



Complications

four short novels by Viacheslav Pihida.

Autumn breeze

It was cold.

He was sitting there for a while now. Winds pushed on him. No, not just the winds. The dark clouds, the raindrops, but more so - empty concrete he was sitting on.

He liked such frost and dark, but now they seemed to be jesting, insulting. He liked that place. Or, at least, he used to. He were to come and stay here for a while, be it ten minutes or several hours. He saw the waves come and go as the weather changed. Sometimes the sea rampaged and he was washed from head to toes with northern waters. But frost helped. He was scorned a lot for the first dozen of visits, yet he still found a way to sneak here, again and again.

He sighed. Hand roamed and touched a little rock. Hard, small. Lightweight concrete. He sent it upwards. Rock flew and began its descent. He reached his arm out, but the piece of long-forgotten unfinished structure omitted it. He curled as he heard a splash. An oaf he was! Teeth met lip with pressure.

Sometimes, indeed, he did freeze severely. But the young body, unable to reason the conscience, adapted. And so he spent his days here, where absolutely no person would want to be - path here was not as difficult as it was disappointing. Long walk gave the zealot as much as four huge stone blocks piled on steep harsh shore so little, rocky and

shallow, that visitors would leave but a melancholic glare before turning around to never to be here again.

He did not have much of interests. He often wondered if he did have any at all. Activities were loud, noisy. Moreover, there were people. Yet here - he had risen the gaze - here he could enjoy the worldful of silence.

Reflection on pointless events faded and suffering has taken its place. She used to be here! Half-frigid face responded with physical counterpart, hurting somewhere inside and wetting the cheeks. Right there. Hand ascended from the specific, special place, just to return back with force, tightened into a fist. He was always meek and lacked strength and durability, yet it never bothered him. So it stung, stung a lot, but instead of stopping the tears, it gave an outburst, adding two new ones to roam the strokes.

For at one day of fall, indifferent from many others, he heard the steps on the concrete. First, a jump. A high-pitched exhale. Then the steps. They were not hurried at all. The female stopped as she reached the end of the platform, then she lowered herself at his left side. Scarlet hair has fallen down, but winds returned the perfect curls close to their former place. She helped it with her fragile, small hand. She looked at him as he was staring at her. Their pupils widened. She then smiled. His lips bobbed twice before creating a clumsy attempt to answer her with the same action; shock was not helping at all.

And so they sat. Panic was killing him. What if she will leave, tired of waiting? Her hand lay close to him, obviously hinting. But what if she wanted to tease him? He dropped his head low then, seeing the rocks below. Water was

washing them for years. Were they looking back on him, or were they not, advising was clearly the last thing they considered.

Yes, now she is not here. Not anymore. He turned away from the sea, as if it was telling the story he could not bear to hear.

And he heard her pulling her hand, rushing the dust along with rubbish on the plate. Thought "What if she did not want me to touch her at all?" was cut short by decisive, rapid interception. She slightly jumped at the swiftness of the movement, but did not do as much as to evade.

He laid himself, unable to withstand the torture of memories. "She is gone," he rolled to the side, "Gone!". Tears refused to flow.

They met there sometimes. He rushed here even more often than he used to. He was spending hours here, many more that he would consider reasonable. Yet he did not ponder on it. Because, eventually, she came here. Not every time, surely. Yet she were visiting this place.

On their second meeting, he, with all of his determination, burst in a shy greeting, at which she asked whether he was waiting. This got him hard in genuine shock yet again. He was standing there, not able to reply as she hugged him.

Tears could have lifted the weight of the situation a bit, yet they betrayed him. His vulnerable blue-and-red knuckles were too cold to provide something to think about. He stood up. He could not bear it, could not bear it. No more.

They used to talk. Talk long, meaningful or casual, discussions, reflections, stories and what not.

And, on one of these late evenings, upon wishing well night, she kissed him, as the stars watched. He was stunned. She laughed and called him out of stupor.

He lost himself to the water. This cold burned his senses, giving slight advantage over emotions that went berserk.

But she never returned again. Not once had he seen her. And he waited. Waited for a year, counting every day.

He was shaking as he walked back. Someone slipped a surprised gaze on the puddle below a young man with clothes as wet and thin as his long black hair, and just as frozen.

It was cold. But it was colder inside.

