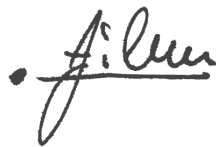


MIRROR TOUCH
(first draft)

Elena Toncheva
based on an idea by Roman Pessarov

Produced by Irina Gurova

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Irina Gurova', with a horizontal line underlining the name.

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INT. VICTOR'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

VICTOR (32) is standing in front of a full-length mirror in his living room. He is naked and carefully examines his body. His skin is covered in scars and burns.

Victor checks for new injuries.

The living room is minimalistic and meticulously arranged.

INT. OFFICE - KITCHEN - DAY

Victor is in the company of two of his coworkers, BOBBY (28) and YAVOR (29) in the kitchen of the company where they work. He leans against the bar and listens to their conversation.

Next to him a microwave oven is at work, heating a cup of water.

YAVOR

Some chick will dance for an hour.
It's like taking them to a
striptease bar, only more cultured.

BOBBY

Why don't we just take them to a
striptease bar then?

YAVOR

Doesn't fit the company's image.
Plus a dance performance is
cheaper.

BOBBY

If you ask me, striptease is a
great dance performance.

YAVOR

Ah, well. Explain it to the leads.

BOBBY

Who thought of this dance thing,
Ventsi?

YAVOR

Probably, you know how he is with
artsy stuff. It was either him or
Boyana-

The microwave signals that it's done heating up. Bobby turns to Victor.

BOBBY

Will you pass me that cup, please?

Victor is surprised. He bends down and takes the cup from the microwave. Steam rises from it. Victor hands it to Bobby, who reaches for it.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Thanks- ARGHH!

Bobby grabs the cup confidently, then immediately DROPS it to the ground and it breaks. Bobby and Yavor instinctively pull away so as not to be splashed by the boiling water.

Bobby holds his palm, which is burned.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

FUCK'S SAKE!

Bobby looks at Victor as if he burned him on purpose.

He rushes to the sink and releases cold water on his hand. Yavor goes to him. Victor looks blankly from the side.

YAVOR

What happened?

BOBBY

ARGHH!

YAVOR

Did you get burned?

Victor steps back and leaves the kitchen without saying anything. Yavor stands next to Bobby at the sink, looking bewildered after Victor.

INT. OFFICE - CORRIDOR - DAY

Victor walks through the corridor. Steps into -

INT. OFFICE - ROOM - DAY

- where there are desks with computers. He sits at his workplace. The others in the room are talking. Victor puts on his headphones. One of his colleagues looks at him suspiciously for a moment, then returns to his conversation.

Victor discreetly looks at the hand with which he had held the hot cup. Blisters are rapidly forming on it.

EXT. THEATRE - NIGHT

People are gathered in front of the theatre. People from Victor's company smoke in front of the entrance. Bobby and Yavor are there.

BOBBY

- he is so weird. I told you when he first came.

COWORKER #1

Did he actually burn you on purpose?

YAVOR

Quiet -

Victor comes to the theater and reluctantly joins his coworkers. They are silent.

YAVOR (CONT'D)

Good evening.

Victor nods. There is an awkward silence that lasts a few seconds, then Yavor decides to break it.

YAVOR (CONT'D)

Did you take a look at the brochure?

Yavor shows the others a brochure for the show. It depicts a dancing woman with a short advertising text.

YAVOR (CONT'D)

"In the realm of the senses".
Sounds dirty, eh?

BOBBY

Hey look, the big shot is here -

The CLIENT (50), a well-dressed foreigner, and VENTSI (45), the company's leader, approach the group.

CLIENT

Good evening. How are you?

Victor keeps his distance and does not engage socially with his coworkers. The others exchange a few words. Obviously, the customer is important to the company.

CLIENT (CONT'D)

Shall we go inside?

INT. THEATRE - NIGHT

The audience is seated in the hall. Stylized, mysterious lighting is on. The dancer, DIA (26), steps on stage and starts dancing to weird music.

The dance explores sensory experiences - Dia uses various objects and fabrics that she touches against her skin.

Victor, who is sitting in the front row, is watching without much interest. Some of his coworkers are whispering, some are watching with interest, others are checking their phones, visibly bored.

Suddenly the music stops abruptly and the lighting changes from dark to brighter. Dia approaches Victor and invites him to stand up. He is embarrassed and has no desire to participate, but she is insistent.

