

The Call

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That Monday, it was 1pm when Sid woke up. He pressed his alarm clock which had been ringing for ages, got up, put on a shirt and the same pants he had been wearing for a week, and went to the bathroom. On the toilet seat, he contemplated the layer of dust which allowed him to draw crosses and circles on the floor. When was the last time someone had swept up this room?

“Well... I guess Anatol will do it again next week when he invites Jessica for dinner.”

He flushed, washed his hands, settled in the leaving room, took place on his usual side of the couch, switched the TV on: there was an episode of Space Goofs. On the table, he could see dozens of empty beer bottles and pizza leftovers. He took one scrap and ate it.

The phone rang at the far end of the room. Sid muttered, got up, fetched himself a beer from the fridge and picked the receiver up.

“Sid speaking. Is that you, mom?”

“Hi darling, how are you? Listen, your dad and I would like to make sure you’ll be coming for his birthday. It’s in two months time and all the family will be attending.”

“Yeah sure I’ll come, don’t you worry,” he answered briefly.

“Fine, I’ve called you on your mobile, but you didn’t answer. So I’ve tried your flat. Shouldn’t you be working on Monday afternoon? You told me last month you had found a job...”

“Well, in fact I didn’t. They took someone else...”

“Oh Sid, I am so sorry! I hope you haven’t stopped searching... You are 31 now, you can’t stay in your leaving room all day long and just live on unemployment benefits... I’m worried about you... How are Nestor and Anatol? Are they with you today?”

“They are fine mom. No, Anatol’s working and Nestor had a party last night, I don’t think he came back.”

“Hmm. Is Anatol still with this girl I was introduced to last time I came to see you? I can’t remember her name...”

“Jessica. Yes, they’re still together.”

“Oh that’s right! Jessica! Such a nice girl! I liked her very much! And what about you? Have you met someone?”

“Mom, I gotta go. I’ve got some things to see to. Have a nice day! See you!” Sid hung up.

He went back to his couch. He was about to take a sip, when he froze.

“Sid...” sounded a deep and mighty voice through the flat.

He was startled and spilled his beer all over his shirt and pants.

“Anatol?!! You... What the f... !!” he screamed. “What’s wrong with you mate, you scared the hell out of me! Aren’t you supposed to be at work today?!” He went to his mate’s room: it was totally empty.

He knocked at the bathroom door, no answer. He opened it. All he found was a collection of dirty cotton buds lying over the washbasin. For months it had been completely clogged with hair and grime.

Sid took off his wet clothes and threw them on the mass of dirty linen near the washing machine. He changed into clean clothing, and went back to the leaving room. He wiped the tiled floor, helped himself with another beer and sank into the couch. He felt vaguely anxious: where had that sound come from?

“I didn’t dream, I’m sure I didn’t dream: I almost had a fit!” he thought.

“Sid...” sounded the same voice. This time it was louder and more distinct.

Sid dropped his glass which broke into pieces.

“Who’s there?” he vaguely pointed the remote like a sword.

“Nestor, show yourself! I swear, if you’re playing stupid you’re gonna have a hard time!! Show yourself you damn fool!”

“Sid...” the voice continued, patiently.

Sid’s was sweating bullets, but he did not make a bad move this time.

“Who’s there?! Show yourself!”

“Sid, be quiet. God is talking to thee.”

Sid stared wide-eyed, shoulders hunched, and dropped his remote on the couch.

“What?”

“Thou heard what I said.”

Sid crawled on all fours and turned his cushions up side down.

The voice continued:

“Do not search for a microphone my son. I am speaking to thee directly.”

Without answering, Sid had sighed and began checking under the tables.

“Hello! Sid, I am talking to thee!”

Sid stopped, half nettled, half amused, and examined the walls:

“Listen, I don’t know who you are, I don’t know how you’re doing such a thing, but please can you just stop now? Your little joke is over! Stop it now!”

“Oh Sid... Thou still do not believe me? Ahem... How could I... Oh, that is right, thou can ask me anything, thou will see I am omniscient, let us start,” suggested the mighty voice.

Sid sighed again.

“But... All right, all right, you wanna play? First, tell me how old I am.”

“Thou are 32 years, 3 months, 19 days and 5 hours old,” answered the voice instantaneously.

“Ha ha! You got it wrong! Ha ha! I’m only 31! I got you! Now tell me who you are and where you’re hiding!”

