

AYLCEE TARHA

CHEMICAL ATMOSPHERE

Story Four of the 'Lost Stories'



Éditions Aylcée-Tarha@Aylcée-Tarha Éditions

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Dualities, romance novel
- Clara, a Witch's Love, fantasy tale
- Clara and the Stone Circle, fantasy tale
- Advent Farandole, calendar
- LMJ, Feudal Trio, children's stories
- Tales of Yesteryear, collection of stories
- The Watchtower, fantasy novel
- The Elemental Peoples, collection of stories
- Lost Stories, text collection
- Epidamos, fantasy novel
- Feudalities, Vol. 1, heroic fantasy novel
- Liberties, Vol. 2, heroic fantasy novel

DEDICATION

This short story is taken from a collection of short stories: Lost Stories, intended to create free downloads for adults. Each story is complete and original.

This text can be downloaded FREE of charge directly from my website by adults, parents, family members, friends, etc., who remain solely responsible for opening the minds of their children (specifically, those between the ages of fourteen and eighteen, in their teens).

I am an independent author and publisher.

This e-book is in PDF format and protected by copyright certificate No. D60268-21272
(illustrations from CANVA Pro)

"All rights reserved."

"Any resemblance to facts and characters existing or having existed would be purely fortuitous and could only be the result of pure coincidence."

"The Intellectual and Artistic Property Code authorizes, under the terms of paragraphs 2 and 3 of Article L.122-5, on the one hand, only "copies or reproductions strictly reserved for the private use of the copier and not intended for collective use" and, on the other hand, only analyses and short quotations for the purpose of example and illustration, "any representation or reproduction in whole or in part, made without the consent of the author or his successors in title or assigns, is unlawful" (paragraph 1 of Article L. 122-4). This representation or reproduction, by any process whatsoever, would therefore constitute an infringement punishable by Articles L. 335-2 et seq. of the Intellectual Property Code."

Prohibition of reproduction rights (or copying rights) and corresponding legal text, with or without the following excerpt:

This book or parts of it may not be reproduced in any form, stored in any retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise) without the prior written permission of the publisher, except as provided by the copyright law of the United States of America. For permission requests, write to the publisher, "Attention: Permissions Coordinator," at the address below:

Aylcée Tarha
La Roucoule
1, Chemin de la Bichoune
-F-15400 Menet
or by email:
aylcee.livres@gmail.com

Pierre had finally been transferred! He'd been waiting for this for over six long months! He absolutely wanted to leave the Paris region: he was feeling very uneasy about living in the city. The train-car-metro-work-sleep routine was enough! He hoped for something different from life. He was a spry man in his fifties, a competent salesman and a chemical manufacturing manager in the industrial sector.

'I'm sick of it! I've just been extorted this month! Several months of work were on my computer!'

In his current company, he was the only one with such skills: the all-in-one role, with the titles of safety manager and staff representative. His boss finally handed him the keys to his new unit based in the Burgundy region, with a company vehicle, housing paid for by management, a salary increase and bonuses, and a professional magnetic card to enter his area.

'I'm recognized by the CEO, who trusts me, and that's something.'

It's up to him to demonstrate his true value as a leader, with people and industrial objectives. He was asked to spend six months with a track record of results before taking up his position. He won his case and was effectively and, above all, permanently reappointed. When the move came, it was eventful: missed schedules, problems along the way, handing over the keys in a difficult situation!

'It's off to a flying start, as always.'

During the first half of the year, everything went smoothly: recruiting staff, refurbishing the premises and machinery, taking over the electricity, water, and telephone contracts, receiving the offices and mobile homes, ordering raw materials, and manufacturing toxic products. Safety was prioritized with mandatory clothing, special footwear, goggles, and masks.

'Who's doing the fire training with me?'

It all started one beautiful spring day when... the incidents

began, irrevocably!
'I had a nightmare night!'

That day, everything started badly. He woke up late. He knocked over the coffee maker. He couldn't find his toothbrush. He had trouble getting dressed and spent some time searching for his second shoe. Then it was time to find the car keys. Adding insult to injury: he fell down the stairs and ripped the seam of his jersey pants! He had to go back upstairs and change back into his shoes in a hurry.

In short: it was the beginning of a bad day! He activated his car key remotely, but it wouldn't obey him the first time! He kept trying, however, and finally, all of a sudden, it worked! He shrugged, fatalistic but grumpy, throwing his new computer bag onto the passenger seat in exasperation. He started the engine, revving, and drove to his factory in the industrial zone.

