

## THE GREAT AWAITING

My eyes opened with the first ring of the alarm and I think I might have even been smiling. I don't know if I've ever smiled right upon waking up before, but I hope this will be the norm every day from now on, starting today. Because today everything changes.

Shower, water, cream, razor, water, peeling, water, gel, water, shampoo, water, conditioner, water, towel, panties, toothpaste, water, concealer, foundation, bronzer, highlighter, eyeshadow, mascara, lipstick, balm, hairdryer, hairbrush, bra, blouse, skirt, cream, heels, just a few buttons undone to show that I'm selling my idea – not exactly myself.

And that's everything. Everything? Yes, looks like it. Time to go.

Perfume.

And the flash drive that I of course couldn't have placed within my reach, I must forget about it even on the most important day of my life. It's not in the kitchen, living room, bedroom, or bathroom, which means it's probably here in the bedroom but I have no idea where. Maybe I was smarter than I thought and put it straight into my bag?

There isn't even a laptop in my bag. Damn, I could have sworn I put it in there, but maybe I just dreamt that I was doing the pitch already so maybe I also dreamt that I packed the laptop? Kitchen, living room, bedroom, bathroom, nothing, and the laptop isn't exactly small, so I should be able to see it.

Don't panic. It must be here, so plainly in your view, it became invincible. Stand in the middle of the room, take a deep breath, look around, and you'll find everything in no time.

It's not working.

Don't panic. Collins has the original version, maybe you will be able to fix a few things, and even if not, the original was good, and it's been approved, anyway.

So, an empty bag, wallet, no need for a jacket, plenty of sunshine, and we're off to the tram.

The door won't open.

Of course it won't open, there's no key. Damn it, why did I take the key out?

Bedroom, bathroom, kitchen, nothing, and I'm trying not to cry not to mess my mascara up but there's no harm in slamming my bag on the floor. Oh God, don't I have the laptop in my bag?

No, of course not, it still hasn't materialized.

Alright, never mind. Bathroom, bedroom, kitchen, and now I'm really searching. Spice drawer, trash can, laundry basket, under the quilt, inside the quilt, in every pocket of every piece of clothing.

One more pull on the door handle – but it's pointless.

Okay, it's fucking impossible. I lock the house every day, leave the key in the door every day. What's happening? Did I sleepwalk and throw everything out of the windows?

So I open both windows, but it doesn't make sense, people would have surely picked up a laptop or even keys lying on the ground. They walk sixteen floors below with their dogs and kids and there's nothing visible on the grass that could belong to me.

Shit. Shit and f- Well, I have to call and postpone everything. Hopefully, just by an hour. Or simply call mom to come with the spare key or a locksmith to get me out of here.

I can't find my phone anywhere.

Fuck. Shit. This is impossible. Why did I buy that cat-shaped alarm clock? In its place, my phone would always be lying, I'd know where to look for it, I'd know if it was in my apartment right after waking up. I need to make a call, then I'll hear... How can I call if I don't have a phone? Maybe I'm holding everything in my hands, but I just don't realize it?

My hands are slick with sweat but there's nothing in them.

God, if Tom hadn't moved out, he would have called me and he would never lose keys. I've never thought I'd miss him, but now I'd even be happy to see him, just to get me out of here.

One last time, kitchen, bedroom, bathroom, but now it's such a mess, there's no way to find anything. I swear, once I start earning like a Hollywood star, I'll move to a luxury apartment building where I'll have a button to press for a security guard with a master key, and this will never happen again.

Someone will call me when I'm late, right? Then I'll hear the vibration and say a drunk driver hit my car, but I'm on my way, just a second, please don't write me off, it's just a one-time thing.

So, is all I have left sitting and praying? Goooooooood...

Kitchen, bathroom, bedroom, one last time, I can't believe this, bedroom, bathroom, kitchen. Maybe I was too focused on the phone and didn't notice the keys? Kitchen, bathroom, bedroom. God, how is this possible?

No, I can't wait like this. I'll embarrass myself in front of the neighbors, whatever.

"Hello? Heellooo?" Swallow, cough, mouth as close to the keyhole as possible, that's probably the best way for them to hear me, right? "Heelloooo?! HEEELLOOO!" Inhale.

“HEEEELLLOOOOOOOOOOOO! HELLO! HELLO PLEASE SOMEONE LET ME OUT I'M LOCKED INSIDE! PLEASE, DOES ANYONE HEAR ME?!"

Ear to the keyhole but I don't hear anyone even closing the door on a distant floor. Only birds and car horns outside the windows.

Oh yes, the windows!

First the one in the bedroom, still wide open, I saw people with dogs down there, and though they're not there now, they must be nearby.

"HELLO ANYONE I'M LOCKED IN MY APARTMENT! SIXTEENTH FLOOR, APARTMENT ONE ONE TWO, I'M LOCKED! CAN ANYONE HEAR ME?"