The audience looks at them in anticipation. Victor stands up reluctantly. Dia begins to interact with him, first touching herself in a certain place, then Victor in the same place.

Victor, who until then had been completely uninterested in Dia's dance, reacts with excitement. He seems mesmerized by her, watching her movements closely. She sees his interest.

The interaction ends and Dia returns to the stage. The lighting becomes gloomy and mysterious again.

Victor sits down embarrassed. His colleagues are looking at him.

MONTAGE SEQUENCE: DANCE

We see different phases of the dance. Dia handles a contact ball, silk ribbons and other objects that come in contact with her skin. Victor looks at her as if hypnotized.

The floor of the stage is covered with small pebbles, on which Dia lies. Some of them stick to her skin, leaving a mark.

END OF MONTAGE SEQUENCE

EXT. THEATRE - NIGHT

People are leaving the hall, discussing the show. It's cold. Victor is standing next to his coworkers, who are talking to the foreign client again. Victor is lost in his thoughts.

They are discussing where to take the client next.

COWERKER #1

So, shall we go to a bar now?

VENTSI

Hey, Bobby, didn't you mention that you knew a nice place somewhere nearby -

BOBBY

Uhm... yeah, it's a new bar a few blocks away -

Victor withdraws from them unnoticed. The group heads to the bar.

Victor walks down the sidewalk in the other direction. Suddenly, Dia catches up with him.

DIA

Hey!

Victor is startled. She stands in front of him and holds her hand out.

DIA (CONT'D)

I'm Dia.

Victor does not react. Dia continues to keep her arm extended.

DIA (CONT'D)

And you?

Victor grabs her hand cautiously. She shakes hands with him vigorously.

VICTOR

Victor.

DIA

Did you enjoy the performance?

Victor doesn't answer. Dia is smoking a cigarette. She wears a heavy coat, under which she is scarcely dressed.

VICTOR

More or less.

DIA

Well, it seemed to me that you enjoyed it a lot.

Victor doesn't answer. He leaves again. Dia follows him.

DIA (CONT'D)

The choreography is mine. This is the first time I tried interacting with the audience though. Did you like it?

VICTOR

It's weird.

DIA

I know it's weird, but did it affect you?

Dia stops him and touches him again, then touches herself. Victor seems hypnotized once again.

DIA (CONT'D)

(cheerful)

I think it did affect -

VICTOR

Do that again.

Dia is startled by his commanding tone, but then reaches out to touch him.

VICTOR (CONT'D)

Not me. Yourself.

Dia's hand freezes mid-air. She shruggs and touches herself again. Victor watches, bedazzled. Dia is puzzled.

DIA

What?

He does not answer. She touches herself again in the same way. Victor stares at her.

DIA (CONT'D)

Tell me what's up!

Victor shakes his head, turns away and starts walking down the street again, Dia follows.

DIA (CONT'D)

Say something. I need to work on the dance. I need to know: does it excite you, does it bother you, is it unpleasant, is it cool -

Victor ignores her.

DIA (CONT'D)

C'mon, say someth -

Victor stops. He doesn't answer for a long time, as if he's not sure if he wants to share this with her. Eventually he approaches her and tells her in a secretive voice.

VICTOR

Listen. I don't know how this will sound, but I have a neurological condition. I can't feel any sense of touch whatsoever. I've never felt anything.

Dia is puzzled. Victor looks around as if he's sharing something very intimate with her.

VICTOR (CONT'D)

But when you touch yourself, I feel it.

Dia continues to stare at him. They stand and look at each other. Finally, Dia speaks.

DIA

Yeah, right!

Dia slaps herself.

DIA (CONT'D)

Did you feel that?

VICTOR

Yes.

DIA

Lier.

VICTOR

I'm not lying. And besides, you have to cover up.

DIA

Excuse me?

VICTOR

I'm freezing.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Dia and Victor are in a bar. Dia drinks a cocktail and takes the icicles out of the glass. She touches them against her skin.

DIA

Do you feel this?

Victor sits next to her and drinks soda. He is stiff.

VICTOR

Yes.

Dia pinches her leg where Victor can't see.

DIA

And this?

VICTOR

What?

DIA

So you have to see it, to feel it.

Dia takes a sip from her cocktail and thinks.

DIA (CONT'D)

Has this happened before?

Victor shakes his head.

DIA (CONT'D)

Awesome!

EXT. STREETS - NIGHT

Dia is tipsy. She laughs. Victor walks her home. They reach her front door. Dia spreads her arms.

