

The Empty House

First Locked Draft

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

VEERA (60, timid, her make-up makes her look older than she is) enters an empty, neat kitchen. The kitchen table has a light layer of dust on the surface, on which are two used teacups.

Veera carefully, without moving the cups, picks up a dried mushroom from the bottom of the teacup and examines it.

The buzzer rings.

INT./EXT. BALCONY - DAY

A shared balcony in the hallway of an apartment building. On the railings, someone has placed a cigarette, precariously balanced.

MARIANNE (40, prim and proper) steps onto the balcony. She picks up the cigarette.

She looks down and feels vertigo from the height.

She sets light to the cigarette and clumsily takes a drag. The smoke chokes her. She coughs.

MARIANNE

That's about as close to you as I'll ever get.

She puts the still burning cigarette back on the railing.

Behind her, JAAN (38, a camera strapped to his neck) climbs up the stairs. Jaan snaps a picture of Marianne.

The shutter sound startles her. She turns around and flinches at his proximity to her.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Veera opens the door to let Marianne and Jaan in the otherwise empty flat.

The flat opens right to the bedroom/living room area where everything is shoved into one space. It is cramped and cluttered. An armchair. An empty shelf. Everything is covered in dust.

Right in the middle of the room is an unmade mattress. Blankets and pillows are strewn as though someone has just got up in the morning.

In a corner, there is an empty shelf, and next to it, a cardboard box full of rolled-up posters.

Marianne takes out one of the posters from the box and unrolls it. It's a huge film poster, where the leading actor - *EERO KETAS* - seems to be larger than life. He is staring straight at them.

VEERA
Don't touch anything.

Marianne puts the poster back in the box.

Jaan leaves his coat on top of the box, then leaves for the kitchen. Marianne inspects a nearby table. Her finger comes away with dust.

VEERA (cont'd)
Everything you need should be here.

MARIANNE
TV?

VEERA
No.

MARIANNE
Washing machine?

VEERA
No.

Marianne tries turning on the light. It's broken, too.

MARIANNE
Is there anything here for a human's living space?

VEERA
There's the mattress.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Jaan walks around the kitchen and starts snapping pictures. He seems to be looking for something. The kitchen looks new and little used - yet there are takeaway boxes and some cigarette butts on the countertop.

There's a shirt hanging on one of the chairs. Jaan picks it up and inhales.

Veera enters the kitchen.

VEERA

What's the matter? Have you lost something?

Jaan puts the shirt back on the chair.

JAAAN

Nothing.

Jaan brings the camera up and starts snapping pictures again to hide his discomfort.

VEERA

Make sure to get everything. Inside the fridge too. But don't move anything. I want the apartment to be documented exactly as it is right now.

JAAAN

...Okay.

Veera absentmindedly takes the cigarette butts on the countertop and throws them into the bin.

VEERA

You wouldn't think this was a bachelor's home, seeing how tidy it is. That's my Eero for you.

Jaan looks like he wants to say something, but then decides against it.

Jaan reaches out for the fridge. On his wrist is an old, vintage watch. When Veera sees it, she reaches out to his wrist to look more closely at the watch.

JAAAN

Oh, it's not working.

VEERA

I know.

Jaan gives Veera a glance in surprise. Veera lets his wrist go, with some reluctance.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Marianne is alone in the bedroom, measuring the lengths and the colour of the walls with her eyes.

She finds a pair of recognisably patterned boxers on the floor. She picks it up as if she's seen it before. She checks the size.

MARIANNE

Seriously...?

There are muffled voices coming from the kitchen.

She puts the underpants in Jaan's coat, which was placed on top of the boxes.

She looks at the messy mattress. Then, as if gripped by some sudden urge to tidy up the bed, she moves into action.

She carefully fluffs the pillows, straightens the blanket corners, and tucks everything in its place.

Veera enters, Jaan follows.

VEERA

When did I give your father's watch to you?

MARIANNE

You didn't.

Marianne's eyes got drawn to the watch on Jaan's wrist. Jaan, feeling self-conscious, pulls his sleeves down.

At the same time, Veera notices the tidied mattress.

VEERA

What did you do here?!

MARIANNE

It was messy.

Veera hastily messes everything up like it was before.

VEERA

I told you, do not touch. That's the only thing I ever asked of you. And still you couldn't follow.

Marianne retreats to the shadows, chastised.

VEERA (cont'd)

Come, Jaan. Do your magic.

Veera notices the empty shelf.

VEERA (cont'd)
Where are they? They're supposed to
be here.

The shelf is covered with dust.

VEERA (cont'd)
Help me look. Don't mess up anything
though.

They spread out to search. Veera finds some cigarette butts
in the cracks in the armchair.

VEERA (cont'd)
He never smoked. Must have been a
party here before he...you know.

