

Incredible story

Science fiction by Khristo Poshtakov

It was growing dark. The last hikers hurried along the narrow path down the steep mountain slope toward the bus terminal which was perched at a curve of the mountain road near to the parking lot. Their silhouettes rushed behind the loose curtain of the tree trunks but Vasco's indifferent stare only registered their movement, without actually paying attention to them. He was lying stretched out on the grass of "his" meadow, overwhelmed by his own past which made him the most solitary man in the Universe. Stars appeared on the dark sky one after the other, winced at him compassionately and seemed to whisper to him: "You are miserable, you are extremely miserable."

Vasco was in a self-critical mood; he thought of his life and tears brimmed in his eyes because of the acute pain of his helplessness. As far back as childhood, fate had pointed its cruel finger at him, pressed his soul and made it writhe. He used to lose the money he was given to do the shopping, break new toys, forget to go back home in time, and then endure his parents' slaps patiently.

His flesh crept with disgust but the merciless memories would not leave him alone and took him back to the pimpled days of adolescence. He saw himself again, dressed in a soiled and stained jacket, his jeans were no good and his shoes desperately needed polishing. The cherished contacts with the "frail" sex seemed as distant as ever. At the same time, everyday life accidents poisoned his existence implacably: the public bus would close its door in his nose, teachers would reprimand him, a hair would float in his soup, a tasteless meat ball would hide a little bone with the sole purpose to break his teeth. Vasco shook his head in desperation and thought of the university years instead. There was little consolation there either. He had entered the university by sheer accident and it all seemed to him a long and painful agony. Professors disliked him, their malicious plot against him meant an endless series of failures at the examinations and a sense of constant stress which was on the verge of the human tenacity.

One way or the other, he managed to graduate but that was no end to his pains. What followed was a nasty boss who was picking on him every day, making it no secret that he would

fire Vasco at the earliest convenience. Already used to humiliation, Vasco kept silent and kept on being late for work.

The complacent face of the moon hung over the trees. He stared at the moon sadly. Deep in dismal thoughts, he failed to notice the flying saucer which landed on the meadow. Then suddenly he saw the bent figures clothed in some glossy material. He shouted, jumped and tried to run towards the path but it was too late. One of the two strange creatures pointed a device to him, something snapped and his feet went wobbly.

"Sorry, sir, but you are an interference. We have to either rectify the wave frequency or eliminate you," the holder of the little device spoke in a perfectly intelligible language.

"What do you want? What are you going to rectify?" Vasco shouted and suddenly felt like weeping. The strange creatures pressed their heads with both hands and wailed.

"Bring the adjuster, Crax! This guy will burst our brains, not to speak about the disturbances along the trans-galaxy route!", one of the aliens managed to whisper between the wails.

The creature called Crax rushed to the flying saucer and disappeared inside. It was then that Vasco noticed it: small, smart, silvery in the moonlight.

"What are you going to do to me? Let me go!", he shouted, gripped by sheer horror. He could not bear the thought that on top of all his troubles he would become a guinea pig in the hands of suspicious aliens!

The alien standing next to him pressed his head even more tightly, the pain made him hop around. Meanwhile, Crax returned, carrying something like a big bottomless bird cage. He dragged the incomprehensible device towards Vasco and joined his friend's wails. The meadow was flooded with strange sounds like a doghouse. The howling did not stop until the aliens put the cage on the head of their captive.

"Umph, we did it. Now the emission is isolated," Crax moaned and wiped the sweat from his forehead.

"We can rectify the interference."

"What emission? What interference? You have no right to torture me!", Vasco sobbed out.

"Don't waste your time with explanations, this one will never understand," the other alien muttered.

"You forget Article 5 of the Galaxy Code which regulates the prerogatives of underdeveloped creatures."

"So," Crax turned to Vasco, "you are a rare mutant in the Universe, fluctuant to n power. One of your bioplasmic channels emits a constant wave which interferes with the pulsating frequency of vacuum and causes harmful interferences into the transgalactic communications. Besides, it has a negative impact on the sense of comfort of reasoning creatures in space. In conformity with a ruling by the Galaxy Council, we shall try to accost you, that is to say, to attune your bioplasmic emission to frequencies harmless to the Universe.

Vasco froze with horror, while the alien took out a flat box with a shining dial. The alien pressed a color spot and brought the box near to the head of his captive. Vasco felt a short pain which suddenly gave way to inexplicable happiness.

"Alright," the aliens sounded happy. "The attempt was successful."

"We'll preserve your physical integrity," Crax added.

They never said goodbye, took the cage away and disappeared as noiselessly as they had arrived. Gradually Vasco's body regained its normal functions, still in high spirits. Joy seemed to pour out from everywhere, Vasco felt like singing. He went to the path, ran downwards and never stumbled, though the moonlight was too scarce.

He felt completely changed on the following day. The people in the subway were his brothers, the fellow workers were more than friends. He was cracking jokes and his cheerful mood seemed unshakable. When his boss threatened him that he would be fired, Vasco dismayed him by simply showing his tongue. The managing director who had looked so frightful before was only a ridiculous figure today. The working hours turned into a pleasant symphony with a remarkable finale.

Vasco rushed down the wide staircase into the street and almost bumped into a beautiful girl carrying a whole lot of parcels. They were too heavy for her and he offered his help. He was not even surprised that she accepted and afterwards thought it absolutely normal for her to accept his invitation for dinner.

Their relationship developed quickly. In a week's time, they went on an excursion up in the mountains. On their way back Vasco decided to show her his favorite meadow, without going into detail about the events that had developed there. The girl liked the place like everything else connected with him.

"Let's sit here for a while," she suggested. "I need some rest."

In spite of his apprehensions, Vasco agreed. Then time slowed down its pace and evening came. There was no moonlight but nature compensated for that shortcoming with numerous bright spots twinkling up in the clear sky.

"Give me a star", the girl, hugged in his arms, asked.

"Choose one."

"That one over there", she pointed upwards. "It looks greenish."

Vasco stared at it; the star blinked several times and its light went out. The girl looked at him in surprise.

"Would you like another one?", he hesitated.

"This one, it looks like a little diamond."

The star flickered and disappeared.

"You are a magician," the girl revelled. "Give me some more."

"Let's go, it's getting cold," he said in a frightened voice and looked around. There was nobody on the meadow yet, beside the two of them.

"How beautiful outer space is! And when you come to think that each star is a sun just like ours!" she spoke dreamily, while Vasco tried to drag her down the path.

They got married in a couple of weeks. He felt happy and nothing could disturb his happiness. Probably that was due to the two firm habits: not to look at the sun in daytime, and not to look at the stars during the nights. He did not want any further trouble with those guys from the flying saucer.