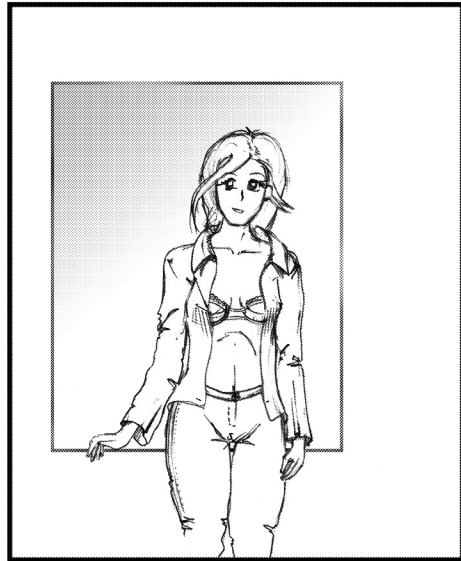


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The story: February 1997
The art: June 2003
The zine: August 2024



the TALK
godai

or all of this," she made another sweeping gesture with her hand. "I don't know if I want to. Maybe it's better to join you..."
"Don't you dare!!!"
"Alright, alright," I shrugged, finishing the last drops of tea.
"Here," she handed me a phone and a notebook. "Who first?"
"I don't know yet. But... maybe I will."
"When?" she asked in a firm tone.
"Soon."
"Well, that sounds better. Why does it always have to involve tears?" she asked. She grabbed my hand and pressed it to her cheek. It was smooth and delicate.
"You have harsh hands," she ran her fingers over the inside of my hand. I did, it was true.
"How did you get them? Write about it. Paint it. Make a film about it. Tell some girl."
"What happens now?" I asked. She kissed me gently. "I can't come anymore. But I'll remember. Besides... you'll see me around. Goodbye."
She dissolved into the smoke. I was left holding the phone. I opened the notebook...

"Doesn't any of this mean anything to you anymore?!"
"Nothing."
"Then why did you fight so hard? Why? In vain?"
I nodded silently.
"And me? I don't mean anything anymore either?"
"You're a phantom, my sick imagination. No real person lies in through the window in the middle of the night."
"Bastard..." she sat on the windowsill, pulled her legs up to her chin, and started to cry.
"Hey, don't cry."
"Now just piss off. Stick your talk somewhere."
"Fine, whatever."
"Yes, whatever? Got a tissue?" she sniffled.
I handed her a disposable tissue from the pack on the table. She wiped her eyes and nose.
"I'll have red eyes because of you. You'll see," she pointed an accusing finger at me.
"I'm sorry, I really am."
"You should be. Don't take it so seriously, it's not worth it."
"I know... It's just that I'm... done, that's how I should put it. Maybe." I hesitated for a moment.
"I know. That's why I'm here now, not somewhere else. I failed, you can't. Fight. For yourself, for me, together."

"Helpless, huh?" I sneered. "So why do you come?"
"Because I valued and loved the person you used to be. I guess there's no more reason to come."
"So I'm not good anymore, right? I behave differently, I talk differently, I do different things. I'm no longer appealing because what I do and how I live is no longer beautiful."
"I already told you, you're cynical and bitter."
"Because that's how I want to be!"
"Oh yeah? And here?" she pointed to the photo.
"A moment. Forgetting."
"And this?" she grabbed a book from the shelf.
"Chance. Fortune."
"And all of this?" she made a sweeping gesture with her hand.
"Whim. Play."
"So?" I asked with hope in my voice.
"Only you can. Nothing else. You can. You used to. You still can. Only... only you don't want to anymore," she turned her back on me. The blue incense smoke wrapped around her hand. The music played softly.
"Understand..."
"No. You have to understand, I can't do anything anymore, I'm helpless."

I was sitting in the studio. The light from the lamp illuminated a blank sheet of paper fed into the typewriter. In the corner, a friendly semi-darkness settled in, filled with the scent of smoldering incense. Some old music filled the air, and the remnants of tea were cooling in a cup. I had been sitting at the typewriter for several hours, but nothing good came of it. A dozen or so written pages were scattered on the floor, filled with nothing but meaningless nonsense. I hadn't been able to produce anything worthwhile for a long time. I finished the tea and turned around the photo on the shelf. It depicted a piece of my past, the one that would never return. Years had passed since those moments, and I still couldn't forget. "Don't worry," she said. She was sitting on the windowsill, her legs pulled up to her chin, resting her head on them. "Hi, I haven't seen you in a while," I smiled. "I had to... go away," she explained, smiling as well. That smile reminded me of all those times when the world seemed beautiful and so simple. Long ago. Long ago. "What are you doing?" she jumped off the windowsill and knelt by the pages abandoned on the

floor. Her brown hair fell into her eyes, so she brushed it away with her long fingers. "Give it back," I reached out my hand. "It's trash. Worthless crap."
"Why do you say that?"
"Nothing's been working out for me lately, not even my hair," I tried to joke, but it didn't come off well. She came closer.
"What I see here isn't bad at all. Oh, this paragraph is funny," she pointed out.
"I can't do any better. It's the end, over, finito!" I turned away. In my mind, I hummed "Yesterday."
"Nice."
"What's nice?" I asked without turning around.
"The song you were thinking of. Were you humming it for me?" she placed her hand on my shoulder.
"I don't know. Maybe. I can't even write about us anymore. Where did what we had go?"
"You still remember. That's why I'm here."
"So where am I, the old me? Why do I think and live like this now?"
"Nothing's working out for you, you're bitter. It will pass. Maybe..."
"You don't know?"
"No. I don't know. I don't know if you want it to