Summertime thunder

"That is such a nice day," John said. "I truly wish for summer to never end."

It was undeniably lovely and warm. The heat was not simply overwhelming - it made any work generally impossible. Quite possible, that everybody had a disturbing bill on air conditioner in the whole region. Mayhap it was the reason for the beach to be so full of people.

"It is," murmured Maria, leaning from the shadow of the beach umbrella. Her soft cheeks were gently touched by the sun. She squinted a bit.

Maria seemed to be the purest being known. There were simply no signs of malice, ever. A wonderful maiden, she was as meek as a mouse and tender as a rose petal. Yet, in contrast to her behaviour, she was given a tall, even somewhat gargantuan body. Her hips, shoulders were wide and her waist was almost straight. She was most certainly not chubby, neither were she slim. Her hair was of light brown color. It lay, curving around her face and tickling the neck with its ends.

"Good things must end, though."

She paused.

"So that when they happen again, our yearning will be satisfied."

"Huh..."

"What?" she bobbed her head towards him.

"It is... greatly philosophical, it's a deep... thought," John struggled to pronounce as he recovered from the awe.

He corrected the glasses with a tip of his index finger, then looked up. A stubborn hair stroke was raised by the light wind.

John was a mathematics pioneer and that was about it. He would often think of anything as a task to be solved. That helped him a lot, but also made him feel less human to others. He was often called a genius, but that was hardly the cause of his knowledge. He cherished his great memory and was always deep in studies. They were giving him determination he barely could sense anywhere else.

"But with that you might go in for psychology or even neurology," he smiled.

"I... do not like medicine."

"Err, psychology is not much of medicine. It is more of understanding people and their 'souls', if they exist. More or less, it is a deep dive into processes of a human brain with concentration of attention exclusively on these." Tech speech sneaked on him, unseen. "Neurology studies the brain as it is, and, well, is related to medicine in a way. I was always amazed by what conscience is capable of, and even though I obviously prefer algebr- Oh! sorry, I went quite far with the monologue," cut he abruptly.

"N-no, it's fine. I can not decide who to be, after all. You are helping, kind of." said she, then burst. "I-I didn't mean to say you do not help! I was just..."

"Honestly," he laughed. "There is nothing for you to worry about. You are so nice no one will think less of you."

"Oh," she exhaled.

They went silent.

The wind seemed to begin gaining strength after a good afternoon sleep it took.

"Wh-what do you... think of me?" Maria turned away to hide cheeks that were suddenly burning bright.

"Ah... W-well..."

"You don't have to say it," she said with voice a bit lower.

"No, I... you are pretty. It was just so unexpected! You are pretty and... kind." This is where he had problems. Complimenting others, especially of female sex.

"Really?" she returned gaze. Her face was of genuine surprise.

"Yes!" He thought it over, hand on his chin. "But could we please not?.."

"Oh, I- sorry I ask-"

"John," a frigid voice reached, "who is that?"

He turned. "Charlotte!"

"Who is that?" she repeated.

"Well..." Too much shock has complicated the conversation on his side.

"I see."

"No, we were just talking..." he stood up.

"Am I too small for you?" Charlotte had no intention of listening. "She," she cringed not only with her face, but her whole body on that word, "is clearly a bountiful lot. I did not think you would go for the size."

"What the hell, Charlotte? We are friends!"

"Oh, like we were?"

The girl was standing still. Her face was red all along, but now the eyes have become wet. Sudden darkness of a passing cloud has come in the most horrid moment, picturing a teenager, usually agile and joyful, now driven with rage and despair. Long jet hair was swayed by the wind, jumping around the fragile body.

Finally, her voice cracked and tears went free. "Like we were damn friends before? For a month or two, before you got close enough to say that 'I am in love with you' cliché?" Spit she. "I doubt we were even friends!"

"Charlotte, st-" tried John.

"No! I was just a toy for you. I can not believe... I can not believe you were so cruel!" She let her head down. "You lied from the very beginning."

She turned away. "Be happy, then," thrust she.

She blasted in the direction opposite of him, not bothering herself with the tears, letting them run and be carried away.

"Charlotte, stop!" he gave the chase.

"Leave me!" returned she.

She has gained unorthodox amount of speed and it took John a little while to catch up with Charlotte.

Trying to find words, he cried: "She is nothing but a friend! And you..."