“Oh thou mean... Thy question was not clear enough, I included the time in thy mother’s womb.”

“What?” Sid asked, narrowing his eyes.

“Absolutely. I have known thee for longer than thou think, my son. So, approximately 31 years, 6 months, 17 days and 22 hours have passed since thou were born. Does this answer satisfy thee?”

Sid remained skeptical and asked:

“Ahem... Can you also tell me the name of the girl I had a crush for in primary school?”

“Camilla.”

“What...! How do you...”

“And when thou were 6, Camilla promised thee to give thee a kiss if thou gave her the answers for the math test. Thou did, but then she refused to give thee that kiss, and thou cried for hours and hours in thy bedroom when thou came home! Ha ha ha!” sounded the mighty voice, obviously very amused.

Sid fell on his knees, completely stunned. How could someone know anything about that when he had forgotten himself?

“Do thou believe me now?”

Sid kept staring at the carpet.

“Oh my God...”

“Yes?”

“No, I mean... Are You really God, isn’t that a joke? But why are You in my flat?”

“I am in thy flat because I am, my son. I’ve always been in thy flat, Sid, even before it was built.”

“No, I mean... What do You want from me?” Sid got up again and looked at the ceiling, with his eyes wide open.

“Oh! You meant... Well, I came to thee because I need thy help. I need thee for a great mission.”

“A mission? But what kind?”

“Exactly: a mission. I cannot say more to thee for the moment, I will get back to thee within a few weeks. I have to organize a couple of things before. Are thou in?”

“Of course I am! But... God?”

“Yes, my son?”

“Why me? What is so special about me? I don’t even think I ever believed in

You in my entire life...”

God spluttered.

“Ahem... Thou know, my son, I work in mysterious ways. Thou cannot ask me something like that. But if thou do not want to be part...”

“Yes, of course, I do accept! What shall I do?!” Sid asked excitedly.

God’s voice suddenly became stronger and more severe.

“For the moment, my son, thou can do nothing for me. Well, well, well, look at thee, do thou think Moses had such a beer belly? How could thou possibly help me in such a poor condition? First, I want thee to lose 13 pounds within three weeks.”

“13 pounds??!”

The walls vibrated.

“Absolutely, 13 pounds. I want thee to stop going to McDonald three times a week, and I want thee to do 150 push-ups and 200 sit-ups a day. I also want thee to clean up that flat of yours. How can thou think straight when thy room is in such a mess? For three weeks, I will be watching thee, silently. If thou do it right, I will come back to thee in exactly three weeks. But I want thee to take it seriously. If one day I happen to see that thou did only 199 sit-ups, or if I happen to see that thy flat does not get better, I will be very disappointed, and thou will never hear from me again. Goodbye, Sid.”

“Are You serious? Don’t You think it’s a bit too much? I mean, I’m determined to try hard, but... so many? Seriously?”

Sid got nothing but a long silence for an answer.

“Oh no, no, no, no, no!! Don’t leave me now please! I’m not finished! Don’t leave me now!” he yelled at the ceiling.

He faced the facts: he was not going to receive anything. He pinched and slapped himself several times.

“I didn’t dream, For sure I didn’t dream... It wasn’t my imagination... The walls actually trembled! The lamps and the beers fell from the table... All that was real... Oh my God...”

He stopped within a second.

“Ok, so... What did He tell me exactly? 150 push-ups and 200 sit-ups a day? No, it was the contrary! Oh shit... No, that’s it! 150 push-ups and 200 sit-ups! Plus the flat to tidy. Ok, I’ll do it, I’ll do it, no problem,” he breathed out deeply. “I’ll just have one last beer to recover...”

Sid strove hard. For three weeks, he complied with the orders he had received.

He woke up at eight o'clock every morning, to make sure he had plenty of time and could pump iron. Many times he felt sick and thought he was going to give up, but his weight loss and his daily prayers helped him hold fast. Additionally, he spent one hour a day jogging and another hour cleaning his flat, which of course amazed his roommates.

"Don't you think you're overdoing it?" Anatol asked him one day. "You've already vacuumed that part!"

"Yes it's true. But you see, the place was so dirty... It didn't make me feel comfortable..."

"Oh man, stop your bullshits please... We had a phone call from your mother today, while you were out. Of course I didn't tell her that you're not your usual self but... Come on boy, just tell me: you've just met someone, haven't you?"

