

## 15 Chilly Christmas

I smooth, nothing did.

Just sat and waited for the call of Edmondson.

Jean-Philippe Toussaint [59]

David From constantly blowing my nose, sitting in a leather swivel chair. In the evening papers wrote that the city is starting a flu epidemic caused by the virus ONE, and that all the citizens for prevention should observe good personal hygiene, be sure to sleep, eat a healthy diet and to regularly ventilate the room. I opened the window and perched itself nearby, greedily breathing the fresh air and trying to get comfortable.

- I often dream of a room, and in it, a sunflower in a pot. The flower fades, the petals fall off and the seeds scatter around and give life to new sunflowers. It's awful. And I see a cat that tries to gobble up the sunflower. But, jumping, cat falls out window and disappears. I'm watching everything happening in the room from the side and heart is racing. And then I dream about a box. Open it, and there's another one, and then another, and so as long as my hand remains a tiny, tiny box, which suddenly disappears, but instead in my hand - kind of a thick book. And like I need to send it to someone, but no name, no address I can't remember.

David complacently looked at me.

- You are terribly afraid that your body will change, and the book will not work. Perhaps it is the fear of pregnancy or anxiety for the fate of the new novel. You desire to make dreams come true, but in your way all the time there are obstacles. You know what I mean? The whole point of the imaginary cell in which you yourself planted. In the words of Thomas Morton [60]: "the True pleasure in life - to escape from the prison you've built for themselves with their own hands". Let's talk about your personal life.

Here it's not so bad, but somehow vague.

- What do you care?

- Inner emptiness that I can't get rid of it. And at the same time, my heart is full of love, which finds no exit. My lover can give me sexual satisfaction, and even worse, protection and security. He smokes drugs and lives in a fictional world. Now he took the kitten and went South, leaving me alone. And I think that at any moment he could leave me. Forever. And at the same time, I have no sentimental feelings for a married man to be physical with which have the satisfaction. This relationship is just physical contact, one of the manifestations of our physical existence and simultaneously a barrier, not allowing us to get closer spiritually.

- The way to love is through fear of being alone, - said David.

- I think, and ninety-nine point nine percent of men don't want to have anything to do with women who can think. I even sometimes remember my dreams and record them.

- That's why they say that life is complicated. Not everyone can comprehend its meaning and the essence of the event. You already know what to do. Your mind can overcome despair. Mediocrity is not for you, and you are very attractive by nature.

His words were reassuring, but I wasn't sure whether he was speaking sincerely or simply

comforting all patients. Since then, he became my therapist, we rarely ate together, played tennis or went dancing – I didn't want to be looked at under a magnifying glass.

Sunlight poured into the window, snatching up a ray of dust particles, which are like fragments of thoughts darted in space. I was sitting on the sofa with his head in his hands, and pondered if I understand myself as a woman. Am I really attractive? Maybe I'm being too hypocritical, arrogant and petty? My life's problems multiplied indefinitely, and, perhaps, not enough of a lifetime to deal with them.

Christmas. All day no one called. The skies turned gray, but there was no snow. For a long time in Shanghai the snow is not even when it should be. I spent the whole day watching movies and smoked a half a pack of "Mild seven". Pining, called Tian-Tian, but no one answered. Began to dial the number of the Mark, but changed his mind in time. Today I needed a man to talk to.

I roamed around the room, not finding a place for anxiety. Finally decided to leave the apartment, not knowing where the fortune was, and the purse was money, and makeup. I decided: what's going to happen tonight, it will happen.

I caught a taxi.

- Where to, miss? - asked the driver.

- Just go somewhere.

From the window I could see crowds of people scurrying about in a festive, joyful bustle. Christmas – a holiday that is alien to Chinese culture. But for young people it is a good reason to have a good time. Streams of couples poured into the restaurants and shops and spilled out, carrying huge bags, filled to the brim with purchases with sales. Another night sparkled rollicking fun.

The taxi driver kept trying to make conversation, but I didn't react. On the radio guitar solo, and then buzzed the voice of the DJ, bubnovskogo about some musical group who have made a breakthrough in the competition of young voices in Beijing. And unexpectedly familiar name has popped up – PU young.

A few years ago, while working at the magazine, I took him and members of his group interview. After this we hand in hand went out for a walk and was on Tiananmen square. He stopped at the junction and said he wanted to give me the idea that some kind of living sculpture. Then unzipped his fly and let the fountain in the sky. Then he took me by both cheeks and kissed him on the lips. He intrigued me, but I was afraid that if I do love him, he will want to urinate directly on my body or require something even more extravagant. We remained friends and saw each other very rarely.

In the Studio voice of the young PU. First he answered some helpless and ridiculous questions, a DJ, and then began to take calls from listeners. "Tell me, China has its own rock and roll?" asked one girl. Some guy asked, are women the source of inspiration in his work. PU Yun several times solidly cleared his throat, and then a sonorous, sexy voice began to hang noodles on the ears of these youngsters.

