

Translated from Russian language with the help of DeepL

## ARLETTE

It was a full moon that day.  
That's what I found out about after it happened.  
It was the end of the year, December 30th.  
From the morning onwards I had the feeling that there were ropes attached to the top of my head, someone pulling on them and driving me like a puppet. At the same time my spine is pulled into a string, a feeling of suspension and anxiety that these "ropes" will never disappear.

Well, first of all, there was no way I could leave the house. So I washed and dressed and looked in the mirror, but I couldn't reach the door. Literally, something is not letting me go, it's scary to go out the door. I'll sit down, sitting. I'm trying to go out again and I'm again scared to go out. And so, for a while. But then suddenly these "ropes" gently "led me" to the door and led me out of the house.

When I came out, I realized that I didn't know where to go. I mean, for some reason I don't want to go to the ashram, but where I "want" to go is not clear. I went on the road towards the German Bakery Café. Although I didn't want to go there either. The unwillingness to go somewhere, now was determined by an incomprehensible feeling of fear. I stopped near the cafe door, confused, unaware of what was wrong with me.

Fear prevented me from going inside.

But even in that strange state of mind, I knew that standing on the road for no reason, with a stupid expression, looks ridiculous.

I bought one apple from a fruit walla nearby.

I didn't eat the unwashed apple, but standing with it in my hand and looking at it, I felt like I was "on purpose".

I noticed Arlette rushing by on her scooter. She slowed down next to me, shouted a cheerful greeting, and I felt like the "ropes" from my top were "untied".

I walked into the café, ate some bean soup there and felt like I could go to the ashram now.

In the ashram, I ran into Arlette again.

She was in a particularly elevated mood and it was passed on to me. We wrapped our arms around each other and swayed like drunks along the path of the ashram, laughing and paying no attention to anyone. I was so glad that the "ropes" let me go that I was ready to dance.

Maybe because of the full moon, we were both on edge. I was light and nicely dizzy. The Ashram seemed to both of us tight, too relaxed and reluctant to let our energy out and we decided to go back to German Bakery.

When I came out from the ashram and sat behind Arlette on her scooter, I suddenly for some reason stopped laughing and somehow seriously told her: "Look don't kill me."



- "Come on, Sami!" ... shouted Arlette funnily, launching the scooter with the speed of a rocket...

She looked back at me from time to time, holding the scooter handle with one hand and gesticulating with the other while talking continuously.

During one of her such looks backwards, I saw that we were in full speed on collision course with a dump truck.

I screamed.

Arlette quickly turned her head, grabbed the steering wheel with both hands and dodged the impact at the "flat face" of the dump truck. It all worked out.

- "See, Sami!" Arlette shouted funny, turning back to me and gesticulating with one hand, "Existence is taking care of us!"

Just it was on this phrase, sitting "backwards", holding the steering wheel with one hand, Arlette skewered the scooter to the side. And without even knowing it, lightning-fast and unmistakably, at all speed, almost perpendicular, crashed into the side of the car-rickshaw...! I've never felt so focused, sober in my life, and my head so clear.

Arlette, who I held with both hands, was insane.

Unlike her, I looked forward. I saw and understood everything a couple of seconds before it happened. I didn't have time to say anything to her.

I saw the rickshaw trying to get away from the hit, but Arlette, backwards facing the road, was screaming at the rickshaw.

It all happened in seconds.

From an intense blow Arlette and I flew up, like from an explosion.

It seems that everything was happening at a slower pace, like slow motion.

It's as if we were even hanging in the air for a while.

My mind was empty and calm.

Without thinking, I just knew I had to hold Arlette as hard as I could because she couldn't see or understand anything. The flight from the impact could have taken her somewhere. I froze on to her. When we reached the highest point of our jump, we started falling. It was like a time-lapse.

All my muscles and body were prepared to meet the ground, the asphalt.

My whole being, somehow without my participation, fully focused, knowing what to do.

But when I was falling, my hands couldn't bear Arlette's weight and I "lost" her, she fell out from my embrace.

The asphalt I "met" with my left shoulder and the whole left side of my body.

The pain I couldn't feel.

