

Simaro

Prologue

It was a lovely night, one where it didn't take too much to fall into a deep slumber. One that didn't pass by every day. One that would leave you feeling ashamed if you disturbed its peace for others...

"Hey, hey, Sarah!", Jack tried. Nothing but muffled moans made up her answer. "Come with me, please, I saw something you will really love to see. I swear, I promise, you won't regret it." As Jack was bursting with energy, Sarah felt tired as her burning eyes burst open. She looked at him with a cranky gaze. Her eyebrows joined as she asked, slightly frustrated: "Why? Why did you wake me up?"

"Just put on your shoes and join me on the balcony. You'll see!" " – Amusingly mysterious you are..." She slowly slid her legs beyond the bed's edge as she yawned out whatever remained of her soul. It did happen, she thought. There were moments where Jack came rushing into the bedroom, but never at night. This was a first time, so there had to be something. There had to be something to be seen or heard out there that was worth it to be seen or heard. She knew resisting wouldn't help at all. Soon she found herself standing straight.

Hesitantly, she pressed her feet inside her slippers and looked at him. With an ever widening grimace, he took her by the hand and guided her to the balcony. It was pretty quiet inside, but when Jack pushed the balcony door aside in one go, she gradually felt that sudden increase in volume. Yeah, that's just how it was. Always something to be heard. New York really was the city that never sleeps.

At her own pace she let her eyes scan the area that opened up in front of her. Flashy billboards, yellow taxi cabs, street lights, people. Nothing out of the ordinary. She looked a bit disappointing at Jack: "Don't tell me you woke me up for this, Jack." He answered with a shy smile as he raised his eyes up to the sky. Sarah followed Jack's movement and tilted her head backwards.

"Oh, wow!", she shouted. Her eyes full of amazement, she kept staring at that one white dot high up in the sky. "Are you sure? Are you sure that...?" " – Oh yes, I'm sure! Carl never mixes up his dates and I thought I just couldn't let this day go by. The sheer strength it took to shut myself up in front of you", he chuckled. "I still wanted to make sure though before making you come up here. And now you are here."

"It's beautiful", she answered with a bright smile. "I never thought to see another star in the sky ever again..." A glimpse of melancholy crept up on her. "If only we tried just a little bit harder, maybe we could have been able to see more. My dad used to tell me about his life back at the farm. About how he saw so many stars as a kid..." Sarah looked down at her hands: "...And how he saw them disappear over time... One by one..."

"We sure need to pay him a visit whenever we got the time", Jack proposed softly. She nodded and slowly turned towards him. She laid her hands around his neck and bared her head on his chest, close to his chin. For a brief moment, she shut her eyes, but she knew sleeping would pose a problem. A cold source of light, shining slightly more intensely in comparison to the others, would prevent her that pleasure. Calmly, she opened up her eyes again. In the distance,

she saw the letters brimming. The letters of that one company that could already be spotted from her apartment. The company that just wouldn't let her go.

"The light's burning heavily again", she quietly whispered in his ears. He nodded: "And the future keeps on turning, like a dream that keeps on burning..." The light came from a word of which the letters made up a name that only inspired chills down their spine: *Simaro*. "Their dream is the future," Jack responded back into her ear, driven as he was: "but is the future also dreaming about them?" Sarah squeezed in Jack's side: "It's alright now. Off to bed again before you start another speech..."

Jack wasn't moving. She knew all too well what that meant. After a deep sigh, she continued: "You always feel drawn to companies like those, but I'm not looking forward to another threat from a too rich for his own good, psychopathic CEO." He knew she was serious, but couldn't help laughing "The odds of something like that happening again... Well, it won't happen again, that's for sure..." "– It better doesn't happen again, Jack!", she said a bit more direct and harsh. "Fosco Cars almost made you disappear. Remember? With their hydrogen? I can't think of it, the idea of them succeeding... Leaving me alone, here... No... Just, no..."

"You know I don't go that far. And in all honesty, their cars had something going on for them. They didn't lie about their speed or silence. Economical in all regards, but those dampers... Yes, those dampers almost smothered me. It didn't take long before I was going to join so many other victims. That's true. Yet the police were there on time. So nothing bad happened..." Jack carefully picked the words he was going to use next: "It's my job to uncover and report reality, even if they involve secretly hidden malpractices." He breathed in deeply and let her pick her words: "I know, but... You shouldn't take risks... That is all."

With a tired gaze, he looked at her eyes that inspired reconciliation. He slid his hands along her shoulders and pressed her against him. "Let's go inside again", he quietly proposed. Again, she let out a yawn, one of intense agreement. Step by step, she made her way inside. As Jack was closing the balcony door behind him, he gave the brimming letters one final look. His hands were itching. He couldn't wait to start digging.