

The Building

Even after she'd moved in with him, Jonas still found himself going back to her old building. He didn't, of course, notice anything strange about this - well, not at first anyway. Initially he'd always pop back to make sure she hadn't left anything behind, until she began to insist she most definitely had not. Then he would regularly stop off to check if any mail for her had been delivered there, even though the landlady insisted that she would be certain to forward any that arrived.

He would make extravagant detours just to walk past the place, going to a nearby florist even though there was one much closer to his house, or making excuses to see a new exhibition at the local gallery, even though it was never remarkable. On such occasions, he'd always pray for rain as he walked by, just so he had an excuse to pop into the foyer for shelter. One of his favourite parts was entering the building. As he pushed past the doors and drew himself inside, he always felt a warmth rush over his body, and a tingling up his spine as he sank into the worn leather couch that sat there.

It was on one such visit that he first made acquaintance with Vadim. An eccentric, slightly ratty little man, with shaky movements, Vadim was the janitor of the building. Having never spoken to Vadim before, he found him exceedingly approachable. In fact, being so regularly ignored and starved for company as he was, Vadim latched onto him in the manner of a stray dog. In no time at all he had dragged Jonas up into his small one room cubby hole, and was pouring him a glass of cheap vodka. They spent all night there, drinking vodka, and listening to Vadim's extensive collection of 8-track recordings of soviet propaganda.

These evenings became a regular occurrence for Jonas; the highlight of his week. Even though his new friend spoke incessantly about his favourite topic, for which Jonas had no interest (although he quickly believed he did), and in such a quick and raspy voice - and only half in English - Jonas was ecstatic. Mainly because Vadim was also excited to answer any of his questions about the workings of the building ... and to show him around. To get to see the insides of the building drove Jonas wild ... to drum on its old copper pipes, to smell the grit of the boiler room. He had free rein to explore the backstage of his theatre, whenever he pleased.

Jonas began to lie to his girlfriend about where he was going all these evenings, as the highlight of his week became practically the highlight of his day. As his lies got more and more imaginative, she began to doubt him. One day she followed him, to see him entering the building, and waited outside all evening, until he came out at 3am. She was distraught. After doing the same thing the next night, she confronted him, but none of his explanations - not even the truth - would convince her to believe anything other than that he was seeing another girl. She moved out the same day.

After parting upon such harsh terms (and harsh words), Jonas felt a wave of depression pass over him. His need for comfort and security drove him back to the building. It was only then that he realised the true nature of his obsession. He fell into a deep hatred of himself, his madness, and how he had hurt his girlfriend. He stopped going to the building entirely. The pain and longing built up in him stronger than he had ever felt in his life.

The weeks wore on, and he found himself going out to bars and having foolish one night stands, to try to drive the sense of loss away. But none of them ever satisfied him. Every lobby he used to shelter from the rain drove him mad for desire for that worn leather couch, and every radiator reminded him only of

that old boiler...

He stopped talking to girls at bars, and would simply mope in the corner swilling down cheap vodka, drawing further and further into himself. He kept this up for what seemed like years, but was in fact only weeks. Then one night...

"I like your hat"

"Uh, thanks..."

"Would you mind if I bought you a drink?" Well, he was pretty broke...

Something seemed different about this girl. Was it the way she smelt? The way she carried herself? Or something ... deeper? They talked and laughed late into the night, and at 2am, she dragged him, giggling into a taxi. As they pulled up outside her building and he staggered out of the taxi, he found himself stunned sober, as his heart exploded with passion. As they entered the foyer and his hand brushed casually against a worn leather couch, he found himself staring at this beautiful girl, and thinking only one thing ... I am going to love this woman, for ever...