

Excerpt from the book "ELEVEN NIGHT STORIES"

Then spoke the one who opened the preserves can by the only three-toed hand.

The seventh story

Knighted

- I want to talk about myself and my wife. She is the most kind, honest and decent woman of all that I know. I, as you can see, not a handsome man, so to speak, a cripple. Half - Jew, and even this half for many of you, is a failing. Right? And she ... Yes, that's her picture. The face as you know is a mirror of the soul.

He deftly pulled out his wallet from his inside pocket, by the same single hand with three fingers opened it, gave us a picture of about four to three inches. Men who were listening to him viewed the photo. And he continued:

- I was a tough guy, not timid, and my life was smiling. Although my father is a Jew, but surname Vyshnevets'ky all seemed Polish and even noble. My father and myself, as you can see, are blue-eyed blonde, a little pug. We speak in Russian clean. We were considered Russian, and indeed I thought so. But ...

But the thoughts and moods of peers and adults in relation to the Jews because of our otherness of the Jews I had known. My mother's Russian, from the heartland, with all the popular catchwords proverbs and sayings, songs and ditties.

Therefore, I consider myself a person of planet Earth and all nations I treat with respect, and certain people I respect or contempt for their soul, not the origin. Frankly, the closest to me are Russian people. And not just because of my beloved mother. I am a Russian. A patriot. And proved it in the distant mountains, where was blown up by a mine the day before demobilization. My Fate can be seen.

Long time I was in the hospital: I was also terribly wounded stomach. Not looked for survive ... If it were not caring of parents and sisters in the hospital

not only about the mortal body, but also for my soul, I do not know that it would become: whether to become an alcoholic, or would do away with life. Cripple am I, you know!

My mother was glad that I was alive, and my father, a teacher of history and director of the school, talked to me a lot about life. He advised:

- Go to the historical faculty: the historians have no appliances, check notebooks, and with a pointer and a card can cope with three fingers. The main thing - remember: to be boring is a mortal sin of a teacher.

Our town is far from the regional center, where there is the Pedagogical Institute. There are no places for freshmen in a small dormitory, therefore I took a place in a private apartment.

I studied well. Of course, worried: others can do everything, and I even wash my face with difficulty! Began to train. Secretly, at home. And, as you can see, something achieved. But not once, not once.

For the doctor Venera Umerova, hostess of house where I rented a corner, I maid all kinds of repairs to the house and the yard, walked to bring the water.

And as we started to love.

- Love? How to? Yes, even with the Venus? And no matter how? - grunted Crucian.

- Yeah, like love, because Gaziz, her husband, a test pilot, crashed in the two years before/ Their love was big.

But life takes its toll. I appeared ...

Though I achieved something in training, but missed from my inferiority complex and once ... ashamed to remember now ... decided to commit suicide, and she noticed it, she was trying to calm me down, she tried to dissuade me.

And then it was happened between us ... we became close ... I asked her to marry me. She answered:

- Wait until my little daughters grow up.

Daughters - one was seven years old, the other was three years old. Even though I like Venera, and respected her, but I could hardly put up with this situation.

I do not know how we would have been on, but suddenly came into my heart new love, and how it had happened I did not notice. It crept slyly, quietly. And grew.

Tamara studied with me in the same group. She studied very well. But she was closed, and the marvelous mystery in her eyes was seemed to me. She was sitting in the next row, I often peek at her. Something in her was as if even otherworldly, sacred.

I lost my peace of mind because of the love. I could not listen to the lectures of professors: I admire the profile of Tamara, a mole on her cheek, she turned – and I admired the pretty eyes. At the seminars I enjoyed her voice. I got sick. But at the same time, my soul was floating in the sky. I felt: this is for all my life. This was not like a love, this was the love indeed, my only love.

One day there was a big concert at the institute. Trams are rarely went, I went home on foot. Caught up with Tamara. Spoke. Reluctantly, she replied. Then I began to tell her about my little town, about my childhood fun. I tried to laugh, but it did not work. And suddenly she quietly asked to tell how I was wounded. She listened without interrupting.

I told her about myself, and about my comrades, and about the mine, and about the hospital. But about Venera did not dare.

Tamara has asked around: about my parents, about our town. About herself - not a word. About the Institute and the distribution that was coming - too. And about the other students - silence. Here we came to her house that has just built, and behind it there was a grove. The city ended up there.

- Boris, you've already passed your home? How long? - She asked angrily.

- No, - I said. - It's very close. Do not worry: there is a breath of fresh air.

And we both laughed. Because smog hung over the city from a new chemical plant.

- Thank you for being spent. Good night, - she said, and held out her hand. How I wish to kiss this tender hand!

Soon there was a long meeting in the evening, and after we walked home together again. I said that I worked in a penal colony, and she asked whether I was afraid the prisoners.

I laughed.

