Александр Чечитов

He, she, and the monster.

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Аннотация

They lived in a quiet, picturesque corner, and for many years their home was an island of peace. No troubles, no worries — just comfort and familiar happiness. Until that fateful day came. In an instant, the peace shattered, and instead of silence, screams of horror filled the house, and the walls were stained with blood.

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For ten years, they lived in a square, two-story house painted bright blue, without a care in the world — right up until the beginning of autumn, on the eve of their eleventh wedding anniversary.

On the first Wednesday of September, Vladimir returned from work in the afternoon. As usual, he expected Dasha to greet him at the door: this had become a long-standing tradition in their small family. Life itself had created it, and it was supported by a little fun that Vladimir had put together at the beginning of their relationship: a simple chain of electro mechanisms set ceramic garden gnomes on ball bearings in motion. When the door opened, one of the three classical compositions chosen by Dasha would sound in the house. That's how she almost always knew her husband had arrived.

This time, the system worked flawlessly. But the door didn't swing open. When Vivaldi's "The Four Seasons" faded, a dry silence hung in the hallway.

Vladimir looked around. Everything in the rooms was as usual.

"Dasha?" he called out quietly. "Are you home?" I'm here.

There was no response. After taking off his shoes, Vladimir looked into the bathroom, then went up to the second floor. The

perfect order was accompanied by an навязчивый, приторный smell.

— Bunny, have you decided to play hide-and-seek? — he called out again, addressing the emptiness. — Oh yes, how did I not think of it right away!

He quickly dialed the cherished number and froze, listening to the long, drawn-out rings. And then, from somewhere above, the sound of Dasha's phone ringtone reached them — muted and cutting off almost immediately.

The retractable ladder to the attic was in place.

"If Dasha had decided to climb onto the roof," Vladimir thought, "she would certainly have left the hatch open."

Stretching, he grabbed a piece of decorative rope. The spring mechanism lowered the ladder to his feet. The melody sounded again from above — and then immediately stopped.

Unlatching the hook, Vladimir opened the hatch and found himself in the attic. Now Dasha's phone was silent.

At first, it was hard to make out anything in the darkening space. In the past, Vladimir would occasionally pile books and trinkets here that Dasha didn't want to part with. The thought that they were still nearby, even if they were covered in dust, gave her a little comfort.

Her eyes gradually grew accustomed to the dense darkness, revealing vague outlines of objects.

"Honey, are you here?" Vladimir asked cautiously, making his way between the old cardboard boxes.

A muffled sound of a melody came from behind the plywood partition — and then fell silent again. A Christmas toy crunched under his left foot: a carrot made of cheap orange plastic.

It felt like there wasn't enough air. Vladimir stopped several times to steady his breathing and calm his pulse. And suddenly, he heard a grunting, strained breath behind the wall. It seemed to remind him why he was there.

"Dear, please tell me you're there!"

The commotion grew louder, and a large, glowing head peeked out from behind the partition. Behind it appeared a body with two pairs of wide, rope-like limbs that resembled arms. The small, glossy black eyes on the purplish-pink face with prominent cheekbones hardly moved. The creature, composed of disproportionately large parts, seemed to be examining Vladimir with curiosity — as if he were something unusual in the dusty attic.

"You, creature!" "Where is Dasha?!" Vladimir shouted, trying to control his fear and anger. "I'll kill you if you so much as touch a hair on her head!"

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