

“You fucking idiot.”

“I still don’t -”

“I don’t want to see you ever again!”

It got quiet for a moment, the air was heavy and thick between them. Ian didn’t want to believe it, but the seriousness in his voice left no space for any hope.

“You really mean it, don’t you?”

“Yeah, now get out and don’t come back!”

“Hey, wait -”

For a moment he hesitated under his hostile stare, but managed to speak again.

“If you want to part for good, I can help you with it.”

“I don’t need your help, or you.”

“If you do it, I promise we will never be able to see each other ever again.”

The man was visibly confused by his sudden and quick surrender, but also curious. At the moment it seemed incredibly tempting to get rid of him, even though a few hours before no such thought would cross his mind.

“Alright”

Again, they paused. Ian didn’t yet quite believe he was doing it, that he was agreeing to this. Yet he knew it would be probably a bit easier for both of them to somehow let go. He was hoping he wasn’t too quick with his offer, but now there was no coming back.

“We will meet one more time, then, if you successfully go through this, we will never be able to reach each other again. You’ll know what to do. You’ll have a chance to back away, but... you should just know. You either do it and none of us gets to reverse it, or retreat.”

“Yeah, I don’t think I will retreat. I’ll be waiting for you then.”

They were acquainted in a strange way. They never actually met, the man saw Ian only in his dreams, he didn’t have any other memories of him. Despite that, he knew him as a real person and recalled spending quite a lot of time together. It was that strange case of having separate memories when a person is dreaming – at the very moment he saw his face he would remember every single detail about him. They ‘met’ whenever they wanted, the man quickly learned to gain awareness while dreaming, so that they could hang out more often. Ian was present in his life for about a year now, and even though their first encounter was rather random, a considerable bond grew between them.

He expected to see him once more, as he was told.

The man woke up in a forest he didn’t recognize. It was past sunset, yet despite falling darkness he could see his surroundings rather clearly and vividly. He soon noticed how quiet it was around him, the

silence was heavy and almost deafening. He still felt a bit hazy, so he didn't get up from the ground yet, instead decided to inspect the place a bit, taking a quick look around. There was nothing particular of interest, instead of his backpack lying nearby - besides that, huge amounts of dry leaves on the ground, twigs, bushes and trees. Everything seemed dead, as it usually is in late autumn.

The man soon regained full strength – it was sometimes rough to wake up in a dream like that. This time however he thought it was slightly different. He reached for his backpack. Since he had no memories of this place or how he got there, the contents of the backpack were as mysterious as his eerie surroundings. Inside he found quite unnerving items.

The first thing that caught his attention was a glock. He didn't own one, yet this particular one seemed oddly familiar. He thought he recognized the feeling when he was holding it. The magazine was empty, but there was no spare ammunition.

Next he pulled out a white shroud, folded carelessly. There was nothing inside of it. Having removed it from the backpack, he noticed a bottle of beer, the kind he would drink only with his friend exclusively. There was only one bottle, and he really didn't feel like having a drink right then, especially this one. The man then noticed a silver necklace and a paper pack of flower seeds at the bottom. The necklace, or rather a simple decorative chain was a gift from Ian. He didn't wear any jewelry but he owned this chain, so he decided to give it to the man. He thought he looked better wearing this. Indeed, the necklace would decorate his neck pretty well.

The flowers, a kind of a dark roses to be exact, were also closely related to Ian, as they were his favorite. He wasn't really interested in gardening or anything like that, not even flowers in general, yet he always thought these were just “very pretty”. He would always say that cutting them down was pointless, just making them die slowly, but since everybody would do it, we should at least make a good use of them. He once even gifted one to the man, saying that most men get flowers only at their funeral, and he deserves one anyway. He then had to explain thoroughly that he was not in love with him, since the friend was a bit weirded out by this.

Besides, he found some general useful items, such as a knife, a pack of his favorite cigarettes, or a small bottle of water.

The man packed the stuff back and decided to look around for some clues. “You will know what to do”, he remembered his words, but for now he felt completely lost and unsure of what was happening. As he started walking through the crunchy leaves and twigs, he decided to light up a ciggie to brighten the mood a bit. Soon after his not so peaceful walk through the forest was interrupted – he stepped on something. At first he thought it was a branch, but it was too firm. He dug up a shovel from the leaves, and he didn't quite like it – first the gun, now the shovel? He grew more and more uneasy with every

passing minute, and he didn't yet quite know what to do or where Ian was. The man began to suspect that something was terribly wrong.

On his way to no particular destination he was wondering about all the items he found, feeling repulsed and disgusted with everything that was so closely connected to the person he was supposed to see one more time. He just needed to finish whatever he was supposed to do, not be reminded of him even more! Almost all that he found in his backpack was somehow related to Ian, and he hated it so much. The man was truly an impetuous person, someone who was ready to give up everything just because of what he considered to be a gravely sin, yet to someone else would feel merely as an inconvenience. Ian knew that this man was often judging and easily offended and inhospitable, but that's just how he was. He noticed more light breaking through the trees – there was a clearing nearby and... something else, just nearby it. He couldn't quite tell what it was, so he quickened his pace to discover what he encountered – he froze in his steps.