Sid gave a faint smile.

"You have no idea..."

"Oh I knew it! I knew you could do it, you sick bastard!" he clapped his hands. "Come on, don't keep it for yourself! How is she?"

"Well... I don't think I would be able to make a description..."

"Oh no, you're really that mad? And did you...?"

"Come on Anatol..." Sid sighed.

"Oh sorry, I forgot you were such a romantic! I leave you alone, I promise. But you're right, you're right: take care of yourself, take care of our place. Like I always said: be gentle during the first weeks, do what she asks, and then, you will get everything you want, you lucky bastard!" he laughed and patted him on his back.

The awaited day, Sid woke up at eight o'clock, like he now had become accustomed to.

"Today is the day..." he thought, anxious and yet excited. He had but slept two hours that night.

He dressed with the elegant clothes he had especially bought for the occasion, and went to the leaving room. He opened the window, put a cushion on the floor, knelt, and looked out.

"Oh God... Please come to me now... I've been working so hard for the past few weeks... Can You just send me a sign? Can You show me that You're real, that my meeting with You last time wasn't a dream?" he prayed silently for long minutes.

"Sid..." a quiet voice reached his ears.

“Yes?!! Yes God it’s me!!” Sid screamed, bouncing and lifting his arms. “Oh I’m so relieved! It’s You! It’s really You!”

“Sid...” the voice was stronger, but yet very shy and almost agonizing.

“Yes God, I’m here. What’s wrong? You can tell me, I’m here! What shall I do now?”

“Sid... What are you...? Can you just close the blinds? I’m trying to sleep...”

Sid turned round and saw his roommate.

“Nestor?? I didn’t know you were here! What are you doing on the floor? My God you’re totally drunk again... What time did you come home? Listen, I’m taking you to your room...”

Sid helped Nestor through the flat, had him lie on his bed and went back to the leaving room. He sat on the couch, sadly.

“Oh God... Was it only my imagination...?”

“Thou managed splendidly, my son.”

Sid experienced an instant feeling of relief.

“Finally, You’re here.”

“Yes, I am. Excuse me, I am a little late: I did not recognize the flat at first glance, I thought I was in the wrong place.”

“Really?” Sid laughed. “Thanks, it is way more homey now... And look at that: I’ve lost 15 fucking pounds!”

“Yes, I know. I know everything, Sid, and I am very proud of thee. But thou must stop being so vulgar. Furthermore, if I were a bad God, I would reproach thee with ignoring thy mates’ room. But I am not, I am very merciful, my son.”

“Yes, You are, and very modest at that!”

“Oh, let us be serious. I did not come to speak about me. I came because we have some work to do.”

“That’s right! Tell me what I’ve got to do now! I’ll do anything for You!”

“Thou now must find a job.”

“Find a job?! Well, that’s not for lack of trying, but I...”

“I want thee to work at the IT department of Great Ormond Street Hospital. Thou have some computer science skills, haven’t thou?”

“Yes I have. I know a thing or two, but... why Great Ormond Street Hospital?” Sid exclaimed. “This is such a renowned and famous establishment... How could I manage to work there? I only have a HNC! One of my best friends in my second year at college studied medicine, but never was accepted there after his thesis. He was brilliant though!”

“Do not discuss, Sid. I want thee to write thy curriculum vitae today. When it is written, thou will send it to the director of the department. Thou will tell him

that thou want to do an internship. I will give thee his mail address.”

“He won’t even read it.”

“Trust me, my son. I will stretch out my hand, and smite the hospital with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will accept thee.”

Richard Witman arrived at his office at 8.30, in a hurry as usual.

“Hello Kate! How are you today? I’m a bit late, my car wouldn’t start!”

“Good morning Mr Witman!” answered Miss Abatescianni.

He sat down, propped his feet on his desk and tilted his head back:

“So, what is the news?”

“You had a phone call from Mr Roger. He wanted you to confirm that the network has been running well since the partial breakdown last week. Mr Cook wanted to explain about the evolution of his interface, you know, for the web page dedicated to patients.”

“Perfect Kate. It seems so crazy that this project shouldn’t progress at all. It should have been done a long time. All I ask is only a bloody interface! Let me check my mails and I’ll get back to him.”

Miss Abatescianni smiled and turned all red.

“Ok... Ok... Bullshit... Ok... Remind me to answer Ms Young this afternoon.”