'Damn, I like being the first one there!'

He passed through all the various essential safety checks within these signposted passages. The mephitic chemical particles spread through the air between the two foreign-made units. He parked in his spot and climbed out of the driver's seat with a long sigh. As soon as he noticed the guys on his team standing around with their arms dangling, he felt a wind of trouble approaching.

'What's going on here this morning?'

His expression closed; he became the unit leader, the one through whom everything flowed. As much as he could appear human, he also knew how to manage smoothly. He was a born mediator, a man in charge, and a tough opponent too. A kind heart, he protected himself with a semblance of distant coolness. He went to the locker room and put on his white coat: he put on his glasses and assumed a grumpy, slightly grumpy expression.

'Okay. Why the silence? Fine.' I'm listening. Tell me your grievances. I'll see what I can do as things stand.'

As soon as the boss was approachable, the employees surrounded him to brief him on the major event. The column had malfunctioned, leaks had developed, and security had suddenly gone into overdrive. The lights were flashing in complete anarchy, and there was no sign that anything would change in the hours that followed. They had decided to shut it down while they waited for him.

"Pierre, what are you going to do now? We don't know."

"Hang on, guys. Have you checked every possible system at least? Is that certain? The entire procedure?"

"Y-Yes, at least we think so! We've reviewed the specifications..."

"Did you do it or not? There's no 'maybe'!"

"Yes, Pierre, I'm the one who double-checked everything in your absence. Since I'm supposed to be your second-in-command, just in case." Okay, Sébastien. So what? What happened next?

"Nothing out of the ordinary. The buttons wouldn't stop. The distillation column was surrounded by mist, lots of chaotic sounds. No comprehension: and then poof! Silence.

-Have you tried anything else by turning it off and restarting? Sometimes it works and things go back to normal.

-No, we were afraid of doing worse, very afraid in fact.

-Did you write it down in the logbook provided for this purpose, Sébastien? Step by step or not? Otherwise, in bulk?

-Yes, of course. I'll be precise in case of any misunderstandings.

-Did you implement all the methods for isolating potential problems in a timely manner, Philippe? The ones closest to the current situation? Read each example?

-Yes, we did it one after the other, under cover of Sébastien's report. Read, reread, and applied it twice.

-Okay, will you have a coffee while I properly analyze the situation. I need to be focused.

-We prefer it when you're here with us, boss.

-Thanks, where's the logbook? Thank you, Sébastien.

-I also noted down what I did point by point.

-Thank you, Philippe. I'll get back to you as soon as I have the solution.

He settled into the engine room, where the heart of the column lived and vibrated, where the machines hummed ordinarily. This silence was impressive in its clarity and did not bode well. At this precise spot where he stood, bursts of noise, continuous and simultaneous, should have been audible, but nothing was noticeable: heavy, overwhelming, the atmosphere was becoming stifling.

'I must find something, or they'll question my reliability.'

He pressed various levers and buttons, nothing. No sound, no clicking, no whirring: nothing but this frightening calm!

'Remain calm and your sense of work will come to your aid.'

Computers had also decided to play tricks on this beautiful day: the screens became scrambled, emitting a few oddities before failing, harmonizing in perfect osmosis of negativity, a verifiable symbiosis. Demoralized, torn, disoriented, he tapped sharply on the general command keypad and... everything started moving again, as if by magic!

'I'm a resister, I definitely love challenges!'

He tossed his bangs to the left with a sardonic smile, that of the old veteran he was! The good old method had struck again... and succeeded. He rubbed his hands together in satisfaction: the men weren't going to recover, for sure. This would serve him well in the future to keep them firmly in hand: trust in this MacGyver of chemistry who carried within him the means to solve any problem.

'The Burgundians looked down their noses at me, the Parisian kid, now they'll revise their plan and be much more careful.'

The production of hydrogen peroxide and highly hazardous products such as industrial resins remained one of his specialties. He had a background as a volunteer firefighter, first aider, and professional emergency repairer; he had

polished his resume with a role as a Seveso risk trainer, and one of his hobbies was knowing how to control his stress in all circumstances.

'I'm a relaxation therapist and hypnotherapist, an instinctive wellness masseur, and I have a professional nose for perfumery.'

All these qualities inevitably set him apart from others.

'I'll tell them who I am little by little. I like to have a bit of mystery; it unsettles some overconfident people.'

