, but he didn't let me know that. I think he just despised me too. Then, why ignore me if he didn't?

I swam up to the buoys and back. Then, I decided to have one more swim. Why not? Mum still hadn't noticed my absence and didn't come here to call for me. Would she be angry with me if she found out the reason of all that? A hundred percent she would. Zero percent she wouldn't.

Suddenly, I felt bad. What was up with me? No, I didn't eat anything expired. I just couldn't move.

I tried to swim back to the shore. Though I couldn't. I'd got quite far away from the beach. Right up to the buoys.

I was about to faint. Then, I started to drown.

And then... Only darkness.

5.

«Where am I? I don't understand anything!» These were my first thoughts when I came to my senses. What was happening around me?..

«Hey, are you all right?» a man's voice asked.

I opened my eyes. It seemed like I was about to die today. I raised myself upon my elbow. Actually, I wasn't all right, but still, I wasn't dead either. So let him think I was all right.

«Yes, I am. And you?»

«Of course, I am too.»

He had saved my life! Oh, my saviour!

I asked, «Why so?»

He looked at me as if I'd been crazy. Though I wasn't. He didn't say anything.

Then, I said, «And why are you asking? Let's say it's my own business!»

«Err... Do you run a business?»

He seemed to be deaf! And I seemed to be crazy...

«What business do you mean? I said, it's up to me to decide if I'm all right or not!»

He chuckled.

«Of course, it is. And may I know your name?»

I answered nothing. I didn't want him to know my name. He'd tell Mum I was here.

«I won't tell you.»

«Why? You're so beautiful! And I definitely must know your name.»

I blushed. Never in my life did anyone tell me I was beautiful.

He took my hand. I was about to melt with joy. Or with happiness.

«Hey! What're you doing?» I pulled my hand out of his.

«Sorry. I didn't want to. I've just... I've just fallen in love.»

«With whom?»

«With you.»

I didn't expect him to say that. So, I blushed even more.

«Why are you saying this? We don't even know each other!»

«And what? I fell in love just when I saw you!»

«You mustn't have to. I'm a usual girl. And I guess nobody's perfect. Me neither. I have lots of issues. So there's no reason to fall in love with me.»

«Why?»

He looked at me as if I'd been drunk. Though I wasn't.

«Because I'm English. And you're Arabic. We live in different worlds. We have different religions. And your parents wouldn't accept me.»

«We'll see that! I bet they would!»

Indeed, would they?

«I'll introduce you to them, and they'll love you when they first see you!»

«Really? I don't believe that!

«Let's come with me!»

Strangely enough, he stepped back and stood like this for a minute or two. I didn't know what he was thinking about. But I didn't want to go to his home. First, Mum would be worried about me. And second, his family would be worried about him! Because if he had met a girl like me, he would have been considered a complete idiot! And, well, third, I want to stay alive for some more time!

«I'm afraid I won't. Mum's waiting for me.»

«Okay. And what if I'll tell her how I was saving you from death?» he chuckled.

I startled. He had no right to tell this to my Mum! Or I'd choke him with my own hands!

«No, you won't. You'd better tell it to me.»

He squinted.

«Well, then, maybe you will tell me your name? My name's Mohammed, little girl.»

«I'm not little! I'm already nineteen!»

Who did he think he was? Not a Prime-Minister for sure. To talk to me like that!

«And you have no right to talk to me like that! I won't tell you my name! No way!»

«But that'll be unfair, don't you think?»

He smiled.

And I got confused. Indeed, would that be fair?

«Okay. You win. My name's Janet.»

«Oh, nice! What a beautiful name! Like you yourself.»

I blushed again.

«Why do you think I'm beautiful?»

«Because I fell in love with you when I first saw you. You're my queen! So, do you agree to be my queen?»

I laughed.

«I'll think about that. But I also think it's high time for me to go home. Mum must've been waiting for me for a long time.»

«I think she isn't worried. Our beach can be seen from the hotel windows.»

«Your English is so perfect! Have you studied it somewhere?»

Indeed, had he..?

«I studied only at college, here in Morocco. Not in Agadir. I went to the capital, Rabat. But I think it's all right for me. English is good.»

«Yeah, I agree. But maybe I'll go.»