DIA

This is where I live. Do you want to come up?

VICTOR

No.

DIA

Really?

Victor shrugs. Dia looks at him.

DIA (CONT'D)

Hold on. You don't feel anything whatsoever, right?

Victor nods.

DIA (CONT'D)

Ever got laid?

Victor does not answer. He shrugs. Dia is amused. Her eyes widen in surprise, as if she has just made an incredible discovery.

DIA (CONT'D)
Get out of here!

Victor is not embarrassed, he stares at her with a blank expression. "So what?". Dia turns to unlock the door, but drops her keys because she's drunk. She bends down to pick them up, then turns to Victor.

DIA (CONT'D)
Want to meet again tomorrow?

Victor looks at her.

INT. VICTOR'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Victor goes home. He stands in front of the mirror and undresses. He checks his body carefully.

He touches himself in the places Dia touched herself. He remembers the feeling, getting excited.

INT. VICTOR'S APARTMENT - VICTOR'S ROOM - NIGHT

Victor is in shorts and a T-shirt. There is a thermometer in the room which he checks. He takes out a thicker blanket from the wardrobe, then he goes to bed.

He turns off the lamp, then stares at the ceiling. Victor is thinking.

EXT. SQUARE - DAY

Dia and Victor are in a square with a fountain. Dia dips her hands in the fountain, the water is cold. Victor feels it, looks at his hands.

Dia takes off her shoe and sock and dips her foot in the fountain. Victor looks at her, then jumps back, surprised. He instinctively raises his leg in the air and moans - it's cold.

Dia laughs.

INT. TEXTILE STORE - DAY

Dia and Victor are in a store for cloths. Dia touches different fabrics.

DIA
Wool -

Dia touches a woolen cloth. Victor looks at his hand, where he feels the cloth.

DIA (CONT'D)
Cotton -

Touches cotton fabric. Victor keeps watching.

DIA (CONT'D)
Silk -

Dia touches a silk cloth. She frowns.

DIA (CONT'D)
No, this is fake.

She looks for authentic silk.

DIA (CONT'D)
Here. This is silk.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Dia and Victor are walking. Dia sees a woman walking a fluffy dog.

DIA
Do you like dogs?

Victor shruggs.

VICTOR
Not particularly.

DIA
Dick.

Dia approaches the dog and begins to caress it. Victor looks at his palms.

Dia plays with the dog, which lets her pamper him. The dog's owner smiles, then looks at Victor. He puts his hands in his pockets and looks away.

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

Dia and Victor are walking.

DIA
 Explain it to me, I don't
 understand it. How do you live
 without any sense of touch?

VICTOR
 I'm used to it. How do the blind
 live?

They continue to walk in silence for a second. Victor
 considered how to continue.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
 For example, I check myself for
 injuries every night. If I miss
 something, it can become infected
 without me noticing.
 (pause)
 It hardly happens now, but as a
 child I hurt myself a lot.

Dia sees something in the distance and her eyes widen.

DIA
 Now this is something you have to
 feel!

Dia sees people spinning fire in the distance. She goes to
 them. Victor follows her. She approaches the spinning fire
 and turns to Victor with a wide smile.

Victor approaches her. The light from the fire illuminates
 her face.

DIA (CONT'D)
 Do you feel this?

Victor touches his cheek.

DIA (CONT'D)
 Is it nice?

Victor nods.

EXT. STREETS - NIGHT

Victor walks Dia home.

DIA

I remembered something. Have you heard of the experiment where they separated little monkeys from their mothers?

Victor shakes his head. Dia continues.

DIA (CONT'D)

They were separated as babies to see how lack of physical contact would affect them. It really messed them up. They clung to their diapers, looking for something soft. Became antisocial and aggressive.

Victor looks at her.

DIA (CONT'D)

Makes me think of your case.

VICTOR

That's not my case. No one deprived me of physical contact, I just can't feel it.

DIA

Yes, precisely. This lack must have affected you in some way-

VICTOR

It's not something I think about.

They stop at the door. There is an awkward pause.

Dia suddenly thinks of something. She hugs Victor. He stands stiff. Dia doesn't let him go, she hugs him like a little child.

DIA

Do you feel this?

VICTOR

Yes.

DIA

So I'm huggig you and you're feeling your own body?

Victor considers this.

VICTOR
I don't know. I feel something.

DIA
Warmth?

VICOTR
I like it.