- There's discipline in the classroom rather than in children's school - I say - in which we have to work. And after all, I obeyed the only teacher of Russian language and the school principal in childhood, I was a bully myself. And so on until the eighth grade.

- What happened? - asked Tamara.

We passed under a street lamp, I saw her smile, suffocated - not immediately was able to respond.

- I entered the Young Communist League - answer my husky voice. - Though finding fault with questions, but soon picked komsorg of class, then was in the Komsomol committee, and went a different life. Then - the army, then - explode. And life changed wrong ...

Several times we went home together. I was drawn to the girl more and more. I once broke down and blurted out:

- Tamara, I love you. Very much. If I'm nasty, banish me at once. I understand that I am not a gift, there are healthy boys, with both hands ...

She stopped. Silent, looked me straight in the eyes, as if she had not seen me. Then he quietly explained:

- Boris, you're nice, I like you as a person. But I love another man. Long time. He will come soon from the Navy. And we'll get married. I'm just a friend of You, a companion.

I was so hard, my friends, as I did not expect. But gave no sign, of course.

- You must know, Tamara - I say - that in the world is a man who will always love and be waiting for you. Until his death.

It was true. A strong, deep Love came to me. I could not even touch Venera and was forced to tell her what was the matter. She cried. But then forgave me,

and we were friends for life. And God gave her a luck. When her daughters got married, met she a nice man.

On the distribution of graduated students I was appointed to the home town as a school director. So much for the former bully! At school, as if just for me and my fate, needed another historian - and of course I turned again to Tamara:
- Let's go, Tom, with me - I suggested. - Your friend comes back, I'll let you immediately. I promise say nothing about my feelings. Just be together is easier.

Well, I was waiting for angry words to me - who I am and how she looks at it. But she says quietly, and looks me in my eyes with a pain:
- I agree, Bob. I still have to go somewhere.
I was so stunned before with happiness that did not understand the "anyway": I thought she was upset because they did not send her to graduate school.

Vishnevetskii paused, took a sip of vodka, not biting. Spent the three-toed hand over the powerful curly head of hair.

At this point, I was sent a photograph. From the pictures looked young woman. Her face was the correct shape, nose was a chiseled, mouth was a small drawing of lips - beautiful. Closer to the mouth was a mole on her right cheek. On the whole, and look, and her face expressed one thing: the severity of the cold.

I remembered the verses of Nicholas Dorizo:

*In my too late poetry
I want to chant the beauties
With frost, severe
Married eyes ...*

Vishnevetskii continued:

- Tamara said, after the distribution, if I loved her still, and I replied that nothing has changed. Then she wordlessly handed me a double, all thickly covered with writing the paper.

It was a letter from her boyfriend, a sailor. Coincidentally, he was also named Boris.

He wrote that he found another woman, that he asked to forgive him, that he never forgot the happiness that Tamara gave him. I realized that Boris was her first man, and he had her also as a first in the life of a woman. I was late ...

- Boris, - said my favorite - you have to think about. If do not change your mind - I will marry you. I respect you, trust you. But there is no love, and whether or not in the future is unknown. There are now only respect, sympathy.

- Tom - I say, almost breathlessly. - I'll do all to make you happy. That's it!

- My parents know about you - she continued - I have no secrets from them. If you and I decide something, I'll introduce you to them. Without their approval I cannot start a family. And without the consent of your parents - as well.

Can you imagine? So smooth, cold, reasonably, in a respectful advice to the parents! As if something about buying a home or even suit is decided, not living people, not about ourselves! I was amazed. But my heart was beating strongly, happily. I believed in destiny, in happiness.

And suddenly I thought of Venera.

- Tamara - I said, and I felt that the voice was hoarse, like a stranger, I - I must confess to you that before I met you ...

- You're about Venera? I talked to her. Beautiful, noble woman. I think, you know, I had to talk to her before to decide something about my future with you. Because of these words, I blushed, as if the fire was put it to my face. And then thought a long time about all this. And I decided that Tamara was not cold, and she is a holy.

Yes, holy! She never wanted to hurt, neither we nor our parents or Venera. She thought and bothered about all of us.

In the morning I flew to my little town. Consult with my father. Mother of the past six months was not: she died of cancer. The father did not want to think of another woman. Monogamous he and I inherited this.

He became director of the boarding school, led the renovation and was there from morning to night. He came back tired and fell asleep at once. At night, he dreamed of my mother.

The father asked, whether I loved Tamara indeed. I said that strongly and forever. And that in the past there was a man, but it was not corruption, but there was love, worthy of respect.

- It would be better, of course, if you and she were the first and only one. But you're as your parents – my father said, hugging me. - It shows your destiny.

The first time I saw his tears - and realized how lonely he is and felt his lonely pain.

On New Year we got married. How to explain my happiness! Tamara was affectionate with me, she divined my wishes and behaved so gently that I as if turned to her little son, while remaining a male protector.