«Okay. See you.»

My God! I didn't know what to think. Everything happened so quickly! And he'd fallen in love with me so quickly! I couldn't believe that! Turns out men can fall in love as soon as they see you for the first time!!! I was shocked!

I also wondered how a BOY (or already a MAN) could have spoken to me! Never in my life had boys even talked to me!

And never in my life had boys fallen in love with me!

I was so overwhelmed!

But... what should I tell Mum? She would be angry with me for sure.

6.

«Where were you, Janet?» Mum asked angrily when I just crossed the threshold of our room. «Though I know everything! So, don't even try to hide anything from me!»

I was taken aback.

«But... Mummy, I didn't do anything that could harm me!»

«Indeed?» my mother looked snake-headed. «While you were coming to yourself, I was there too! Helping this man save you, my foolish daughter!»

«But... I didn't want to...»

«Listen to me: why did you go there at all?»

«I don't know. Maybe I was sleeping or something...»

«Don't hand me any more of that jive!

«I don't!»

«You do! Listen to me, Janet: do you love him? I know everything!»

How can Mum know everything? Wow! I was really surprised! Mum's a real superwoman! I can't stop admiring her!

«Yes, Ma. I love him very much. So much I'd give all my life to him. For him to be happy.»

«But, my darling, do you know it's me who ran there first when you were drowning?»

«You did?»

«Yes, me! Not him!

«Then where was he?»

«He ran when I shouted that you had been drowning! I don't know how to save lives!»

«So, then, he pulled me out?»

«Yes! Only then, did he pull you out of the water!»

«Err... Did he go away when I saw swimming?»

«I don't know. Maybe he was in the shower. I don't know. Don't ask me that.»

«O-o-okay. I won't.»

«Janet, I want to warn you: he's not for you. He's not your type. I can see that clearly.»

«But, Ma, why do you think so?»

«I'm afraid he isn't taking much interest in you. Maybe he doesn't even need you.»

«But, Mum, I love him!»

«I know that, my dear. But, please, be careful.»

I couldn't understand anything.

«What do you mean to say, Ma?»

«Just don't come up to him so often. You better go to the beach with me, not alone, when I'm in the shower. My darling, I'm so worried about you! I know what you feel, but it's my duty to take care of you, even if you're already nineteen.»

«But he told me he loves me!»

«Janet, Arabic men always say thing like that. So, it's not much of a rarity for tourists to hear something like «I love you', or «Be my love', or «Be my wife'. And then, it turns out he already has a wife, and maybe, not one! So, please, I beg you: be careful. You might be disappointed in your «love' in the future. Although I can understand how you feel now.»

I couldn't help starting to cry. Mum approached me and hugged me.

«My dear Janet, you're my only child, and I don't want to lose you. When you were drowning, I thought it was the end of the line! Imagine my feelings! I'm a mother,» she said, sobbing. «I'm your mother! And imagine what a mother feels when she loses her child! What's more, her only child!»

I could understand her now.

But still, I had a right to my happiness as well. I told this to Mum.

«My dear, you'll surely find your special someone. But not here. Look, they're all poor people. They have nothing but their huts...»

«But he must have a big house!» I interrupted.

«How could you know? He must've told you a lie!»

Actually, he didn't say anything about his house.

Though bewildered, I carried it off very well. I had to win my case anyway!

It was late, so I couldn't go and say good night to Mohammed.

«So, Janet, please, don't take him so seriously if you still happen to talk to him. Okay?»

I needed to think about that. I had a whole night ahead of me.

«Okay,» I said.

«So, come and have a calming shower. By the way, how come you started to drown aground? The sea's shallow here.»

«I felt bad, Ma. I'm sorry.»

«My God! What's happened to you? And how do you feel now?»

«Thanks, I'm better now.»

«I must've looked after you all the time! Promise me you won't go anywhere without me! Remember – you've got asthma! Have you forgotten about that?»

«No, Ma.»

«Okay. You crazy fool!»

7

29 July 1972

Agadir, Morocco

I couldn't sleep at night again. What an insane holiday! Seemed like an insane asylum! Oh, my God!