From the "meeting with the earthly hardness" I felt silence and calmness and the realization that everything was over. There was the desire to lie here, on this place, on this asphalt with my eyes closed, to take a nap, to forget...

A strange feeling that could be expressed by saying, "I finally found the time and place to nap. Most of all, I didn't want to open my eyes. I didn't want to see anything or anyone and know what happened there. I was afraid to see. I was so tired! I needed a nap..."

Lying with my eyes closed, I knew that all my bones were intact and it was perceived as something I knew beforehand.

But I have to get up. When I got up, I saw that I'd ripped the skin off my shoulder, but it wasn't too bad.

I found Arlette with my eyes.

It was exactly what I didn't want to see or know...

She lay in the middle of the roadway face down, and there was a pool of blood around her face. She wasn't moving.

As I ran up to her, I sat down next to her and lifted her by the shoulders. Her head was dangling. Her whole face was a bloody mask... her eyes closed.

Around the accident scene, in a solid ring, gathered local Indians. None of them expressed any reaction to this spectacle.

They just stood there, just watched...

Quietly, Indifferently, with some sleepy curiosity.

Between me and the world was an invisible wall. I was surrounded by silence and immobility.

Completely alone. Alone with this blood, with Arlette and the hot asphalt.

I shouted at them: " Do something!" They didn't react in any way. Some just stepped back.

But they just kept standing there and watching. I saw a familiar Sannyasin from Moscow in the crowd. She was with her young son. Trying not to meet my eyes, she pulled her boy's hand and left.

Holding Arlette by the shoulders, I either knew or glimpsed that not far away lies a wrinkled and inverted auto-rickshaw and next to it a bloody driver. Everything seemed unreal.

Didn't realize right away that there was a sannyasin near me who saw our "flight". Later I found out that he was Greek and came to the ashram a couple of days ago.

He picked up Arlette. The world around me began to react again and notice my presence, began to come alive. Besides me here was someone else.

Also, out of the deafening silence and frozen world came an athletic build rickshaw walla. He pulled up his rickshaw, put his injured colleague in it, then Arlette. I sat on the edge holding both of them.

The wounded rickshaw walla had a piece of glass stuck in the pulp under his lower jaw, he was bleeding. It was like some kind of surrealism.

All my life I've been afraid of the sight of blood and wounds.

And now all this.

We made it to the hospital. It was close by.

Arlette and rickshaw walla were brought into the room, put on the beds. I sat next to Arlette. She won't open her eyes. Her face was rubbed with a cotton swab. There was a deep wound on her nose bridge. She was bleeding out.

Leaving only me near Arlette, all the doctors and sisters crowd up around the injured rickshaw guy. So, I sat next to her for quite some time.

With a piece of cotton wool, I wiped the blood that flowed out of a deep wound on the nose bridge and seeped into her eyes. If I couldn't catch with the cotton wool trickle, it was flowing from eye to ear.

It was a nightmare.

Stunned by all that happened, I patiently expected that "white-robe people" would take care of Arlette, after being done with the rickshaw fellow. But nobody came near us. It's passed enough time. The injured rickshaw guy was taken somewhere.

I asked one "in white", what's going on? Why aren't they helping to Arlette?

For me was told that I had to put 5,000 rupees in the cash before they were helping her.

That amount of money I didn't even have at that time.

I demanded that at least she was given the needed injection in those cases.

They gave me the price of a few hundred rupees, which I still had in my wallet. Arlette was injected.

After the injections, a young man, but already with bald patch came up to us, a Doctor. He sat on the bed with Arlette. Bowed down to her face, he asked for her name?

Arlette's eyelids flinched. She seemed to have come to her senses.

The doctor repeated his question again.

Arlette, in a gurgle voice, answered she doesn't remember. She started pitifully repeating, "I don't remember my name! I can't remember! I can't remember my name!"

And then, to all the questions, she kept saying one word, "kinetic," emphasizing on the last syllable.

It got creepy!

The compassionate doctor come back again. Sitting next to Arlette, he began to move his swarthy elusive finger in front of her eyes. -"Look at my finger. Look at my finger. Do you see my finger?" He repeated.