“Certainly, Mr Witman.”

“Bullshit... Bullshit... Oh, listen to that, a young man with an HNC is applying for an internship... Ha ha ha!”

“Hi hi hi!”

“Ouch!” Mr Witman jumped from his chair.

“Is there a problem, Mr Witman?”

“Well, yes, I don’t know, the mouse triggered a discharge! Can you believe it? It’s the first time it has ever happened to me! I just was about to junk this moron’s mail and... Ouch! Ouch!”

“Oh my God, are you ok? Do you want me to...?”

“Quiet. Do you feel it?”

“Feel what, Mr Witman?”

“I don’t know,” he whispered. “It feels like... Oh my... Do you see it? The mouse’s moving by itself! Is that a glitch?”

Sid’s curriculum vitae opened on the screen.

“Kate?”

“Yes, Mr Witman?”

He stared at the screen pantingly.

“Summon him to my office...”

“Yes!” Sid exclaimed in his room. “God, are You here? I’ve already got an answer! They’re okay to take me! Hello? They want to see me as early as tomorrow!”

Sid could hear a pin drop in Nestor’s room.

“Oh no... Not again...” he began to tense up. “Do You really think You’re obliged to jilt me now? Please...”

That night, Sid got visited by a mighty voice during his sleep.

“My son, here I am. Do not worry for tomorrow, thou will be fine. Mr Witman certainly will make thee know that he is mad at thee. I played a little trick upon him and he does not like to feel demeaned. Indeed, he has a big self-esteem problem. Thou only need to take a look at his gorgeous ATV. So, do not be afraid and trust thyself, my son.”

Sid took a deep breath before he knocked.

“Please, come in!”

“Good morning, Madam. I am due to meet Mr Witman. Can I see him?”

“Oh, you must be Mr Reed! Mr Witman will be back in a minute! Have a seat!”

Seated, Sid kept straight as a post, looking at his feet.

“Come on, my son. Do not be that shy. Talk to her.”

“What? But I can’t...”

“I beg your pardon? Have you talked to me Mr Reed?” asked Miss Abatescianni.

“Ahem... No... I... Yes I mean... May I ask your name?”

“Well, I am Miss Abatescianni. But here everybody calls me Kate!”

“And,” he began to falter. “How... How long... How long have you been working here? Ahem...”

“It’s my second year, and my first one in Mr Witman’s office. It’s not a bed of roses every day! And you didn’t make things easier yesterday! He was so furious! I didn’t dare say a word!”

Sid opened his eyes wide and swallowed hard.

“But it’s okay! You completely impressed him! How did you...”

“Good morning! You must be Mr Reed I assume!”

Richard Witman had got in unnoticed.

“I won’t be very long,” he continued. “I didn’t appreciate your little joke at all. I don’t wanna know how you managed to hack my computer, but I want you to know that I would have already sued you in normal times. You can thank God that so far I have had nothing but an incompetent fool to take care of my project. I’ll give you a temporary job to start with. Please go and see Mr Cook. He will show you around.”

“Thank you Mr Wit...”

“But I swear, Mr Reed,” he pointed his finger to Sid. “The very next time, I won’t take it as a joke, I promise. You’d better watch yourself.”

On his way out, Sid went to the bathroom.

“Hey! You! Are You here?” he asked the mirror. “What’s the hell is this?? I didn’t sign for this! D’You hear me?”

“What is the matter, Sid?”

“What’s the matter? Let me tell You! First, You put me on a crash diet that almost killed me, and now, who’s that Mr Witman? You make me work for a real tyrant! I dare not imagine what I’ll be through when he realizes I’ve never encoded a web page in my whole life!”

“Thou now have to learn, my son. After all, thou are thirty one years old now. Thou cannot stay all day long in thy leaving room and live on unemployment benef...”

“Oh, stop it! You sound like my mother!”

“Sid, do not yell at me, please. Thou do not help me if thou are questioning all my doing. If thou do not want to be part of my purpose, thou can leave and go back to Space Goofs on thy television set. I will find someone else.”

Sid calmed down. He sat on the toilet seat, and bit his lips.

“No, sorry. Of course I’m in. What do You want from me now?”

“First, do not worry about thy work, I will be with thee. Thou will become the best engineer that this hospital has ever known. Moreover, I want thee to invite Kate to dinner tonight.”

“What? But what for?”