Now, I had no right to come up to Mohammed. Or, well, I did, but not in front of Mum. I need an escape plan. Though she was right to a certain extent. Yes, I had to be careful, especially if I'd got such a disease. But my Mohammed! I loved him very much!

We both needed a place to meet in. Not the beach. The hotel hall. Right. A great place, actually.

I started thinking whom to send for him. The cook! Because it had to be the one Mum didn't hate. Mum liked the cook. «A good guy,» she said.

The cook suited very well for the business. He wouldn't tell Mum about all those things I would talk to Mohammed. And, of course, he wouldn't tell Mum that Mohammed and me were seeing each other in the hall!

30 July 1972

Agadir, Morocco

The next day, when we were having breakfast, I came up to Rashid (that was the cook's name) and told him I wanted to see Mohammed at hall in the evening due to my situation. Mum didn't notice anything, so it was all right for me to talk to Rashid. She was looking at what she had in her plate at the time.

From now on, we went to the beach only in the evening, when it was someone else's shift, not Mohammed's. And in the afternoon, we were enjoying the sun in the swimming pool.

I knew Mum was taking care of me, so I wasn't against. She loved me, so I didn't blame her for her actions in any way.

So, I spoke to Rashid. He promised to tell Mohammed that we would be meeting in the hall every evening, before I went home, back to England.

I told him I'd be waiting for Mohammed in the hall. As for Mum, I told her I would love to read a book in the hall. There were some indeed. In English, of course. I don't understand any other language. Maybe I'm nuts. I should've learnt one.

Mohammed agreed. He was free in the evening anyway. I was looking forward for the first meeting in the hall. In fact, it was our second tete-a-tete conversation.

Mum agreed to let me go to the hall. I told her I felt lonely, so a book in English would do no harm.

8.

I put on my best dress. Although it wasn't a dress but a T-shirt and breeches. Okay, let it be the best T-shirt and breeches. Well, I didn't have another pair of breeches.

I was afraid. To be honest. What if Mum would notice me and him? That'd be a horror! She wouldn't forgive me!

All the hour before our meeting, I was behaving like a stupid one. I was jumping around the room, singing a crazy song (I don't remember how it's called) and shouting something like «Ya-a-a-ya-a-a-a!» or «Cock-a-doodle-doo!» Mum asked what the matter was with me and why I was singing and shouting all that jazz. I answered that I'd just had a sleepless night. Mum told me I would better take a sleeping pill every night. But it's bad for our health!

Finally, the hour was struck. I went downstairs (though there were only five stairs that separated our floor from the hall!).

I sat. Nobody. Even the receptionist had left somewhere.

I waited for some time. Nobody.

I thought, «And if Rashid and Mohammed have just decided to play a trick on me? That's be the last thing for me to do to anyone!»

Perhaps, they were even laughing at me. Maybe, saying something like, «Well, this stupid fool has fallen in love with you, Mohammed. How bad of her! She doesn't even know the rules of conduct and etiquette in our country!»

But... how could I know them? I wasn't even taught them on arriving to this country! The travel agent should have taught Mum and me some simple rules! But they hadn't! They didn't even care about how we would do in this or that situation, or what should we say when someone unknown approached us. They didn't even care!

I heard some steps. It was not him, though.

I waited for some more time.

And here he came. He was wearing a T-shirt as well. And jeans, not breeches.

«Hello,» he said. «You wanted to see me, right?»

«Hey! Weren't you willing to see me?»

«I? Of course,» he smiled.

I smiled too.

«But... You're so magnificent I can't find words to describe you.»

«Oh, thank you very much!»

«Don't speak!» he interrupted. «Just listen to our hearts beating!»

I was startled. I said nothing.

«Ha-ha, don't worry! These were the words for you!»

«Thank you!» I blushed.

«So, how's your life? What did you do today?»

«Well, nothing special. What about you?»

«Working, as usual.»

Then, he looked straight into my eyes! Oh my God, how beautiful his eyes were! The brown iris with a big black sphere inside. My God, how I admire him!

He took my hand.

Fortunately, there was no one in the hall at the time.

«I love you,» he said, smiling.

«Mohammed, thank you very much for the confession! I love you too! I was too shy to tell you about that! I was afraid you'd laugh at me!»

«Hmm, laugh at what?»