"Who am I, then?" she stopped. She was not even panting. Anger left her to deal with sorrow. Her voice, now not loud, seemed to attempt to disappear completely.

"You are a... treasure, a gift!" he was rushing through words, yet any trial made it worse.

"Oh, that," she pronounced with unstable voice. The vowels seemed to get contort by themselves.

John sighed. "You are important to me."

She faced him. "Really?" Charlotte yelled. "You have said that before. 'Tis what got me. Now dare you sit by that brat skygazing and prove my importance?"

Skies themselves cleared, now with sun blinding John.

"Mon amour," began he.

"Mais pourquoi?" Charlotte shot in apathy.

She would not run. She needed to deal with this question and these were the words from the bottom of her heart. And John understood that. Charlotte wanted to know the truth,

despite all the pain that caused her to yell and run. Yet she would not believe his words, say he those carelessly. Now he had a bit of time to think.

"Remember how I struggled with you?" he did not let her answer, avoiding the accusation of ease with Maria. "It was not because of you."

Charlotte tried to hide it, but her eyes opened wider. Then she frowned. "'Tis because of her."

"I hold you dear. Yet I need friends, too, not only the beloved one. I am almost good in science but I am an emotional wreckage. I need support. I am too awkward to even get along with you and for that I need friends. I need support all of the time, 'tis my weakness."

She listened now. John smiled, but regretted it. A smile could kill it, even though self-criticism is a good way to get along with others.

"Yet you, mon amour... You are precious." He closed her in a hug.

Charlotte has not moved. But she obviously was moved. And John loved her for a way she shows emotions.

"I could not say that I did well and exactly that, but, in a way, I need my friends for you." A tiny self-insult, crappy, iffy sentence structure with "for you" as the key element.

"I went and invited Maria to the beach to talk her out of her sociopathy a bit. You texted you were busy, after all."

Charlotte tightly hugged him to the point of greatly inconvenient pressure. "I said I had things to do! Did you

really think I would be 'busy' whole Sunday? Can you not try to understand something except the verbatim meaning of the words?"

"'Except', a preposition, a conjunction and a verb. As a prepo..."

Charlotte carefully led her leg behind his foot.

"...eans exclude som- whoah!"

She pulled it back, dropping John, and herself as well, down.

"Shut it, you!"

She grabbed the sand with the hands, now free. John was lucky to have heard that to close his eyes. He was soon spitting the sand out that came in an instant.

"That was for the complications you caused," cried she, trying to be upset. Tear strokes were long dehydrated to nonexistence.

He helped himself to rise, supporting torso with the elbows. "How can I kiss you now?" took he a high note. He finally found his glasses, dropped in 'combat', after several seconds of a spastic search, and put them on.

Charlotte sat back. "What, thou say that shall stop thee?" she cocked her head and closed an eye. "I barely sprinkled you with sand. You were so gloomy that I wanted at least something would shine on you."

He approached her. "Sprinkled? You almost buried me alive!". Then he murmured: "And who was the gloomy one, after all?"

"Ow!" Smack on the back of his head was a response.

"Shut it. You may not escape the next bout so easily."

Relieved beyond any limits, he soon returned to the worry of how he regained control in conversation. While it was greatly because of his knowledge about his beloved, it was also done with simple mental tricks by a great degree. Fear of manipulating Charlotte to the end was far worse than angst of her reacting to the factuality as such. He was too afraid to tell her that.

Yet he knew very well, that there are days when no thing in the world stands between him and Charlotte. He shall make her as happy as he can, because she was indeed a very dear little storm incarnation to him.

Springtime frost

Like a beautiful flower thrown to wither, she lays on the bed in tears. Fine blanket is terribly twisted. Bed of professional carpentry with its rich decorations and fascinating patterns forces the situation to be something a painter would sell for a great price. Yet no words and no brush swings, no playwright and no artist may describe the emotions of this poor person with spoiled elegant dress with the color of a starry night skies and now-wasted hairstyle that took an hour to be made perfect.

She weeps unworthy of a lady, short of aesthetic restraints, yet her unbelievable beauty remains untouched. The only daughter of a nobleman, who fell for a singer of a rare grace, was raised with attention and sharp aristocratic principles. She inherited swiftness of thought of her father and the wonderful voice of a mother. Some say that this child was to be a songbird far greater than the mistress herself. Yet any of teachings are impossible to witness this time in the dim light of a candle.