“Do not discuss, Sid. It is all part of a big plan. By my will I allow events to happen. And I want thee to take Kate out tonight.”

“But... You know I can’t do it! I have not spoken with a girl for months!”

“I know Sid, and this is absolutely not something thou should be proud of. I also know thy internet history, and this is such a shame, Sid.”

“Gasp... Ok you’re right, I’ll talk to her right now!”

Sid found Miss Abatescianni at her coffee break at the same floor.

“Hi... Huh... Kate, that’s right?”

“Hi Mr Reed! What can I do for you? Is Mr Witman asking for me?”

“No of course not! I just wanted... What are your plans for tonight?”

She instantly became as red as her chair.

“Well, I’ve got nothing for now, what about you?”

They met at 9 pm in a restaurant of Miss Abatescianni’s choosing, close to Bloomsbury Street. Once their orders had been placed, Sid began the conversation.

“So Where do you come from, Miss...? Annetabiasci...? It doesn’t sound very English Where does it come from? Germany?”

“Abatescianni,” she smiled. “No, no, it’s Italian.”

“Oh yes! Of course!” he hesitated. “And... Have you been to Italy yet?”

“I believe I visited it twice, when I was a child. I’ve been in Turin and then in Rome.”

“Oh Rome ! La cittadellina eternalita!” Sid grinned.

Miss Abatescianni laughed. “Yes, but actually one just says la citt eterna. But you know, I hardly know this country. I was born here, my grand-grand-grand-father was the one who emigrated. He came from Naples. It was a long time ago!”

“Your grand-grand-grand-grand-father??” Sid raised his eyebrows.

“Absolutely! He was such a womanizer! He abandoned his wife and his six children and eloped to Paris!”

“With is mistress?” Sid choked on his water.

“Yes, Indeed! Can you believe it? But it’s not very interesting. You surely don’t want to hear my story...”

“Yes, please! Go on!”

“I think his name was Dario. And his wife’s name was Angela. That’s it! Angela. Naturally, she came to France after her husband. But of course she never got him back...”

“Well, there was no Facebook in those days.”

“Absolutely!” Kate burst out laughing. “But once she was in France, she got into money troubles, she couldn’t go back to Italy... She also had a nervous breakdown, so, three of her children joined her in France: Arturo, Vincenzo and a girl...”

I forgot her name... In short, Arturo was my grand-grand-father.”

“Oh ok! Was he also running away from his wife?”

“Of course not! But he and Vincenzo, the oldest, hung around with the wrong crowd when they were in Italy. Their father hadn’t left anything for them, and they got into drug trafficking, things like that... They stole cars and money for some crime organizations and corrupt politicians, to fend for their brothers and sisters...”

“You simply can’t have a good Italian story without mafia-like networks!”

“Yes, that’s true! That’s so cliché, but it seems to be true! So, when they went to France to see their mother, all their bad friends were after them, because of course they had conned them before they left! So, Arturo, Vincenzo and their mother had no choice but to flee to America to hide!”

“What about his sister?”

“She got killed! What do you think, these guys were serious! And they followed them to New York! They got Vincenzo and his mother, Angela, they shot them both! But they didn’t get Arturo.”

“Jesus! What about him?” Sid asked.

“Do you know Spiritudencia?”

“No, what is it?”

“This is a religious community, or something of the sort, in Eastbourne! Its members are specialized in addictions. You can join them if you’re addicted to something. It can be anything: alcohol, drugs, computer, sex... You spend a few months, maybe a year with them, and they make sure you leave without your former addiction!” she got her face closer to Sid, and whispered: “I heard that they make someone stay with you around the clock. He’s never further than four meters from you...”

Sid started to sweat. “Ok... And why are you telling me that?”

“Ha ha ha! Nothing personal, Sid! Arturo came back to Europe and joined this community, in Eastbourne. He thought: “Well, I’m gonna hide here for a few months, no one’s gonna seek me in that lost place!” And guess what?”

“What?”

“He became a priest!”

Sid choked on his water, again. “You don’t say!”

“Yes he did! No joke!”

“But if he was a priest, how did he...? I mean, he was your grand-father, wasn’t he?”

“Grand-grand-father. Well, he conceived a son with an American girl before he became English. They were reunited a few years after.”

“This is unbelievable...” Sid sat mouth agape. “Do you think there is such a... a thing as destiny...? That we are part of a big plan that allows such awesome events to happen?”