My body is halfway out of the window to have a chance to hear even the faintest human voice – but nothing besides the hum of cars from the highway. Even if I scream my lungs out, they won't hear me.

Still, I try, cupping my hands into a tube like a child.

"HELLOOOOOOOOOOOO! I'M LOCKED AND I NEED TO GET OUT! SIXTEENTH FLOOR, APARTMENT ONE ONE TWO, PLEASE! PLEEEEEEEEEEEEEASEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!"

My head hurts. I don't know if it's sweat or tears but my mascara is definitely ruined, I feel it sticking to me. I hear no one answering.

There's one more window, I saw kids going into the store earlier from it. They're probably at school now but there must be a shop assistant!

"HELLOOOOO! VIOLET SHOP PLEASE MA'AM PLEASE  
MA'AM FROM VIOLET SHOP PLEASE COME  
HERE!"

I listen. In vain.

"PLEASE! SIXTEENTH FLOOR, APARTMENT ONE ONE  
TWO! PLEASE! I'VE LOCKED MYSELF IN! AT LEAST CALL  
SOMEONE! VIOLET SHOP! VIOLET SHOP! HELLOOOOOOOO!"

I burst out sobbing but I have to pull myself together, I have to listen. The door under the purple sign didn't open.

And my hair is ruined when I tangle my fingers in my hair. I kick aside a pillow that had fallen out of its case and sit on the kitchen stool, howling. I thought a lot, thought in circles, that I could find the key, that I could call someone – no, I can't, because I lost both my phone and my computer, and no one hears me.

It must be the pitch time by now.

Why isn't anyone calling me?

Maybe they are calling but I can't hear my phone.

When I try to calm down to catch the vibrations, the deafening silence is unbearable. The deafening silence and the hum of car traffic in the distance. I've never felt so... alone. Like everyone suddenly vanished.

When I pushed my tear-sticky hair back, I saw the radio. It's been here since I've rented this place, antique and never needed. Now I grabbed it and started turning all the handles in it like crazy, looking for anything that might sound like a human voice.

*"...degrees, the first warm day of the year, and we're also expecting the first storm of the year, this weekend night from Saturday to Sunday, so go out for a walk or even better, lounge in your gardens or balconies, sunbathe and listen to..."*

I know nothing about radios. Can it send a signal the other way around? There are no instructions, only sound, speech, crackling. I'd know what to do if I had internet access. Only if I did, I wouldn't need to figure out how the radio works.

I'd say it is at least nice to hear a human voice – but it isn't. I feel dumb and awful. How could I end up in such a situation? I just went to sleep and woke up – and everything's gone. My future. My success. My dream. My pitch that – let's be honest – wasn't great enough for them to care so much. I was the one caring so much. Apparently not enough to prepare everything, though. But I could swear I prepared everything. That it wasn't a dream.

What if I stay here forever?

Of course I won't. People will start worrying about me. Eventually, someone will be coming up the staircase from work, and I'll be on the watch. Eventually, I'll break the door down. Or the key will suddenly pop up in my hand.

No. Still empty.

I pick up the rag from the floor but I immediately drop it back. I'm suffocating. I'm exhausted. I want to go to sleep. I want to get out of here.

I can't go to sleep. I have to stay awake. I can't, because I'll rearrange things again. I have to search through everything again. I have to get out of here.

Sixteen floors down. Maybe someone will see me through the window if I get a little lower. Am I really considering it, am I already barefoot and looking out the window facing the highway imagining my foot on the narrow protruding piece of wall next to it? Can't I wait? Do I have to convince myself that the interior of the apartment is terrible, that I'm suffocating, that I have to get out?

"HELLOooooo," I howled for the last time at the window facing the store. For the last time, I pressed against the door. For the last time, I pulled on the handle. I approached the window facing the highway.

The windowsill is scorching hot, I have to move to the side quickly. I looked at my window knowing that I could return at any moment. It wasn't that difficult yet, not until I looked down, but it couldn't be helped, not to look down, it's like being in the Queen Sofia Arts Center and not

looking at Guernica. The most important thing is not to think about whether anyone ever died as foolishly as I'm about to, or whether they'll determine from the autopsy that I went crazy, destroyed the apartment, and committed suicide a shiver runs through me when I think that word but I can't tremble

not in this position

just a little more tap on the neighbor's window don't let the wind and the aching muscles push you off and I looked down again and the down was spinning and rising I wonder what my last thought is going to be before

Oh no. No, no, no, no, no, no, no. No. No. Never. I'll stay inside. I'll miss the pitch. I'll eat something. I'll go to sleep. I'll wake up. I'll take a shower. I'll eat something. I'll go to sleep. I'll wake up. I'll eat something. I'll go to sleep. I'll wake up. I'll go to sleep. I'll wake up. I'll go to sleep.

Forever.

And I'll close both windows just in case.