Her tragedy is not an easy one to bear. She does not try to forget about it anymore, for it has no use. She wants greatly for it to leave her, that feeling of loss. She wishes to cry it, scream it, yet she remains silently whining in pain.

So she remembers him.

"Pete...", she lets out a name as she weakens the grasp on the pillow. A name so very dear and important. A name

which explains it all. All of the misery is centered around a handsome lad. His even head is topped with what seemed to be purest copper. He is rarely seen without a smile. His friends know that his hand is quick to steal something worthy, although he would be kind enough to give his possessions to those who need these more. He'd come looking fancy in simple, even dirty clothes. His charisma was bested only by his care about friends.

The problem is such: she loves him still. His sharp face and his wits. His strong arms and sea-deep eyes. His acceptance of her. They had a bond and it strengthened over time. She'd run to him and he would embrace her. She told him sweetest of words and was ever overjoyed to hear lovely replicas herself.

Yet the reminiscence is not all that cheerful.

The flowers of all kinds were in bloom, unwelcoming cold of the winter had long passed - spring was in its finest hour. All of those greens were but a heartwarming sight - the nature itself has awakened from its slumber to spread the magic of life over fields and forests, gardens, balconies - so very different from the dead white of the previous season. Folk was experiencing the great joy. Farmers carefully seeded the earth, prepared to bear the harvest; they had their livestock share the pleasure of warmth. Travelling merchants - lonesome men, for exceptions were rare, of unmatched coin understanding - were there, having the confrontation against their stationary counterparts on the value of goods' variety that was blessed by the unknown forces of winds, earth, water and fires, whose deities were unlike in every other region despite the church's growing power.

Among the citizens on crowded streets she were unseen - she was finding her joy in the wonderful park. Surely, she just could not stay in her room, which was not short of flowers. Here were so many more, but what mattered much more - here were tulips, and so many that the whole house was unable to fit them. Bank in front of the huge flowerbed was unoccupied. In the morning townspeople were long awoken, pushing themselves on their crafts to have a good profit. So there she was able to witness all of the wonders of flora that were present here.

But she saw a red-haired figure taking its time in the near. The man was unmistakable.

"Pete!" she cried as she ran.

Young male turned to her. In the overcoat of old wood hue, his looks were as charming as they could be. Yet the smile was amiss. His eyes had taken the freezing look that made her stop. This has taken her aback.

"Pete?" she repeated with worry.

"Finest morning, Rosaline." came a lifeless reply.

"What is the matter? What happened?"

He was rarely addressing her formally, in fact, he never did, she thought it over. She has known him very well, and if that look was read by others as a mere disturbance she knew it to be a sore calamity. She felt chilly in her light dress all of sudden.

He sighed. "I did not have the guts to tell you before. I knew not how. I still struggle to." He closed his eyes, thought it through and continued: "I am terribly sorry to tell that. I was

lying to myself and to you, too. I thought, believed I loved you..."

Rosaline gasped heavily. This was not expected. No, not at all.

"It was not true. I have seen you in my dreams, I remembered you day and night, but whenever I see you I have nothing but doubts. Do not blame yourself."

She whispered: "Pete... oh, Pete...". The words were getting to her after a prolonged delay each. Her mind was all hollow and she sensed but the singing of birds. It felt as if she was not quite here.

"I am sorry. I... I know it hurts. Damn, I knew it would hurt you! I have dealt you harm! I am so sorry to have told it. But it is true." He was going about the same words, same phrases and the meaningful explanation was still far.

"Pete, you do not have to say such things. Dear, I love you!"

She was looking at him. Her emerald irises were set firmly on him. She held her arms behind, clasped her hands on the fabric. She appeared emotionless in face, but upcoming tears excluded additional commentaries on her heart's state.

"It is not true, is it? It is all false. You have said so much to me before, my dear. How can this be true now, how can this banter be correct? This little chatter can not overcome all of love you have expressed to me! I would never abandon you, leave the doubts!" She spoke with confidence.

Yet all he did was lower the gaze. He spoke a moment later. His voice grew merciless and serious, pity left it. "I have never loved you. All the things I have said and done were a

misunderstanding. None of this matters now. I shall let you live on, without me. We were not meant to be together."