“Like my grand-grand-grand-mother who got shot?”

“No, no, no! I mean...”

“What?”

“Sid you’re such an idiot!” he thought. “I meant, like...”

“Like the fact that we are having dinner together tonight?”

Sid brutally stopped. He swallowed hard and started to tremble. Kate was looking at him right in the eyes.

“Ahem... I’ll... I’ll be right back, I’m off to the gents. I... I have some men’s problems.”

He left the table quickly.

“Men’s problems? Damn, I can’t believe I said such a stupid thing!”

Sid had hardly entered the restaurant toilets, when he heard the now familiar mighty voice:

“What is going on, Sid?”

“Man! I just can’t do it! She’s so gorgeous! She must take me for a moron!” he was spraying his face with water.

“Ha ha ha!” God exclaimed. “Thou are doing fine. Keep on making her laugh, everything is going to be all right.”

“Can You just stop repeating that everything’s all right? How can You be so sure?”

“Huh... That is correct. I do not know that, Sid. Indeed, girls are too much complicated. This is beyond my knowledge.”

Sid smiled, drying his hands.

“By the way, is her story true? I mean... Her grand-father who was a priest...?”

“Grand-grand-father. Absolutely, Arturo was one of my greatest achievements. But he was difficult to manage. He kept on misappropriating the funds raised during the call... I think one can do nothing against one’s genes.”

“Huh?! That’s pretty racist, God...”

“Oh! Thou have got a point, Sid! , I will confess that to myself when I have time.”

Sid went back to his chair with a large smile.

“What’s that grin? Have you met someone funny?” Kate asked.

“Ahem... Nothing! I mean... I often laugh for no reasons,” he answered. Oh what an idiot! he thought. It’s getting worse and worse...

“So, it’s your turn. Tell me about you,” she questioned him.

“Ahem... I’m sorry, I just can’t compare favourably... My family doesn’t have such a fabulous and romantic history... My parents are just retired English teachers.”

“But maybe all this is coming soon. This is what you’ve just told me, isn’t it? You’ve told me that we are all here to accomplish a purpose, or something like that. So maybe something epic’s gonna happen to you...”

“Something epic’s gonna happen to me? But if we follow your logic, considering that your family have already got their dose of adventure, your life’s gonna be pretty ordinary and boring...”

“Oh, Sid, don’t say such a thing! Don’t forget I work with Mr Witman! Sometimes this is an adventure in itself!”

They burst out laughing.

They enjoyed the rest of their evening, and then Sid insisted on paying the bill.

“Thanks a lot, Sid. I appreciated it very much...” Kate said as they were leaving the restaurant.

She looked at the street.

“Where did you park?”

“Well... I came by bus.”

“Oh that’s nice! You’re acting ecological! I should do the same, but I never get organ...”

“No, that’s just... I don’t have a car. In fact, I don’t have a driving license either...”

“Ha, ha, ha! You are such a character! Anyway there isn’t any bus left at that hour. Come on, I’ll give you a lift!”

Once at the foot of his building, Sid hesitated and decided to take matters into his own hands.

“Well... Can... Can I offer you a tea, a coffee, or something?”

Kate accepted readily. They met Anatol in the kitchen.

“Hello! You must be Nestor, Sid spoke a lot about you tonight! I’m Kate.”

“Hello! Wrong guess, I’m Anatol. Nice to meet you.” he said and gave Sid a wink. “Sid, by the way, I haven’t seen Nestor for a week: every time I come home, he’s having a party somewhere. I’m off to sleep, good night!”

Kate sat down on the couch with Sid and her cup of tea, and looked at the shelf. Amounts of books and videos seemed to be arranged alphabetically.

“Are they all yours? This is almost like in a library!”

“Ahem... Yes it is,” he answered self-confident. “It took me a lot of time to

collect all this.”

“You didn’t tell me that you liked love stories that much...”

Sid straightened up. Kate stared at him right in the eyes.

“Well...” “In f... In fact, those must be Nestor’s! Or... Or Anatol’s girlfriend! I’m absolutely not fond of romantic stories!” He could see Anatol doing some obscene gestures behind Kate. “I... I find they’re all the same and not credible at all... Ahem...”

Kate kept calm and still, she didn’t even blink. Sid didn’t know where to put his eyes on.

“Are they really?” she asked slowly.