Lying behind him was a corpse of Ian, terribly pale – he must have been here for quite a while already. He also realized what happened to the ammunition – all the bullets were in poor man's almost torn chest. The man gagged at the sight and mere thought of the possibility of him having killed him. No, he wasn't a murderer! He didn't remember anything like it, yet he felt heavy and hazy just looking at the motionless dead body. He had to support himself on a nearby tree for a while, he felt so horribly overwhelmed, almost unable to breathe and about to faint. At least Ian died pretty quickly, he hoped at least. His face didn't reveal any emotions or pain, and that was probably for the worse; his stare was empty, but piercing, and he somehow couldn't stop himself from looking, only worsening how he felt. He knelt down and closed his slightly covered with fog eyes, so that at least he wouldn't look at him like that anymore. For now, it was the least he could do. He only hoped that whoever did this to him, did it quickly. With shaky hands he carefully picked him up and headed towards the center of the clearing.

Digging a shallow grave took way shorter than he expected, all this time occasionally taking a peek at the corpse. The fury he felt before was fading away, but not enough for him to pity him or feel any remorse. Of course, he wanted to end their relationship, but not by burying him. He knew that he should at least feel sorry for him, but he wouldn't let himself be. He said what he said, and he didn't intend to change his mind just because of the sight, not so quickly. Maybe Ian made all this up just to try to convince him to give up on this? If so, he did quite a good job, he was terrified by what he was going through – after all, it was possible that he murdered him, and now he was preparing to bury the corpse, like some sick killer. Well, if that's what it'd take for him to be finally gone, he'd do it. The man didn't quite like it, but he was still determined, even though guilt slowly started to haunt him.

He took the shroud and spread it neatly inside the pit, preparing a resting place for whom used to be his friend. The man gently dragged him inside and positioned in the typical way corpses are laid, with his hands slightly beneath his chest. The body felt heavy, cold to the touch and its very presence was making him nauseous. It wasn't decaying or anything, he just thought that Ian didn't deserve to die like this – even if it was quick, it was surely painful. And whether he did it or not, it happened because of him.

The man then reached for his backpack and grabbed a beer. On any other occasion, they would drink it together, this time however he put it into the grave, next to him. He also gave him the necklace, which he received as a gift from him, and placed it in his palm.

“Just take them with you and don't come back.”

He wasn't sure about the flower pack. The only sensible thing would be to plant them on the grave, however he didn't feel like giving him any favors, even after he died. He left them around to think about it later, and sat in front of the grave.

As he was staring at him in silence, he started to have second thoughts. It was probably the worst thing he's ever saw, he couldn't bear the sight, yet at the same time couldn't look away, he felt strangely captivated. It was filling him with pure terror. He began to realize what was happening, what he was about to do. The man now wanted to talk to him so badly, hoping that somehow he would answer. Maybe he overreacted? Maybe Ian overreacted with all this show. Was this really worth giving everything up and hurting him so badly? But he felt hurt too. On one hand he offered this whole ordeal, maybe he saw no other option? But then, if he retreated, would things ever be OK again?

“You said I could go back, but you are dead already, so how the fuck am I supposed to?!”

Nothing

“I wouldn't kill you, I didn't want this to happen, not this!”

Of course, nothing

“I wouldn't...”

After yelling at the corpse for a while with no answer, he finally went silent, knowing it's pointless, corpses don't answer. He just got overwhelmed by everything. There had to be a way to go back, after all he told him so, however it didn't look very promising at that moment – he was sitting in front of the grave with the corpse in it. Having yelled at the dead man, he concluded that he actually regretted getting both of them into this situation. This was one of a kind person, someone who showed him a different way of life, whom he had so many memories with, and who could easily tame him with his charm. It would be foolish to let it all go like this, not to mention horribly painful for both of them. But again, would Ian forgive him if they were to meet again? Forgive – probably yes, but surely not forget.

Either way, it was quite a mess. And as much as he would like not to, he had to decide what to do.

“There’s no fucking way I can fix this. Maybe it’s for the better.”

He stood up disheartened. He was unable to look at him anymore. He covered him with the rest of the shroud and picked up a shovel. A bit hesitantly, he started to cover the corpse with dirt.

“I hope you forgive me. You deserve better.”

He tried not to think, he knew he would regret doing this, but there was simply no way of possibly returning to how things were. He fucked up. It was difficult to breathe for him.

Having finished, he opened the seed pack and planted a few seeds on freshly made grave.

“Goodbye”

Soon after he was done with everything, he laid down on the ground, exhausted and drained. It was too much for him. Shortly after he woke up.

Just as he was told, they never met again. The man tried reaching him a few times, but it was as if that person never existed. He gave up after a few such attempts.