"Pete, no. No, everything is all right." She was not understanding it. She started for him, arms readying for an embrace. "Pete, dear, I..."

"No!" he shouted. "I must go now. I am sorry. Sorry for all of this."

She was stuck in place, crying.

"I did not want to harm you," came from him as he directed himself away, "I should never have said anything. I... You will not be seeing me anymore, with you."

"Pete, no. Pete. Pete!"

Pain, sorrow rushed down, taking her. The man she loved and saw him love her now said that all the delightful memories were faked. She finally understood. Pete was telling lies to comfort her and himself whilst he tried to comprehend just what he felt. He had two feelings locked in the bout and now he had chosen which one of these to trust. All she lived through was none other but an afternoon dream she was rudely awakened from.

She glared forth as the mist in the eyes cleared. Young man was now a silhouette in distance.

"Pete."

She had acknowledged it. Acknowledged that those years were naught but a fairy tale. Caressing and shenanigans were made up. Had he found a better fiancé? Was that the cause? Was he leaving? It did not matter. Her Pete left to

never return, to never be hers. That is, if he ever belonged to her as she belonged to him.

Nature's bounty was nil now. This world has turned to be empty.

She reached the comprehension. She has come to realization. Now she must accept it.

Winter warmth

"Hell, I missed you."

"Likewise."

"Still la-co-nic, Ice?"

"Can't help it."

"Oh, come on! It is cold enough without you here. Let us go, I would not want to stay here forever."

"This hairstyle of yours is cute."

"Aw, I am glad you noticed! Yes, I thought I would go for shorter length but was careful about it."

"It snows. How lovely."

"Well hell, it was such a storm last week we could not get out of house. It was very horrid here. I wish I could live at your place."

"I dream of taking you with me, but you know what issues I am facing."

"You must just wait a little. You can manage all of the rest just fine! I know it."

"The snow is deep. I like it. We could - Ugh! ...I am amazed that you were able to make such a snowball, but it will not save you!"

"Pfft! Try and beat me! Wait, why are you... Where is your snowball?... Ack! Have you never participated in snow fights before? You were supposed to throw snow, not rush me down."

"It took you by surprise. You look cute when you are surprised."

"Eek! Damn, that got me. I will not let you see me surprised anytime soon, now!"

"Quit it. Rules do not exclude running away, you know. You are better than me at this. But never mind that."

"You just wanted to hug me."

"I will not deny this."

"Can we get up now? This is all... charming,"

"You blushed."

"Tsk! ...but we will freeze to death here."

"Romantic."

"I am in thigh highs."

"Ah, excuse me."

"Thanks for lending a hand. Huff. Clearly dying from cold would have been by far more romantic than you."

"I am sorry."

"At least that was honest. God damn it, I am all wet because of snow."

"Where is the nearest café?"

"Eep! Don't just pick me up this sudden."

"You liked it."

"Uh... Mh..."

"So, where? I will carry you wherever I must."

"Yeesh."

"Too exaggerated?"

"Yes. Anyway, it is in that direction. Well, the closest one is right over there, but it is shitty. I like that one at the mall."

"There is something magical about shopping malls."

"I guess so. I just would go visit one to buy something. The mall itself is... okay."

"There is something metaphysical about it."

"Talking big words again?"

"Extraterrestrial. Ow! Something otherworldly, enchanting."

"Hitting you might actually make you easier to understand. But in a mall? Seriously?"

"This is what I feel."

"You dreamy dork."

"Thanks."

"Gee, it was not a compliment. Yet you reacted nicely."

"It is so pretty here with all this snow."

"Yeah, literally everything is covered with snow. Honestly, if you did not let me go, our snow-white hair and light-hue clothes would have never been distinguished from that ivory deathbed. Oh. Your queue is just as lovely as ever."

"I am always glad to let you play with my hair."

"Nya!"

"Yet the white color is superior."

"I think it is just cool. Like, I like it, I wear it. It ever offers some protection from heat, but that... that is useless now."

"If you were wearing black clothes, you would not feel much warmer now. Still, it is weird that such simple thing as color sets up a fashion. Goths would lose nothing if they reconsidered their color. It would match their pale faces."

"White-wearing goths. Yikes."

"Perhaps I am still too far from understanding fashion."

