

Second Prizewinner

WHITE ROSES

Anna Cader

Hello. Let me tell you my story. Be warned, it won't have a happy ending like in the black and white romantic films. I want this story to be a warning for you and other women who're in a similar situation. Let's start at the beginning.

My name is Roksana. From the youngest age white roses were present in my life. The passion for growing flowers I inherited from my grandma. In her garden there were plants the names of which no one in the family could remember. I loved spending holidays in my grandma's house, because the whole surrounding area was flooded with all the colours I knew. But we loved the white roses the most. I always got them on special occasions: birthdays, Valentine's Day, graduation. I don't remember when the white roses have become my curse.

Today I will give you a part of my diary, where I described the hell planned for me with clockwork precision by somebody close to me. Somebody who swore in front of God to be with me until death us part. I admit, he kept his word...

2 December 1999

I got white roses today. Not for any special occasion or my birthday. Last night I told Kuba I'm pregnant. He left the house angry, slamming the door. A few hours later he returned completely drunk. Then we fought for the first time. Many words were said that still hurt me. He even said the child is not his. I think he wanted to hit me in the face, but something stopped him – I saw it in his eyes.

I know that Kuba didn't believe what he was saying, because he sent me flowers today...

We have to reconcile, we love each other and the child needs to have a father.

16 July 2001

I got flowers today. For the first time in almost two years. But it's not our anniversary or any special occasion. Two days ago my husband Kuba threw me to the bed with all his might and started to strangle me and beat with his fists. I can't explain why he stopped. Did he lose the strength to torture my body or did he sober up when he heard our child's cry? When he left me,

he spit in my direction and said a short: “Whore”. I couldn’t believe it was all happening for real. Kuba was drunk again and I didn’t manage to prepare his favourite dinner on time. I provoked him, it was my fault. I woke up the next day full of bruises, but I know he’s sorry because white roses were waiting for me at the table.

5 May 2004

I got white roses today. It’s the biggest bouquet Kuba’ve ever given me. There’s no special occasion today. Kuba has forgotten our anniversary and the Women’s Day a long time ago. It’s not Mother’s Day or my name day. Last night he beat me again. This time much worse than the last time... Afterwards, he dragged me by my hair from the living room into the car and threw me away, like garbage, in the park where we met. When I regained consciousness I was in a hospital, and Kuba sat by my bed. When he saw I woke up, he pretended to kiss me and said “The police is here. They want to ask what has happened. Remember, you went for a walk at night and somebody assaulted you. If you say something stupid, next time I’ll make sure you never open your eyes again”. He kissed me on the cheek with pretend tenderness. I did what he told me. I didn’t tell the police what really happened. If they arrest him, I will be left with no home and no money. The apartment belongs to him, he got it from his parents and they will throw me away. And anyway, what will it change, him being in prison? He’ll be back shortly. I’m worried he will torture me even more. I’m afraid of him, but I’m more afraid of loneliness... I know he regrets what he did and he’s sorry, because he came to the hospital with a bouquet of white roses.

19 August 2013

I got flowers today: special white roses for a special occasion. Today is my funeral. Last night Kuba finally killed me. Once again he came home drunk. One inappropriate look and he became aggressive. Fortunately, our son went to my parents for holidays and he didn’t witness the nightmare Kuba prepared especially for me. For hours, he physically and mentally tortured me. He burned my bruised and battered body with his favourite cigars, so I would listen carefully when he told me what he would do to me next, with psychopathic delight. Finally my tormented soul abandoned my body. He was mad, as according to him his sick “fun ended too early”. For one final time Kuba took my body to the park and left it like a dog by the bench on which we

sat together when we kissed for the first time. As goodbye he only said: “Until death do us part”.

I know now that if I were stronger and left him in time I wouldn't get the white roses I hate so much today.