

Horvath

+ Amalia

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of it.

HORVATH. Oh, it doesn't matter whose idea it was. The main thing was how happy Mr. Hammerschmidt was to see it, don't you think?

AMALIA. Of course.

HORVATH. *(After a moment's pause:)* I hope you have a very nice Christmas, Miss Balash.

AMALIA. Thank you. You too.

HORVATH. Will you be spending Christmas Eve at home?

AMALIA. Yes, of course. With mother.

HORVATH. Do you have a tree?

AMALIA. Yes we do. We have one every year.

HORVATH. That's nice.

AMALIA. We've used the same decorations that have been in the family for years and years, just adding one or two things now and then. It reminds me of my childhood and when my father was still alive.

HORVATH. Is it a big tree?

AMALIA. What do you consider big? I'd say it's about as tall as you are.

HORVATH. *(Smiling:)* Ah, it's what you would call then a "perfect" size.

AMALIA. Last year we had one that touched the ceiling but we had to hang so much candy and extra cookies on it, it took us two more days of baking just to fill it in. We decided on something a little smaller this year. Where are you spending your evening?

HORVATH. Me? Oh, I don't really know yet. Perhaps I'll visit some friends. My landlady invited me for a cup of egg nog. I'm not sure I want to be in the same place with my landlady and egg nog.

(They both laugh.)

I don't know, I suppose I'll just turn in early. I'm pretty exhausted from these last few days. Here's my chance to catch up on some sleep. I suppose you'll be having company for supper?

AMALIA. Oh no. Well not company exactly.

HORVATH. No? No one?

AMALIA. Well, just my fiancé.

HORVATH. *(After a moment's pause:)* Your fiancé, Miss Balash?

AMALIA. Yes, Mr. Horvath, you know about him.

HORVATH. Well I knew there was someone. But a fiancé, that's news. Do you have plans to marry soon?

AMALIA. Yes, in fact we should be setting the date tonight.

HORVATH. *(After a moment's pause:)* What a surprise. Congratulations.

AMALIA. Don't be so surprised, Mr. Horvath. You see, there is someone who loves me.

HORVATH. Oh, I didn't mean...

AMALIA. You've already forgotten the things you told me on this very spot, two weeks ago.

HORVATH. I am so sorry, Amalia. I did apologize. I do apologize.

AMALIA. *(She smiles.)* Do you know I almost died that day because of the things you said to me. You'd said some pretty mean things in the past, but when you said that it would be impossible for anyone to ever love me, well, I can't tell you how that hurt me. It was like you'd found the most vulnerable spot of my very being and plunged a knife into it. I just couldn't bear it.

HORVATH. I had no idea what you were going through.

AMALIA. No you really had no idea at all. Just the day before, I'd been stood up by the very person I was counting on. I waited from three in the afternoon until eleven at night. *(Laughs.)* And then to top it all, you said those awful things to me the next morning. And

worst of all they felt like the truth. But I'm not angry with you anymore honestly, I'm not. My fiancé wrote to me again and explained everything. But the things that I wrote to him about you. God how I poured out my hate in those letters.

HORVATH. I know.

AMALIA. You know?

HORVATH. Well, I mean, I can well imagine that you might express your displeasure with me to someone else.

AMALIA. Do you know what I wanted to do?

HORVATH. Can I guess?

AMALIA. You couldn't guess in a million years. It's too terrible.

HORVATH. Perhaps I can.

AMALIA. Never.

HORVATH. You suggested to your fiancé that he beat the living daylights out of me.

AMALIA. (*Surprised:*) That's right. How did you know?

HORVATH. I just guessed.

AMALIA. I wrote that you were a heartless fool and an idiot.

HORVATH. (*Momentarily forgetting:*) Yeah, that made me mad.

AMALIA. What?

HORVATH. (*Thinking quickly:*) Um, I would have been pretty mad, if I'd known you'd written that.

AMALIA. Well, I did.

HORVATH. That's all I'm saying.

AMALIA. I wrote other things too.

HORVATH. You don't have to tell me.

AMALIA. And my fiancé wrote that if he ever lays hands on you.

HORVATH. (*Interrupting:*) That he'll knock my teeth out, sure.

AMALIA. How do you know?

HORVATH. Every fiancé writes that. It's not hard to imagine.

AMALIA. But if he were to get hold of you.

HORVATH. (*Interrupting:*) Then we'll meet.

AMALIA. Oh, but you don't know him.

HORVATH. I'll introduce myself.

AMALIA. I don't think he's all bluster like Kadar, you know.

HORVATH. Well I should hope not. You deserve someone better than the likes of that fool.

AMALIA. You know Mr. Horvath, I still do not know to this day what you had against me.

HORVATH. How can I explain to you that...

AMALIA. (*Interrupting:*) I guess there is no explanation. I don't want to argue about it anymore. I want to put it behind us. If you promise not to laugh, I'll tell you something really ironic.

HORVATH. Of course, I won't laugh.

AMALIA. Do you swear?

HORVATH. You have my word of honor.

AMALIA. (*Sincerely:*) When I first came to work here, I had a crush on you. I did. And then you just started making fun of me, relentlessly. What could I do but respond in kind.

HORVATH. (*Shocked:*) You, had a crush on me?

AMALIA. In the beginning.

HORVATH. I didn't know.