"Fashion ain't matter when you got this awesome hair color."

"Mph. thank you again."

"There we are. Somehow you managed to walk fast but hold me gentle."

"I care about you."

"Thanks. Wait, are you not going to put me down?"

"Is there a problem with carrying you to the café itself?"

"I mean, it is kinda embarrassing. All those people..."

"But I am with you. Why would they matter?"

"Yea, you're right. To hell with them. You are my Ice and I am your Snowflake. Oh, that's right here."

"Where should I put you?"

"That sofa looks nice. Don't you think our nicknames are cheesy a bit?"

"We have made them up back then. They are simple, but lovely, dear Snowflake."

"Yeah, that is right. Are you ever wrong?"

"Sometimes. You want your usual?"

"I'd rather walk with you, thank you very much. That time you forgot about the sugar was crazy."

"I thought they added too little!"

"I have diabetes, goddamnit! And there is something especially good in sugarless cappuccino. It's not like I am dead sick to not to have tried it with sugar. I just can't stand you sugarcoating everything."

"Bad habit. My life was not sweet enough without you."

"Aw, Ice. You can be neat at wordpicking."

"Hah. I have luck to be laconic."

"Did you say I talk too much?"

"I would never mean that."

"I think my glucose jumped from your comments."

"I do not mind carrying you back."

"You are a treasure. If you fall for anyone else, I'll kill her and then kill you."

"Understood."

"Thank goodness they have these small cardboard cones. I really hate it when the coffee is sold in thin paper cups. They do not isolate heat at all!"

"What are you occupied with now?"

"It's that damn sol-"

"-feggio again?"

"Unfortunately, yes. We do not have to know how music works to play it!"

"At least that is not the acoustics you are studying."

"My point is - music is art! It is a way to express feelings! Why concentrating on so difficult stuff? I will hardly need half of it."

"But that gives you understanding of what you do exactly."

"Gimme a break."

"Intuition is a powerful thing and I envy just how much of it you have."

"Huh?"

"You feel how you go about music. It is wonderful. This is why your play is so captivating."

"I am so sick of people saying to me 'You play great'. Honestly, if it were not you, I would probably cuss like the last misfit on Earth."

"That does not suit you."

"Fucking really? I am just going insane with all this stuff!"

"You can always contact me."

"Now when you are so far away! And I hate messaging. It makes you even more distant! Damn!"

"Here is a clean napkin, dry your eyes."

"Thanks."

"What was the matter?"

"It's just... ah, just... I feel so terribly alone when you are not here, I suffer so much. I need you. Oh, why can we not live any closer? Why can't my parents let me go to you at least this bit more often? And I am always so busy. I mean, just... just why? Why does it have to be so hard? I have done nothing wrong! I just want to be with you!"

"I need you too. Yet I hold you now and I will never let anyone take you."

"But can you really? What if something happens to me? What if something happens to you?"

"I will give all I have to keep us together."

"Thank you so much for keeping me. Honestly, I am such a crybaby. How can you keep me?"

"I find it great that you can express your emotions. I wish I could, too."

"You totally should not become a blabbermouth like me. It is horrible. I tell the things I do not want to tell and sometimes I even burn out, but I soon need to talk again. It sucks."

"You rarely reach misunderstandings."

"Absolutely not! I speak even faster when I panic. And I panic a damn lot when I am misunderstood. It is like using the words but missing with them all. Besides, my voice is shit."

"I would listen to it until I die. There is nothing else I would like to hear."

"You are amazing. But you have such a cool low tone. I just have this dumb falsetto. That's this annoying high pitch."

"It is not annoying."

"I really do not know what could I do without you. I suffer a lot when you are gone, but I know you will return, even when I fear you won't. It was so much harder when I did not have you. I was all alone. I thought I would kill myself just to end this. No, really! I can not express my gratitude to you. I cherish every single moment with you. I would beg you to stay with me if I didn't know that you would be late for the train. Goddamn, why are the tickets so expensive here? You should stop spending all your savings on them! What do you even live on?"

"On love. On thought I will hit the road to meet you again."

"You precious selfless fool! Aw, hell... I need to cry a bit. I am so damn relieved to have you back. Can you bear my tears a little?"

"I would, however long it takes. I would spend every moment I have with..."

"...you. Thanks... thank you so much."

