

Girl in cold

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In a place too cold for civilization to exist, there is a house. A wooden house in the middle of nowhere, virgin to the dirty copper cables. In front of its door, a girl standing with a bucket in her hand looking deathly the horizon. As if life has left her, she is standing there motionless. Tears are coming out of her eyes, they freeze on her face forming ice stalagmites in their way down.

“I have to go for water to the well,” she thinks. “I have to go for firewood to the forest.” But she doesn’t move, she stands paralysed in front of the door. “Why?,” she thinks, “Why did I do it? Why? I didn’t want to do it. I am not a bad person...” Her memory travels to the past, can it come back to the present?

When she was a little innocent girl, she played with a cute, nice and small cat. Tom it was called. She used to play with Tom, to caress Tom, to run with Tom, to walk with Tom, to tell her secrets to Tom. . . Tom was her friend, her only friend. “Dad! Why are no more kids in the field?,” she used to ask. “Because no other people here have children sweetheart,” her dad answered patiently. She then returned to Tom and smiled again at the company of her only friend. Tom in happiness purred when she was with him.

Her parents were afraid. . . “All this loneliness can’t be good. Could our daughter be bad?,” they thought, “Can our little sunshine do something terrible?” Little by little, month after month, week after week, day after day, as rust eats away the metal, the fear was eating their hearths. No more in their head was their daughter that innocent little girl that she used to be, she became a potential criminal, a monster waiting to emerge, some weed to be started from the field before it grew too big. . . They had to do something, the nightmare could not become real.

They did something. On a sunny afternoon of some year, they took their daughter. “It will be a surprise, our treasure,” they said to her. “Don’t be afraid, you will be able to play with Tom at night. It will be all right. We only will be a few hours out.” “Have you listened, Tom? Don’t be afraid! Dad and Mum said we’ll be back soon, my friend!,” she told him before entering the car. As the car left, Tom looked how his only friend went away little by little until the car disappeared in the horizon. He meowed sadly.

As the car advanced, a new building emerged in the infinity. An old building,

blackened by the absence of light, rotten by the presence of evil, cracked by the disgrace of their residents. "Dear! We are coming to the jail," her mother said. "We want you to see what happens to the bad people." "I'm afraid!," she replied. "I don't want to enter here! I want to come back to Tom! He must be afraid!," she cried. "We don't want you to become a bad girl," her father said. "That's why we bring you to here. Now, you will see what happens to the bad people and why you should be good." "But I am good!," she protested. "Dad!," she said, "Mum!," she repeated waiting someone to answer, but silence was the only answer. The car continued going.

She closed her eyes, but it was late. When she opened them, they were in the jail. She was tightening the hands of her parents, but they didn't seem to notice the terror in her daughter's heart. They advanced through the hallways, cell after cell she saw each prisoner looking at her with sad almost non-human face. She tried to escape the horror, she started to run. Her parents ran behind her, they lost her. She advanced between that diabolic faces looking at her. She couldn't think, she only could run. The hallway arrived its ends, she couldn't run more, she stopped.

She breathed, she looked straight. A cell was there, a cell with a man inside. He was different from the others, he stayed calmly without pain in his face. His eyes were cold. No warmth came from him, he was a living ice statue. He touched his bold head, he looked at her. She could not stop looking him. Their sights met. Her warm eyes confronted his cold eyes, his cold eyes caught her warm eyes. He woke up, he walked toward her until the bars permitted. His eyes became freezing, but she couldn't look away, she was trapped by him. He smiled, but no happiness came out of his face. As the snake comes out of the basket in front the punji player, her soul came out of her in front of him. As the stealer in front of his spoils, he showed his teeth in a big smile. She fell to the floor, the man sat in his corner again. The parents and the guards arrived; shouting and voices vanished as she closed her eyes.

The nightmare became real. She woke up in the car. Her parents looked at her, but they didn't see their sweetheart. Her smile was erased from her face, her eyes cold, all her happiness absent. . . She seemed dead, but there she was looking quietly the surroundings in the car. Her parents looked each other, they continue the journey towards home. "Tomorrow she will be better," they thought. "It has been a hard day for her." She looked around in sadness for not finding there what she didn't find inside.

They arrived home. Tom happily went to her, but she seemed not happy in the presence of her friend. Her parents left them alone, they had to make the dinner. Tom meowed worried about his friend. She looked him, but this time no warmth came out of her face. She took Tom, she started to caress Tom. Tom meowed happily. She suddenly stopped, she started to squeeze him. Little by little Tom felt the pain in his body, he

meowed in pain. She didn't stop, she continued squeezing him. Tom couldn't scape, he meowed louder and louder. The pain grew, her strength increased. Tom tried to look at her, tried to ask her eyes to stop, but they were cold. Tom meowed as high as he could. It was too late, his body tore apart, his blood covered her. But she had no emotion in her face.

Her parents went out. They are watching the horror. Her daughter covered in her friend's blood, emotionless looking at them. They cried, they screamed. "That is not our daughter," they thought. "What have we done?," they lamented. They looked, they saw, but they could not believe what was in front of their eyes. "It must be a nightmare," they repeated as a broken cassette. They took the car, they left. She was alone. She was there in the middle of nowhere standing with the blood of her friend. She moved, she had to survive.

Her mind comes back to the present. There is no cat, but she sees the cat. There is no meow, but she hears the meow. There is no blood, but she feels its humidity over her dress. "I am sorry Tom!," she shouts. "He forced me," she said. But Tom doesn't go away from her head, he looks at her. He still meows. "Stop torturing me!," she cried, "Please. . . ." Tom looks at her, he has no anger in his eyes. He approaches her, he passes by her leg, he meows and vanishes.

She looks down, sadness comes out of her face. She looks up, a sigh comes out of her mouth. She can now rest in peace. The bucket falls to the floor, a metallic sound breaks the silence in the empty surrounding. She falls to the floor, ice pieces that vanish to dust. The place disappears from the world.

Dedicated to Emmi Arvidsson, without her this story would have never seen the light. She put the inspiration for it in my heart in that dark bar that night of November. I can only hope to be worthy of her.