Arlette, like a broken record, kept saying, "Kinetic! I don't remember my name; I don't know my name... Kinetic..."

So, for a while the doctor and Arlette, at the same time, repeated each own phrase, ignoring what the other said.

Neither I nor the doctor noticed at what exactly point Arlette's eyes became meaningful. Suddenly, with anger and "dignity", with her familiar French accent, she "splashed" in the doctor's face: "What are you doing here waving your finger in front of my nose! Am I a little child? Why were you swinging your finger in front of me?!"

Oh! She recovered!

The doctor, silent and calm, with the face of the man who did his duty, got up and left.

Arlette asked me what happened?

I explained to her. She repeated it again: "kinetic."

As it turned out, "Kinetic" was the scooter on which we made our aerial somersault. The scooter Arlette begged from a friend, swearing there wouldn't be a single scratch on it. The scooter was just newly bought, brand new.

Now she was very worried about the fate of Kinetics.

When she found out she wouldn't get medical help until she'd contributed five thousand rupees, she gave me the phone number of her friend.

I called. Arlette's fellow, an Indian guy, got here fast and brought the money. He stayed with her.

It was around 5:00 p.m. when it became clear that my presence and help were no longer needed.

Goodbye, Arlette said to me, "Sorry, Sami."

Later I found out that the hospital found drugs in her purse. Someone reported it to the police. She was in serious trouble with the authorities. But after a good bribe, "baksheesh," the case was hushed up.

And now I'm devastated, walking down the street, away from the hospital.

Not even "devastated," but just empty. I wasn't feeling tired. On the contrary, when I left the walls of the hospital, the meaning of the word "freedom" became very comprehensible.

Arlette and I, with a scooter, was somehow faded and seemed something distant compared to the hours spent in hospital in contemplation of blood.

I didn't want to go home; I was afraid to be alone with everything that had happened. Plus, I felt empty, I hadn't eaten anything all day except my morning bean soup. I went all the way to the same German Bakery that Arlette and me never made it to in this morning.

There I met the sanniyasin from Russia. It was a blessing!

I told him everything that had happened. At the same time, I found myself slightly shaken and my hands trembled.

I also found a wound, quite deep on my ankle, a lot of scratches, the skin on my left shoulder was scraped and it hurt to touch my left thigh. But it was a little thing.

Having listened carefully to me, giving me the opportunity to "let off steam," the friend from Russia suddenly said: -"When I look at your lips, I want to kiss them."

This remark, not in any way connecting with what I told him about, brought me back to the moment in the café. And the Russian guy seriously added: "It would be good for you to have some vodka now."

Here I remembered that one of my friends who departed Pune, left half a bottle of vodka for me. The Russian guy was delighted about it and we went to my apartment to finish it.

We did it pretty quickly. I wasn't afraid to be alone anymore. I even wanted to be alone. The acquaintance left.

It got dark. After showering and licking my wounds, I went to bed.  
Thanks to the vodka, I fell asleep easily.

I woke up very early. The morning seemed grey.

I remembered yesterday and that today was December 31, New Year's Eve. I'm covered in abrasions with some skin stripped off. " Like on New Year's Eve, so will be the whole year..."

I remember a saying.

My eyes fell on my pillow. There was a rose neatly lying on it. The rose was dry.

It emerged from nowhere. In my mind, I'd gone over some options of its appearance, but none could stand the reasoning.

What's going on in my life?! Yesterday, "Kinetic", today, the rose!

I quickly dressed, swallowed a banana and I ran to a friend rickshaw driver who knew the way to Agni-Baba. We raced from Koregaon Park in Pune to the green mountains, to Baba.

As I approached Baba's hut, I saw that the cloth that replaced the door had been raised. It was rare.

Baba was standing in the middle of his house.

When I walked in, he happily said: "I know what happened!"

And he clapped his hands and laughed and added.: "Karma's over! Sami, your karma is over! That's it!"

Only now I felt how tense I was all this time. Baba's words relieved the tension. I cried. For the first time in a long while.

Agni Baba joyfully clapping his hands and laughingly, said: "The rose is from me. A gift."

To be continued....