She is good at cooking, I helped her as best as I could. If I violated the order of our apartment, which has been at the school, my wife scolded me in a motherly. I was ready to break into shards as crock, just to please the beloved. And, of course, I was in paradise.

However, my wife insisted that I was at teachers' meetings to her more severely than to others, and this was the most difficult, because she is the nature of the educator. Pupils adore her. And our colleagues marveled at my unkind, in their opinion, to Tamara.

They sought the reason.

Some said that I pick on my wife for unknown reasons. Tamara smiled.

But as they say, nothing lasts forever. Do not have time to finish the honeymoon as a letter arrived. Guess from whom? Yes, from the sailor. He had written that supposedly realized his mistake, and that other woman was bad, and that he wanted to return to Tamara.

My wife gave me the letter. I was reading - and petrified. I asked what will happen next to us.

- Will be the same, - she said. - I'm your wife, we are colleagues, I became close to you, while he is now a stranger. That's it.

But I was in trouble, I lost sleep and appetite. With difficulty I went to classes.

A week later, my namesake showed up in town. He told me that he honestly asked for a talk with Tamara. That without this crucial conversation, he could not go back. He spoke to me with respect.

He was sad. I felt sorry for him.

He suggested:

- Let Tamara will decide herself, and we both will accept any of her decision. In any case, I am.

It would be foolish to argue with that. Tamara got dressed and went out with him to the frost. They walked along the street back and forth in front of the entire town from four in the afternoon until half-past ten in the evening. I was waiting for. What I experienced, words cannot convey.

- And how are you patient enough? - Could not resist Karas.

- It was difficult. But I knew it was not in my power to do something. Did that make a mess of things. Then I grab one book, then another, but could not read. Turned on the TV, but it just annoys me.

And then I came to mind another way to escape - to compose a short story for children. Scary and at the same time funny story. Outlined storyline, began to develop it. But I was thinking of Tamara, of what was waiting for me. Every now and then I casted pen and paper, walked, or rather, pacing the apartment, like an animal in a cage.

She came alone – frozen, silent. Then he began to cry. I thought my heart would burst with pain. And this pain was not for myself. For her. It was a pity her, weeping, very much.

I thought she broke up with another Boris, just one came home, but she loved him, not me, and therefore so it was going through. That she stayed with me only because she felt sorry for me as a disabled person - and she wept over her fate and she could change her mind ...

Afraid to speak! Just I put in front of her in silence a glass of a hot tea and dish with jam. She drank her tea in silence, as if calmed down a bit. And she says:

- Come on.

I walked over.

- Get on your knees.

I had hesitated, but had become. I looked forward with fear what would happen next. Tamara put his hand on my shoulder and said quietly:

- Look me in the eyes. So, I see the pain in your eyes, my husband. The pain is in vain. You won, so I ordain you to be my knight.

My little woman gone crazy, I thought, from a long conversation with an uninvited guest: a cry, then cripple the Knights committed. And she sobbed again - and said in earnest:

- Are you really a knight, and I have it legalized their ritual. He realized that I was far from him. Yes, it was hard. But it was his fault. I do not need anyone but you. I love you, my dear, I respect you as a director, I love you both as a man and as a husband. And I believe that you will be a good daddy: I'm pregnant.

Then she smiled, stood up, picked me up from my knees, embraced warmly! And I blurted out:

- Why are you crying, Tomic?

- It was hard, my dear, to lead boring conversation - answered - to explain to Boris that I did not need him, and to understand that he is miserable forever. But no, not out of pity for him, I burst into tears from overwork. You know how it is with athletes at the finish line? Kiss me.

We live together with Tamara twelfth year. We have two strong son , one is eleven years old, the other - seven.

- All's well that ends well - summed up Brovastik.

- Yes. I recently defended my thesis in pedagogy and teaching at the university. We now live in a regional center, my father retired, he lived with us. We are about to finish the construction of our home, and her parents will move to us.

Tamara - not only the teacher, but also a children's writer. It began with the fact that she has found that a fantastic story, which I sketched a memorable evening of my initiation into the Knights. She continued and completed the story.

I confess to you that I love her all the same old passion. And she ...

He paused, putting back the picture of his wife.

- And she is the Perfection. Sometimes I even think that Tamara is an angel who revealed to me by some extraterrestrial lottery.

Does she love me, still I cannot say for sure. Because sometimes I look at myself through the eyes of third parties, and ... And when I shave, get dressed, wash my face, I feel my one-armed.

When I want to carries my favorite adoring ten fingers - the more ...

But I would like to believe and to love her. Because if she does not like, then she secretly tormented. No, no. To drive away the rotten idea!

- Your history is instructive. Let me express my admiration for you and your wife - rose from his chair Beard. - Now, I think I can connect to conversation. The fact that I want to tell you, is not so amazing, but it is also instructive.