All this gave him a very reassuring, protective image in a very insecure or unstable place. He had a highly developed sense of smell: he had received a little additional training in this field during a pre-employment in the perfumeries of Grasse, in the southeast of France. He easily detected the scents, odors, and aromas that surrounded him, near or far.

"Well, Pierre... What were you able to do to make it work again? We're amazed by this convincing result."

"Oh, that's a secret! I won't tell you guys."

"With you, there's always a solution, right, boss?"

"I just try... It's a matter of feeling!"

"Ah, you Parisians... you're lucky or spoiled by life."

"It's not for nothing that we represent the capital!" -Yeah, oh come on... you're certainly geniuses, but we...

-Get to work now! The morning's almost over!

-Oh, damn, it's true, it's almost eleven o'clock now!

-I'll help you since I was late earlier.

-Thanks, boss. We're going to the clean room; there are two more pallets to finalize and keep in stock for a German company.

-Yes, it's scheduled for the day after tomorrow, there's plenty of time there!

The morning, or at least what remained of it, was punctuated by minor incidents: when one subsided, a second emerged. At lunchtime, he returned home and... put his head in his hands: the upstairs neighbor had a water leak! With his feet soaking wet, his shirtsleeves rolled up like his

trouser legs, he began to mop up the water seeping from the ceiling and seeping down to the floor.

'This is really my day, it's about time it ended!'

When he finished his sewer work, he made himself two chicken sandwiches and ate them on the go before returning to the company. The machines did their work, and he was able to go to his office to do his mail and answer the phone. He tried to manage everything on his own. It was late afternoon when... it started again! Impressive silence...

'Oh, that's just my luck, yeah, pretty bad luck!'

Fallen suddenly, like a cleaver!

'She's not a machine that's going to dictate her will to me!' Pierre persisted in trying a more intelligent system where logic played a role, but he had to face the facts: the perfect brute method worked better. He repeated his action, and the machine hiccuped, then coughed, and finally went silent. He was thinking about a permanent quota, but for the moment, he couldn't think of anything he could invent to make this production line work better.

'It's not a done deal! We have to find something else... I've definitely got a spell on my head today, one problem after another... It's enough to make me bang my head! I repair or find something, but another riddle comes back to bother me, it's not normal... Something strange is happening.' Sometimes I feel like there's a presence following me, sizing me up, disturbing me...'

The employees wished him a good evening and left the factory on Pierre's shoulders: he had to finalize the next day's schedule, organize his desk, send out several faxes, put the letters in the morning mail, do the final product analyses, etc., etc., etc. He was about to leave too when... a terrible threat loomed...

'It's impossible: a mystery to him, to the factory, to the environment? Or was he really rambling, being crazy.'

Before him, a sort of dense but localized fog formed, a silhouette at first imprecise and blurred, then more discernible. Pierre wasn't really surprised by this kind of phenomenon; in his youth, he had been initiated into paranormal activity, but the vagaries of life had decided otherwise. He was faced with a ghost who wanted to make contact with him!

'He must have sensed my magnetism and the intensity of my aura...'

In this surprising silence, alone with the form, the atmosphere was decidedly quite surreal. Someone else would have had their hair stand on end, but not him. He waited quietly, curious about this new experience. This man, despite his feet on the ground, was always ready for new horizons, with an open mind. The ectoplasm came closer, not moving, waiting for another sign.

'What an unusual encounter between a living human and a deceased one! Will I be able to communicate with it? That would be great!'

A voice was heard, more like a whisper:

"You're in my shoes right now. You should be scared. Yes. Scared of ending up like me."

"Why? What happened to you?"

"That's why I'm here, to warn you and ask for help. I can't change anything alone. I really need you. If you want to stay alive, we have to help each other. You must believe me and trust me."

"Always ask, and I'll see. You can also mislead me and drag me into a downward spiral."

"I'm not a poltergeist, a teaser, or a bad guy. I'm here to keep you from much more serious trouble."

"To do that, you'll have to tell me everything, otherwise move on."

"I understand. You're asking for proof before moving forward. That's normal. Here's one, the most official one there is. Here."

On the desk cluttered with all sorts of paperwork, Pierre noticed an official document, initialed and stamped. He picked it up and read it carefully. It described various phases of industrial development in the area designated for these activities. An expert had prohibited several areas, including the possibility of any chemical plant. The City Hall circumvented the text, countersigned by the Prefecture!