- Wait a minute - asked I the driver.

Got out of the taxi, went to a phone booth on the sidewalk and put it in automatic telephone card. Phoned quickly.

- Ni Hao, PU Yun? I said cheerfully. Is it Nicki, He greeted happily, but somewhat exaggerated:

Hey! Merry Christmas! – Contrary to expectation, he did not call me, baobei – "baby", remembering that was live. – Why don't you come to Beijing tonight? – he asked in a carefree voice. We have engaged for one performance at the bar, busy bee, and then all night partying.

– OK, Rojestvensky night will arrive in Beijing to listen to your music.

I hung up, nervously walked here and there around the booth and went to a taxi. Diving into the interior, told the driver:

– Drive to the airport, and the sooner, the better!

In the beginning of the sixth was just the flight to Beijing. By purchasing a ticket, I went to the cafe next to the waiting room and drank a Cup of coffee. Can't say I was pleased or happy, but not irritated and not embarrassed. At least this time I had a goal, I had something to do – you need to fly to Beijing for a concert of rock-n-roll and to stretch this Christmas night without a lover and without inspiration.

The plane took off and landed right on schedule. Every time on Board fills me with a panicky feeling that the plane will crash to the ground, because this big, heavy metal machines simply nothing to do in the air. But I still like to fly.

I went to dinner alone and be refreshed, since neither didn't eat on the plane. In Beijing the restaurants a little more expensive than in Shanghai, but the food there is good. At me the whole time staring some white men sitting at the next table. This typically European shameless scrutiny could encourage a single woman from Shanghai, who arrived in Beijing on Christmas. At least it convinced of their own attractiveness.

At the bar, busy bee, a favorite hangout of the rockers, forever crowding hairy and shaven musicians with old, stale faces, but the elastic ass in tight pants. They compete to see who will plays the guitar, and arguing about what more burn the girls. All gurobi in this place is huge busts, like the Hollywood starlets. This is one of the essential attributes (along with money, power, talent, attractive appearance and other), involving the regulars of the music scene

The music is just stunned, the nose hit the smell of tobacco, booze and good spirits. At the end of black, like a tunnel, the passage I noticed PU yuna. He smoked and strung on a thread of silver beads.

I walked over and patted him on the shoulder. He lifted his head, smiled with all his teeth, gave what was holding beside him a woman and forcefully hugged me.

– So you actually flew? Crazy sanchika! How do you do? – He stared at me. I think haggard. And who you brought this up? Just tell me and I'll show him. A bad attitude to a pretty woman is not a mistake, it is a crime.

Beijingers are famous for the fact that I can pile up a lot of passionate nonsense, but instantly forget everything I said, as soon as I utter the last word. And all around are missing their chatter on deaf ears. But I like this kind of compliments, hot as flame, cold as ice cream.

Juicy we kissed each other, then he waved his hand in the side sitting next to a woman and introduced her:

– My girlfriend Lucy, photographer. – And turning to Lucy And Coco from Shanghai. She graduated from Fudan and is now writing a novel.

We shook hands. Lucy strung on a thread remnants of silver beads. PU Yun took her bracelet and put it on your wrist.

- It broke over dinner, he explained. Prigladit hair back, a gesture called the waiter.

- How about a beer?

"Thank you," I nodded.

On the stage some people were busy with the wires. It seems that the concert was about to begin.

- I went to your apartment, but found nobody. Can I sleep over? I asked PU yuna.

- Uh, no, no sleep. Party until the morning! I'll introduce you to great men.

- Not interested, ' I replied, wincing.

His girlfriend pretended not to hear our conversation. Under falling strands of hair from her eyes without any expression looked somewhere in the void. She had a nice nose, long, shiny hair and breast. The long skirt was sewn from yellow-green linen fabric with a thread of exotic color, like water in the Nile.

Into the bar came a man of very remarkable appearance. When a heart skip a beat from the inevitable feeling of love and fear to be rejected. The skin was surprisingly smooth, slender body, and shiny hair slicked up and stuck out like wild grass. Eyes with a languid languishing. Looking at someone, he narrowed his eyes and his eyes became similar to a Fox. Aquiline facial features gave the whole look a Bohemian look. A little dissonance in his tidy comely appearance, made rounded goatee that made him look like a cruel lingley.

Apparently, he knew yuna PU and Lucy and came over to say Hello. PU Yun introduced us to each other. Handsome name is Drifter, he was the most famous stylist in Beijing and throughout China. Having green card of the United States, he flew around the world in pursuit of new trends, inspiration and beauty. Any woman in Chinese show business would be extremely happy, having caught his own image consultants.