«At my words. And at me.»

«My dear... err... Janet, I will never laugh at you. You should know that.»

«Thank you very much! Let's talk about something!»

«Let's talk,» he said. «And about what?»

«About anything you like.»

«Okay. You choose.»

«So, o-o-okay,» I muttered. «Let's talk about books.»

«Books?» he was surprised.

«Yes!»

«All right, then.»

I said, «I wonder what books you read. You must be so well-read! So, do you read any philosophical books devoted to everyday problems?»

«Oh, well, I've read... maybe, one or two books when I was young.»

«And what about now?»

«Now I don't read any.»

«Oh, why?» I asked, my eyes wide opened.

«Because I'm not interested in reading. And I don't have time for that because I work all the time.»

«I can see now. You must be very tired?»

«Not that much, but still...»

«I understand you very well. I myself am exhausted.»

«Why?»

«Because I study at university. And I need rest.»

«Rest from what?»

«From my studies.»

«But it's amazing that you study at university!»

«Yes, but...»

«But what?»

«You need to work hard to get good marks.»

«And who doesn't? Who doesn't need to work hard nowadays?» he chuckled.

«Yes, you're right. Now, everyone must work hard.»

«But look at this from the other side. You... you are the reason why I open my eyes and why I'm happy!»

«Oh, Mohammed, you're saying such beautiful words!» I laughed.

«And I'm happy I make you laugh. I'm happy that I make YOU happy.»

He smiled. It seemed like I was now on the top of the world!

Then, we both fell silent. And so we sat until I had to go home. For how long had I been staying in the hall..?

«My Mohammed, I must go now. Mum's waiting for me. And if she suspects something, I don't know how we will see each other then...»

«No problem. So, tomorrow – here, at the same time?»

«Right! That'd be great!» I exclaimed.

«My love! I can't wait for the moment I see you again!»

I ran up to my room. When I entered, the room, Mum said:

«Well, Janet, I hope you have found something useful for you. How did you spend your time there?»

Strangely enough, her voice was sincere enough. It meant she hadn't noticed anything.

«Well, Ma, I've found some book, but not much of interest.»

«I see.»

«But, maybe. It's better than nothing.»

«Of course, it is! And don't get upset about Mohammed! You'll soon forget him.»

«True!»

I pretended to be calm. I didn't want Mum to know anyway.

«Okay, Ma. I promise!»

«My little Janet! Come to me and let me hug you!»

I approached my mother and hugged her. I loved her. She's my only parent.

Dad left us when I was six. Mum and him divorced because of some property issues. I don't know what exactly it was. Fortunately enough, I wasn't the reason.

My best friend, Emma, has only her Mum too. And guess what – her father left them because of the daughter! He said he didn't want Emma to be born. That's awful! Emma's a wonderful person. And I don't want her to suffer. I'd be her best friend and dad at the same time because she doesn't deserve a single-parent family. She's good enough to grow up in a two-parent one.

9.

31 July 1972

Agadir, Morocco

The next day was very special for me. I would see Mohammed again!

Although I didn't want to cheat Mum, I needed to see him every day. So, my way was the best one. Nobody would suffer.

In the evening, when it was time for me to go down to the hall, I told Mum I'd find a few more books there. She agreed. She said, «A girl mustn't be bored. Especially on holiday.» Marvellous words.

I was waiting for Mohammed, as the day before. (Although it was already evening, so I'd say «the evening before»).

«Hello,» he said when he came.

«Hello,» I answered.

«How're you?»

«I'm fine, thanks for asking! What about you?»

«Me as well,» he said, smiling and taking my hand. «Where is the best place I want to stay? Between your arms!»

I laughed. Such nice compliments he was saying! I was happy. Really happy.

«My love! How will I live without you?» I said, with sadness in my eyes.

«My dear! But you can come here whenever you want!»

«Yes, that's true! Although... I don't have much money for the tickets here. Maybe...»

«Maybe what?»

«Maybe you would buy them, for me to come here?»

«But, my love, I don't have that much money either. All I earn I spend on food. I'm sorry, my dear Janet!»

«Well, I don't know... It seems like you just don't want for me to come here...» I was confused. Very confused. I didn't know how much money I would need to come here every weekend! And I did want to come to Mohammed every weekend. I only wanted to be with him, and that's it.