'Very hazardous to the environment and far too close to private homes. The river that winds around the site will be and will end up polluted, and this will be permanent. Relocation of the establishment further from populated areas.' This was ratified by the scientific document, which included soil and water samples taken within a radius of one to one hundred meters, then over several years, stretching over several kilometers.

He looked up: this required reflection. But he didn't understand why this form was coming into contact with him. He had nothing to do with the troubles of this ghost-man... Unless... 'No, it can't be... it couldn't be... it would be too unfair... an industrial conspiracy covering up other things much more important... than a second existence? His own... What would be the motive?'

-I see your mind works fast... very fast, even!

-I definitely don't want to be the butt of this joke... that's for sure!

-I was the poor, naive engineer who got the fallout. I knew too much, they eliminated me without fear.

-Were you the scapegoat or a straw man in this sad and dark affair? When did you find out exactly?

-Against my will, I didn't see the wind coming. That was my first mistake. My second mistake was telling them I knew, that I had irrefutable proof.

-And when you realized it, it was too late...

-Not exactly. I was blackmailing them: money.

-They tried to take you into their confidence then. -Yes, and when I was at the heart of the thorny problem, my conscience awakened, and I went off to tell the story...

-Only they intercepted you first, and... squeak!
-More precisely, it was boom! Leaving for the sake of leaving.
-But how did you get that incriminating paper?
-I had begun secret research and had a notary friend to whom I sometimes gave papers to keep. I submitted them to him in a sealed envelope marked Confidential. He must still have some of them inside his safe in his office.

"I'll need them if you want us to be a powerful duo. I must have as much information as you do about this case if you want my current help or advice."

"I'll come see you every evening to take stock and give you the information I still have."

"Avoid touching the column or the computer systems, otherwise I won't be able to work properly."

"This needs to be resolved because I'm not the one perpetuating this."

"So there are other strange phenomena in these premises?"

"It seems so... It won't be easy to flush out the intruder."

"One thing at a time. I hope it doesn't malfunction tonight because I need to recover."

"See you tomorrow. Thank you and good luck for the future."

Pierre closed everything behind him: office, production, and workshop-laboratory. He reset the alarm, and wearily walked back to his vehicle. He was responsible for the entire production unit, employees dependent on his actions, interns, and accounts to report to his superiors and customers. Night and day, he was on the alert, at the mercy of an alarm or mysterious incidents acting against him.

'I must remain focused on the concrete reality of my experience and cannot digress into paranormality, even if it is active and visual.'

A curse hung over him and the premises. He had vaguely studied the parametric calculation systems related to geobiology: he would study that aspect, organize the related documents, it would already offer him the beginnings of an explanation, he was reassured deep down. He knew the vast possibilities of this science, complementary to feng shui: it

was one of the founding principles of this Chinese art.

'Geobiology is practiced with an old-fashioned dowsing rod or with scientific instruments.'

It allowed him to go back in time, to find the origins, even the causes of certain disorders or illnesses, sometimes even older than current events or situations.

The factory was relatively new, as was the surrounding industrial zone. He would search both the present and previous years because the two phenomena occurred alternately, having nothing in common.

'Like a pinball machine, two balls collide interdependently yet have the same goal: to score points.'

The first, most recent point was in his hands and partially understood in outline. The second case would be resolved but remained completely anarchic and unknown: motives, characters, atmosphere, reasons... The future would be full of twists and turns of all kinds. There would soon be a lot of sport and excitement on the horizon! Pierre was distracted in his driving...

'I'm tired, I can't talk about it, I'm very alone...'

Pierre was drawing up a plan of attack in his head, solutions in case he was caught off guard in this or that situation, and he did so well... that he didn't stop at the red light and... was pursued by the police like a common criminal on the run. 'All I needed was them! What a day!' he grumbled, heading to the parking lot escorted by the police, delighted to catch him in front of everyone.

'Yes, officers, I was distracted and nervously on the starting blocks. I had a bad day, very exhausting.'

The police gave him a weak ticket and left. After this incident, he played the role of a cleaning lady, his studio flooded once again! 'Here we go again! When will it stop? All I want is a little peace and quiet!' He went to knock on the door of the tenant above, who opened it, bewildered. He told him to turn off the water tap in his bathroom because it was

flooding his own. He apologized and finally closed it.

'Are you sick, sir? Haven't you noticed? I've had water running through my house since noon, after all!'