As Jaan looks for the trophies, he comes to the boxes
covered by his coat. Then, Jaan notices a small part of the
underpants sticking out of his coat's pocket.

He turns and sees Marianne watching him. She turns away.

Jaan, embarrassed, shoves the underpants deeper in the
pocket to hide it from sight.

Jaan comes to a hidden cabinet behind a curtain. He opens it
and finds the trophies, haphazardly thrown in there without
any care.

VEERA (cont'd)
Take them out and arrange them on the
shelf. Make sure you can see his
name.

Jaan duly does as he's told.

VEERA (cont'd)
Sometimes they still show one of his
films in the old theatre down the
street.

Marianne comes up to Jaan and whispers.

MARIANNE
Let's buy a new bed. A new start.

It sounds almost like a plea.

Veera overhears her.

VEERA
What for? Aren't you only staying
here for awhile?

MARIANNE

You can't really expect me to sleep there.

VEERA

There's just no need to waste a perfectly good mattress.

MARIANNE

Do you want me to get chlamydia? Is that it?

VEERA

Have some respect for your brother.

Veera turns to Jaan, wanting to end the conversation there.

VEERA (cont'd)

Jaan, let me see what pictures you've got.

Jaan hands the camera to Veera. She flicks through the pictures.

MARIANNE

You don't know shit about Eero. You just pretend you do.

Veera doesn't hear her daughter. She keeps flicking. Then she hands back the camera to Jaan and approaches the shelf.

VEERA

Let's clean these up a bit.

Veera grabs a cloth, and begins to wipe the dust off of the trophies. She cradles them like a baby.

MARIANNE

Are you even listening to me?

(pause)

He hated the trophies.

VEERA

He just wanted to keep them clean.

MARIANNE

Yeah like he kept his dick so clean.

VEERA

He was an artist. It's normal.

MARIANNE

Is stealing everything from me also normal?

VEERA
Don't be so dramatic.

MARIANNE
(pointing to Jaan's
wrist)
So you're cool with *that* on his
lover's arm?

Veera's hands slip. The trophy on her hand drops on the floor with a loud thunk.

A beat. Then Veera rushes out of the room.

Jaan flicks through the pictures on his camera. He goes forward, forward, forward.

Marianne watches Jaan.

MARIANNE (cont'd)
It's been four months already.

JAAN
I know...

MARIANNE
Four months, so why do I still feel
like I'm competing with him?

Jaan reaches for Marianne - with the same hand wearing the watch. Marianne tries to yank her own hand away, but Jaan's grip is tight.

Their fingers intertwine.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Veera stumbles in the kitchen, half-dazed.

As her mind derails, the kitchen itself seems to slightly derail from reality as well.

Empty cabinets. Chipped paints. (And maybe in the corner of her eyes, the windows do not look out to the sky but to a wall, like in a studio)

Veera searches for an electric kettle. But it has its cord cut off at the tail.

She rummages deep in one of the lower cabinets before digging out an old, rusty traditional kettle.

She fills the kettle full of water and puts it on the stovetop.

Jaan enters.

He silently removes the watch from his wrist, and puts it on the table.

J A A N

I-

The words don't come. Jaan turns to leave, but Veera speaks up.

V E E R A

Sit down and let me pour you tea.

Jaan sits down and watches the two shroom-filled teacups.

The kettle rises to a boil. It whistles. Veera brings it to the table and pours in the two teacups.

J A A N

That tea is-

V E E R A

I know.

(pause)

They were there when I came. Probably the last thing Eero drank.

(pause)

Am I right?

J A A N

Why would you ask me?

Veera sits down and inspects the steaming cup.

V E E R A

What does it feel like?

J A A N

Like you're feeling everything for the first time again.

V E E R A

It's a bit too late for that now, though, isn't it.

(pause)

Do you love my daughter?

Marianne enters.

MARIANNE
Who loves who?

Silent.

MARIANNE (cont'd)
We need to leave, Jaan.

Jaan stands up and leaves his cup on the table.
Veera looks at her daughter for the first time.

VEERA
Marianne...

Marianne turns around.

VEERA (cont'd)
I'll buy a bed.

Marianne is surprised, but she doesn't respond. She gives her mother a last glance, then Marianne and Jaan leave the kitchen.

Jaan's wrist is empty.

INT./EXT. BALCONY - DAY

Marianne and Jaan pass by the balcony where the cigarette she left on the railing is still there, still burning.

Marianne puts it out and throws it in a nearby bin. Inside the bin is full of old cigarette butts.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Now alone, Veera brings the untouched cup to her lips. Then, she stops.

VEERA
That's about as close to you as I'll
ever get.

She stands up and pours the whole content of the thing down the sink. She looks around the empty house. Then Veera picks up a piece of cloth and begins rearranging and cleaning the house of dust.

FADE OUT