Sid was sweating all over:

“Kiss her! Kiss her right now thou idiot, or it will be too late!”

Without thinking twice, he gave Kate a long passionate kiss. Cars set to honk outside and fireworks displays could be seen through the window. After long minutes of embrace, Sid disappeared a few moments to go to the toilets and brush his teeth. That was when the habitual voice came to him:

“Very well done, my son.”

“You again! Don’t You think all these meetings in the toilets are pretty weird?? Thank You for that anyway. Tell me, would the cars still have honked if I hadn’t kissed her?”

“It is all part of a big plan, Sid. Thou begin to do well, thou will not see me for some times. Do thy job tonight, I will come to thee later.”

“Do my... But... One minute, You’re God, aren’t You supposed to be the advocate of chastity and abstinence before marriage?”

“Ahem... Yes, I...” God snorted. “Ahem, yes I am... But... Do not worry, I will not be looking at you too tonight. See thee later, Sid.”

For the weeks that followed, Kate and Sid lived a perfect love that one only sees in romantic movies. They spent all their evenings and weekends together, visiting cities, watching movies at the cinema, walking in the parks. At work, Sid also succeeded in impressing Mr Witman, who thus fired Mr Cook, his associate. Every night before going to sleep, Sid prayed God not to forget him, repeating Him that he was still ready to accomplish his mission when he was needed.

One Friday morning, when Sid had finished his daily push-ups, he heard:

“Sid, do thou have two minutes for me?”

Sid rolled over and jumped around all excited:

“Oh You’re here! Two minutes for You?! I’ve got the entire day if you wish!”

“Oh no, Sid, I will be very brief. This is our next step: I want thee to go tomorrow to the place I will show thee.”

“Huh... It reminds me of something,” Sid smiled. “Praise You that I have no son to sacrifice!”

“If only thou knew how right thou are, Sid. I want thee to take Kate with thee.”

Sid froze. He frowned and pointed the finger at the ceiling:

“Listen! If You hurt a hair of her head...”

“Then what, Sid? What are thou going to do? Are thou going to kill me? Ha ha ha!”

Sid crouched on the floor:

“Oh God please no... I beg You, don't hurt her...”

“Come on Sid, I am just joking with thee! You are such a credulous person! Ha ha ha! If thou could see thy face!”

Sid got up bewildered, while God continued:

“Everything is going to be alright, my son. Do as I say, please. It would be a pity to stop it all right now. I would have not the courage to find a substitute for thee.”

Sid found Kate in her office and asked her:

“Hi darling, what would you say about getting away for the weekend? We could go to the country. It would be a nice change, wouldn't it?”

“Yes sweetie, why not? It would be very nice actually! Do you have a specific idea?”

The following day, early in the morning, they drove to Winchester. Kate could not stop talking and asking questions about the weekend while Sid was lost in his thoughts:

“Why the Hell did He want me to go out with Kate? Is she also part of the plan? But she didn't tell me anything... Well, I didn't tell her anything either... Oh my God, maybe she's a spy!”

He jumped from his seat, and Kate cast him a weird glance. He caressed her leg and sat again smiling to her.

“Or maybe God just choose her because she was able to drive... Anyway everything has been planned since the beginning... He's so intelligent!”

In the suburbs of Winchester, they sank into the forest before getting closer to the given address.

“Are you sure that's here, honey?” Kate asked.

“Of course I am, it looks that this is the good address, isn't it?”

“But, Sid! This is a farm!”

“A farm, come on! It’s not because you see cows in the yard that it has to be a farm, Kate! Anyway, this is the address they gave to me when I made a reservation. It has to be here!”

Sid went out of the car when Kate got impatient:

“Sid! What’s going on again? I didn’t say anything when you took me to a... a dirty swamp two weeks ago, but, what are we doing now in a farm?!”

Sid moved towards the farm without answering.

“Oh shit...” she also got out of the car and angrily slammed the door.

She kept on yelling at him while he pretended not to hear her. He went through the yard to the main door. He could hear noises inside. Obviously a lot of people were having a meeting in that place. He knocked and opened the door.

Suddenly, dead silence. Then, sighs of relief.

“He’s made it at long last!”

Sid could recognize all his family around the tables: his parents, his brothers and sisters, his grandmother, his uncles and aunts, his cousins, his five-year old niece... His mother stood up and kissed him hello:

“Darling! We’ve been waiting for you since yesterday! We were desperate to see you!”