«Mohammed, let's be honest. I have no money to come to you, so it's you that I want to buy the tickets for me.»

Suddenly, he said:

«Okay. If you don't want to come here, it's up to you. I'm not making you to.»

I was struck dumb. So, it meant he didn't care? That just couldn't be!!!

«Wait! I thought you're a man!»

«My love,» he said, taking my hand, «I'm a man. But not a bank.»

He hesitated.

«But, my beautiful woman, how I want to hug you! I'll be waiting for you, my queen! You draw me like a magnet!»

With these words, he hugged me.

Well, maybe, he didn't have money. But he'd be waiting for me anyway! It was so nice!

«Okay,» I said. «I'll come to you as soon as I save a little!»

«Don't worry, my love! I'm always here for you!»

«But there's a problem.»

«Which one, dear?»

«My Mum won't let me come here to you.»

«But can you tell her I'm a good guy?»

«I've been telling her this for million-billion times. And I'll go on with that. But she won't listen to me.»

He let me out and said:

«Looking into your eyes and thinking, «You're me girl, the best girl, and there aren't any other girls in my life'.»

I calmed down.

«Yes, maybe you're right. I'm really sorry for what I've just said.»

«Janet, you don't have to apologise.»

«Indeed? So, no hard feelings?»

«No hard feelings,» he smiled.

High time I went home. It was already very late. Our conversation took us two hours! Quite a lot of time.

«So,» I said, «see you tomorrow! Mum's waiting for me!»

«See you!» he smiled. «Good night, my dear!»

But he didn't go at once. I stood up and was about to leave. But suddenly, he came up to me, took my arm and drew me close to himself. And then... then, he kissed me!

He had been kissing me for about one minute. It was the first kiss in my life. I wouldn't forget it. Yes, I'd never ever forget it.

It seemed like I was going to have a sleepless night again, thinking about what'd just happened.

His lips were warm enough.

When he let me out, he said:

«I'm the king, and you're my queen!»

What nice words!

«So, Janet, I must go now. My...» there, he stuttered, and then said, «my family's waiting for me too. You know, my mother and my father. They both need care.»

«I understand you very well, Mohammed. So, good night!»

When I got up to my room, Mum said:

«Janet, what's up with you? You look like having drunk some bad stuff in the bar!»

«No, Ma, just being exhausted.»

«I didn't know one can be exhausted while on holiday!» she answered.

«Yes, they can,» I replied.

«Okay. I tired too. Good night, Janet! And don't forget to lock the toilet door when you're finished. You can't sleep very well with that vent making noise!»

«Sure, Ma.»

When Mum fell asleep, I began thinking again.

First of all, why did he kiss me? Second, why didn't he care about Mum's being against our meetings? Well, maybe he just thought when, for example, we married one another, he wouldn't see her? Maybe. Sometimes, they live away from parents as well.

And third. I absolutely had to buy the tickets to Morocco to come to him myself. No other way.

I needed to earn money somehow. Somewhere.

Oh, how I want to live and be served like a real king! I want to visit someone and have a hundred cakes and a thousand cups of tea! By, the way, it's not food that matters, it's the hosts' warmth that has a real meaning.

I often wonder why only famous people – such as actors or singers – are welcomed heartily and treated like that. I wish I were one of them. But no! I must study – and now work too, for me to get here every weekend! Study, and study, and study. Work, and work, and work. What's it all for..? So unfair it is! Those actors haven't got any education, but still, they're so rich and prosperous! They're respected. And, of course, they'll laugh me off if they just see me!

Well, I don't understand one thing. It seems like I must even work for them. Work and live, live and work. How crazy!

10.

1 August 1972

Agadir, Morocco

My God! I had only a week left to stay here! It was awful! I wouldn't see Mohammed any more after I left Agadir!

Stop, stop! No panic! I was going to find a way to earn money to come here again anyway!

Mum got tanned very well. She was sunbathing by the pool in the afternoon, when I was with her, and in the evening on the beach, when I was home (getting ready for meeting Mohammed in the hall).

This time, I put on another T-shirt. It suited me too. A nice one. I thought we were going to have a beautiful date.

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