We had a chat. He was smiling, eyes sparkling like drops of dew on the flower of a peach tree. For some reason I was embarrassed and did not dare to look too often in his direction, lest he think I was flirting. Tonight I certainly was not love of adventure. Women who have in the past a lot of lovers now a dime a dozen. When they are over thirty, their face says that they are ready for everything. "It is a pity that men see in me a writer, and a woman," thought I, involuntarily falling into self-deception.

The band came on stage. Electronic guitar roared like a wild beast in the jungle, and people in the diverse crowd instantly came to life, rocking back and forth, as if electrified, and so energetically shaking his head, that it seemed those here-here will come off. I joined in the midst of the mob, and swayed in unison with her happy in mindless ecstasy. Got free and entirely devoted to rousing music.

The face shone with a blue, strangers shamelessly flirted in the middle of a hot buzz. The hall was filled with a shrill, rattling sounds. It seemed a little more and they will strike each other in the air and flogged the fountain of sparks, scorching all around.

- I TA-a-AK happy - hysterically howling hysterically sang the guy on the stage.

Flyer stood and smiled and patted me on the ass. The sight of this beautiful bisexual with a distinctive makeup forever grinning face was unbearable to me. His eyebrows, cheeks and sideburns were richly powdered. He slept with both men and women, and, according to him, his girlfriend was terribly jealous of the boys. He is hopelessly mired in a web of complicated sexual relationships and could not define their orientation.

- In our country, millions of peasants barely make ends meet. So we can assume that you are lucky, ' I said to him.

He replied that he thinks I'm smart and mysterious. It captivated my calm face and proper buttoned-up blouse, like a well-bred lady.

I have several times sent him to the Mat, and said nothing more. But inside thought it pretty enough to drive me crazy. I never liked to swear.

- You have the cutest little ass! - he shouted in my ear. The music was too loud.

In the morning our taxi was trying to climb on the Beijing streets like the vast medieval forest. In the sky there was no moon, but the rooftops were covered with frost.

By three o'clock we reached the house of one of the members of the rock-and-roll brotherhood. It was a room of gigantic proportions. Here hosted American, Loma once known gurobi, but those who repent of their sins and are married to a drummer. The drummer built a small greenhouse, in which, according to rumors, used to grow marijuana. The whole company drank together, sang, played Mahjong and computer games, and mumbled something in a love stupor.

At four in the morning some of the guests were making love in a Jacuzzi, some went to sleep like a log, others were making out on the sofa. The rest decided to go to the restaurant "Xinjiang" eat noodles to manual cooking. I grabbed the sleeve PU yuna, afraid to get lost in the night Beijing. Getting lost in the city at this hour would be not just bad, but awful on the street the icy night wind seemed to cut the skin with a sharp razor.

Flyer somewhere evaporated. Among those who ate homemade noodles at "Xinjiang", it was gone. I have found, at least a pair of explanations: one is that someone picked up, and the other that he picked up. Who knows? He was either a great hunter or prey. Fortunately, I didn't give him the phone number. Otherwise now would feel unhappy and abandoned. Coco in the midst of the Christmas creature, more than ever, prone to melancholy and pathos.

At half past five I took some sleeping pills and lay down on the sofa at home in PU yuna. Of the stereos was flowing soothing music of Schubert. All was quiet, except the roar of the random truck on the highway. Could not manage to sleep. Sleep has eluded me light-winged shadow, leaving a helpless shell of a body and leaving it at the mercy of ruthless waking consciousness. Lead grey haze permeated my whole being, the body was filled with weight, but was surprisingly easy. The illusion of a transition to another world was even pleasant: I stood on the edge between dream and reality, life and death, and only by the fact that I was lying with open eyes, saw the ceiling and the surrounding darkness, I knew that was still alive.

I finally picked up the phone, leaned against the back of the sofa and called Tian-Tian. His voice was very sleepy.

- Who am I? I asked him.

- You Coco... I called you but you weren't home, ' he said quietly, without a shade of reproach, as if

he was sure, that I can't do wrong.

- I in Beijing, I said, and clenched her heart inexplicably tired wave of tenderness. At that moment I had no idea what I was doing here. I was distraught, homeless heart is tired of vain impulses, hopeless wanderings without rest and peace. Life was empty, only the flights from one place to another, only insomnia night after night. No music, no booze, no sex was not able to save me. I lay in the dark womb of the night like a living corpse, awake, and prayed about himself: "Lord, give my husband good blind person, because all I see is darkness." I started to sob.

- Do not cry, Coco. I this is not myself. What happened? - alarmed Tian-Tian. He still woke up sleepy from the heavy slumber into which was immersed each night, taking sleeping pills (like me).

- Nothing special. My friend was a success. I'm so excited I can't sleep... and die with open eyes... No strength to return to Shanghai, and you there either. I miss you... When can we meet again?

- Come to my South. It's great... And your novel? he asked.

At the mention of the novel I stopped. I already knew that going back to Shanghai and continue to write. Wanted Tian-Tian, so he liked me. And I had no other choice. Otherwise I'll lose the love of too many people, including my own.

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