“Mom... But... What are you all doing in this farm?”

“Well you know that, Sid, we were looking for a place for your father’s birthday, it needed to be not too far from everyone. We found this pretty farm! We’ve rented it for the weekend! But come on, I’ve been calling you every minute since last week. You never take the call! I really thought you had forgotten!”

“Ahem! I’m sorry, I’ve got so much work, I’ve turned off my phone...”

Half a dozen people joined them at the door and kissed Sid hello. His mother continued:

“And you do have a job now! Anatol told me everything! I’m so happy for you!”

“And look at you!” his cousin Tony exclaimed. “You look twice as slim!”

Kate approached and it caught Sid’s mother by surprise:

“Oh hello! Welcome! Sid, can you please introduce us!”

“Kate, this is my mother, Eleonore. Mom, this is Kate.” Sid said pretty amused.

“Nice to meet you!” Kate rejoiced. “Sid didn’t mention anything! What a surprise!”

“Of course you’re more than welcome, Kate!” Eleonore stared at her with a blissful smile.

Kate entered the room and began to greet everybody. Sid apologized and moved

towards the back of the house. He sat on the grass.

“Oh God... I don't understand... What am I doing here? What kind of mission is that?”

At this very moment, Sid could see a picture projected in the sky. A fat guy was extended on his couch, watching TV and drinking beer with his hand in his pants.

“No... Is that me? Is that really me?”

“It was, Sid. This is the purpose.”

Tears began to sink down his cheeks, he wiped them hastily.

“God... I don't know what to say... Thank You so much!”

“Thou are welcome, Sid. I just want thee not to forget that I love thee. In fact, I've always loved thee, but this angered me to see thee living in thy rubbish heap all day. Goodbye, my son.”

A fresh wind caressed Sid's face.

“Sid, what are you doing here?” his mother had joined him. “Come on, lunch is not over, and you didn't even kiss your grandmother hello!”

“Of course, I'm sorry. I'm coming right now,” he said.

“Let me tell you something else, darling, please don't be mad. Tomorrow, we're going to mass with all the family! You know how important this is for your father! So, please avoid freaking out as you do it every time, understood?”

Two weeks later, on Sunday, it was 7am when Sid woke up. He stole out of his room in order not to wake Kate up, and began his daily push-ups.

“One... Holy Mary... Two... Mother of God... Three... Through the intercession of St. Patrick... Four... May God straighten my faith...”

He then got up and stretched, like he now always did, thinking about the work he had to finish for the following week, when he knocked a book off the shelf.

“A Bible?” he thought. “I never saw a single one in this flat. Who the Hell did buy this?”

He slowly picked it up, moved to the window, and looked at the sky.

“You've just placed it here, haven't You?”

He got no answer.

“Well, thank You anyway. You're right, I had to get one one day!” Sid was about to go to store his new book back on the shelf, when he thought: But? Why have You exactly opened it at Job's story? Is it another sign?

Still no answer.

“Ok! I understand! I'm going to read it now! But You're lucky it's Sunday!”

He came to the kitchen table, enjoyed a bowl of cereals, and immersed himself in the reading of Job's book.

At eleven o'clock, he was joined by Kate, who kissed him and helped herself to some cereals too.

"Hi darling! Huh? Why are you actually reading the Bible?" she asked suspiciously. "Oh you're right! It's the Day of the Lord!" she laughed. "Anyway, you never told me you actually believed in God!"

"No, honey. I just usually like to spend my Sunday morning reading. It's called culture. Anyway I'm almost finished, I don't find it very interesting..."

"Job's book? Are you kidding? I never read it, but I know that this is the story of Satan and God fighting each other and with a poor guy in the middle... Are you telling me you can identify with Job?" she jested.

"Don't make fun of me, please... Oh, you know, maybe... But considering you take me to the pizzeria twice a week, you have to be Satan then, you little temptress!" Sid answered without turning his eyes away from his book.

He then froze reading the very last chapter of the book: So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had a remarkable physical fitness, and a perfectly tidy little apartment, and a very exciting job in a renown hospital, and yet plenty of time to take care about his delightful girlfriend.

He immediately closed the book. He stared at Kate eyes wide open, and then began to laugh hysterically.

"You're so right honey! Ha ha ha! How could people still identify with such ancient stories?!"