Dia lets him go. They look at each other.

VICTOR
Show me more.

INT. DIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Victor and Dia enter her apartment. It's artistically furnished, tasteful, narrow, there is a certain creative chaos. It contrasts with Victor's minimalist apartment.

Dia pours herself a drink.

DIA
You want something to drink?

Victor shakes his head. He looks disapprovingly at the apartment. Dia lights candles for the atmosphere.

Victor takes off his coat and enters cautiously. It's as if he's scared of the mess. He stands by the sofa.

DIA (CONT'D)
Take a seat.

Victor seats.

DIA (CONT'D)
What should we do?

Dia looks around and thinks. There is a vase with a bouquet of roses on the table. Victor glances at it. She catches his eye and approaches the roses. She starts stroking their leaves.

Victor looks at his fingers and rubs them.

Dia deliberately pricks herself lightly with one of the thorns. Victor is startled. Dia is amused.

DIA (CONT'D)
Sorry. Did that hurt?

VICTOR

A bit.

Dia looks around again.

DIA

Got it!

She takes one of the candles and starts dripping wax on her skin. Victor leans forward. A mixture of discomfort and curiosity on his face.

DIA (CONT'D)

Burns a little, right?

VICTOR

Yes.

DIA

Do you like it?

Victor doesn't respond.

DIA (CONT'D)

I like it.

Victor swallows. Considers his response.

VICTOR

It's interesting.

Dia leaves the candle. Thinks again.

DIA

Hold a moment.

Dia leaves the living room. Victor stays. He looks at his forearm, where Dia dripped the wax. He rubs his skin there. He looks at the kitchen where Dia went.

Dia appears at the door with a knife.

DIA (CONT'D)

Something interesting.

Dia approaches. She begins to run the blade over the skin of her hand, it leaves a white mark.

DIA (CONT'D)

Do you feel this?

VICTOR

Yes.

She does this for a while. Victor looks mesmerized.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
Cut yourself.

Dia is startled.

DIA
Excuse me?

VICTOR
Cut yourself a little.

Dia laughs, thinking he's joking.

DIA
I won't cut myself.

VICTOR
Just a tiny bit.

Dia sees that Victor is serious and her expression darkens.

DIA
Screw you, I won't cut myself.

Dia returns to the kitchen with the knife. Victor follows her.

INT. DIA'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Victor enters the kitchen after Dia. He stands at the door. Dia puts the knife back in the drawer.

VICTOR
Please.

Dia doesn't face him, she's angry now.

DIA
Are you insane, I won't cut myself!
You do it!

Victor approaches her.

VICTOR
I have done it. Many times.

Victor lifts his sleeve, and shows his scar.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
I want to find out what it feels
like.

Dia is afraid of him. Her amusement is long gone.

DIA
I'll tell you what it feels like:
it hurts and it's unpleasant,
that's it! You haven't missed a
thing.

VICTOR
Please -

DIA
I don't want to cut myself, do you
understand me? This has no
consequence for you. If you look
away, you stop feeling. Right?

Victor doesn't respond.

DIA (CONT'D)
Right!?

Victor still doesn't respond.

DIA (CONT'D)
For me there are consequences. And
this isn't fun anymore.

VICTOR
Nothing will happen to you, just an
inch. I'll show you how.

DIA
I won't cut myself.

Victor approaches her. Dia is scared.

DIA (CONT'D)
Get away from me!

Victor freezes. They look at each other for a moment. Dia
breathes fast, she is horrified.

DIA (CONT'D)
It's time for you to leave.

Victor keeps looking at her. Seems she's about to cry.

DIA (CONT'D)
I'm serious.

Victor nods. He moves away. Dia watches him.

INT. DIA'S APARTMENT - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Victor takes his coat and leaves the apartment.

INT. DIA'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Dia watches him leave. When the door closes, she exhales. She is very scared.

INT. VICTOR'S APARTMENT - DAY

Victor sits on his couch, thinking. He looks at his phone.

He dials Dia's phone. A free signal is heard, which then becomes busy.

Victor removes the receiver from his ear.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Victor is working on his computer. He looks around to make sure no one is looking at him. Dials Dia again.

Again a free signal that turns busy. Victor leaves the phone on his desk and continues to work.

EXT. THEATRE - NIGHT

Victor awaits Dia in front of the theatre. She comes out. He follows her, for about 20 meters.

Eventually she stops and turns to him.

DIA

Don't you get it, I don't want to see you!?

Victor approaches her. Dia is upset and scared.

DIA (CONT'D)

Stop calling me, and don't come here again.

VICTOR

I want to talk.

DIA

I don't.

VICTOR
Please.

DIA
You have 10 seconds to leave, or
I'll start screaming.

VICTOR
I didn't mean to scare you. There
are things I need to feel.

DIA
Five seconds.

VICTOR
I was just curious -

Dia STARTS SHOUTING. Victor is startled and after a second he hurries away. In the distance, a passerby, startled by Dia's screams, looks at him suspiciously.

INT. VICTOR'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Victor checks for injuries. At one point he stops and stares at his reflection.

He grabs his skin and begins to pinch himself, trying to feel something. He is angry and frustrated. He uses all his strength. His palm trembles, not from pain, but from the effort he puts in.

After failing to feel anything for a long time, he stops. He is angry.

EXT. DODGY NEIGHBOURHOOD - FOOTBALL FIELD - EVENING

Victor sits on the grass near a football field. With him are two THUGS - NIKOLA - big and fat, with whom he talks, and THE BEAR small, skinny, with protruding hair and many tattoos.

NICOLA
When are we talking about?

VICTOR
She has a performance next
Thursday.

Nicola takes out a notebook and checks something.

NICOLA
The Bear has boxing lessons on
Thursday.

(MORE)

NICOLA (CONT'D)
 (nods to The Bear)
 We can do Saturday, Tuesday or
 Wednesday.

Victor considers this.

VICTOR
 On Saturday she has rehearsals till
 7.

Nicola makes a note. Runs the numbers.

NICOLA
 1500 for each of us. No
 perversions.

VICTOR
 I'll need you to cut her.

Nicola considers this. Looks at him judgingly.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
 Just a little...

Nicola shrugs. Shakes his head.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
 Just so you know, I might react
 weirdly.

NICOLA
 How so?

VICTOR
 I'm not sure. Just ignore me.

Nicola looks at him for a long time, trying to figure out
 what his deal is.

NICOLA
 Look buddy, that's your business.
 You're paying us to cut the lady,
 react how you like.

EXT. THEATRE - NIGHT

Dia leaves the theatre. Walks the streets. These are small
 streets, relatively well lit, but with no passers-by.

Dia is worried. She obviously feels that someone is watching
 her. Stops and turns back. Doesn't see anyone. Looks around,
 continues.

She stops again and takes out a cigarette. Her lighter doesn't work. She gives it several tries, still nothing.

Dia seems to feel something again and turns back, cigarette in her mouth. Doesn't see anyone. She's scared. Shakes her head, as if to shake off the fear.

She turns forward again and tries lighting the cigarette again. This time it works. Dia swallows the smoke.

At that moment, two hands SLIP A BLACK CANVAS BAG on Dia's head. Dia starts shouting.

The lit cigarette falls to the ground.

Nicola and The Bear hold Dia, wearing black masks. She thrashes and screams, but they manage to put her in the back seat of a car parked nearby. Nicola sits in the driver's seat.

He turns on the headlights and starts the car.

INT. UNDERGROUND PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Nicola and The Bear throw Dia on the ground. She screams, but there is no one to hear her.

Victor stands to the side and watches.

Nicola and The Bear start kicking Dia.

We hear her cries and the blows that Nicola and The Bear inflict upon her. We don't see her being beaten, instead we see Victor, who bends over and falls to the ground from the blows. There is pain on his face.

He looks at Dia with agony and interest, making muffled sounds. He convulses as he watches the thugs kick her.

Nicola stops kicking Dia and pulls out a pocketknife. Victor's eyes widen: this is what he's been waiting for.

Nicola leans over Dia and exposes her hand. Dia, who sees nothing, tries to pull her hand away. Nicola grabs her roughly.

Victor watches, still crouched on the ground.

Dia starts screaming again as Nicola pierces her.

Victor cringes in pain. Keeps looking. We approach him as he watches. We see the pain on his face.

Dia's screams echo. Victor watches until eventually he can't stand it and shuts his eyes. His body immediately relaxes from the convulsion and exhales with relief. Dia keeps shouting.

Without looking, Victor turns, stands up, and walks away with his back to her.

Nicola and The Bear carry on.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

The next day, Victor is at work in the office. He seems relaxed and in a good mood.

He goes to a printer to print documents. As he prints, he whistles a cheerful melody.

THE END