Throughout the evening, Pierre wandered around the town of Chalon-sur-Saône to relax, grabbed a bite to eat at a friendly kebab shop, and then headed home. Exhausted by his week's work, he fell asleep peacefully until a loud ringing alarm unexpectedly woke him up. He yelled under his breath as he listened to the message telling him that an alert was going off.

'There you go! It's starting again... Oh, I'm so unlucky! If one thing happens, this other one will have to watch out!'

He pressed the stop button, then entered his PIN and dressed quickly. Wearing jeans and sneakers, a T-shirt and glasses, he closed his door, got back in his car, and drove to his factory. 'What's going to happen tonight? Come on, we have to go and reset the tank and boiler system. But this isn't normal!' He parked in the parking lot after passing through each mandatory security gate.

'Oh, what security constraints!'

Pierre slipped out of his seatbelt and clumsily got out of his seat. He found himself right in the middle of the factory and felt a blow to his stomach paralyze him. His head throbbed, his temples swayed, and his legs barely supported him: a swirling dizziness appeared in front of him. He widened his eyes in surprise, opened his mouth in astonishment, and was unable to make a single movement, as if hypnotized.

'Good night, damn it! What's happening to me?'

The tornado approached him more closely and began to spin around him gracefully, like a classical ballet dance: it made him dizzy almost impossible to control, so delicious, so delicate. After several minutes, it stopped as suddenly as it had begun: she leaned towards him and... kissed him... on the nose, on the forehead, on the cheeks, on the lips, like a breath of light wind...

-Beautiful caress, strange dream, cuddly thrill... smiles...

-Yes, I am a friend to you on this starry night.

-What are you doing here and why tonight, and especially me?

-I am the one who was condemned without giving her the slightest chance of salvation, without warning... because I like you, you are like the one who once made my heart beat, making me pregnant before dying, leaving me alone to face everyone.

-Thank you, but I don't know you, or your story...

-I haunt these places because I died here under delicate circumstances. There was a large pond here long ago, reeds and trees hiding my love affair with Pierre. It was a new feeling for us: he was the son of a notable in the town and I was the daughter of the executioner. I was rich but people crossed me while crossing themselves, given my father's profession. For Pierre, it was not an obstacle, he did not consider this kind of hypothesis, he was above it. He found me under the weeping willow at siesta time every day. Yet one afternoon, he did not come: forced to, his father had locked him in his room with a double turn when he learned of the emotional affair between us. Only our youth had inflamed us: I found myself pregnant by his works! Double disgrace for my family! When he learned of this from a note informing him of the matter through a friend, Pierre ran away from home and came to join me at the willow, trying to reassure me with his presence. He was very moved and held me passionately against him: he planned to marry me in a distant city where we would go thanks to the horses he would steal from his father that very night. That was the last time we saw each other: that night, he was stabbed by one of the servants, believing he was dealing with real gallows foal. Misfortune continued against me: to avoid revealing my pregnancy, I went to give birth in an abbey held by sisters. I gave birth to Pierre's child, who was taken away from me directly to be given to a woman from the upper middle class who had just lost hers. I wept with grief and almost died. But God decided otherwise: I returned to the paternal estate, which had just married me to an old gentleman full of money

who needed an attractive and physically young wife. I quickly learned why he so ardently desired to marry me: for his lewd and Machiavellian activities. Having become impotent due to his great age, he offered me to men who loved me in exchange for a tidy sum of money so that I would be pregnant to perpetuate his name. He chose them for their resemblance to him: I had become his plaything. When I gave him three, he decided to stop this game but invented a new one: he took young women, including me, and made us kneel to pray while whipping us one after the other, along with many others... until the day when his body was found naked and tied up... I was immediately suspected and made to confess to this crime without having committed it, a sad fate for me, wasn't it? While I was changing prisons, I managed to escape but they took dogs and found me. At the edge of the forest, here without trial, they dragged me and burned me like a witch! That's my story, and ever since then, I've haunted the place, provoking fear, panic, and terror whenever I try to make contact...

-And with me, it didn't happen the same way, right?

-Exactly. And besides, you have the same first name as my beloved...

-Yes, but I'm not him. I'm modern, a scientist, and you're on a protected and very dangerous site. You're endangering other lives... innocent ones. It's unfair.

-It was the only way. I don't want it to explode!

-You're shutting down a chemical facility under heavy surveillance. What do you expect from me now that I know your story? I'm responsible for this place.

-Only one thing: that you let me rest in peace. -I understand, but for that, what must I do for you?

-You have everything you need to send me back to my death without a doubt.

-You want me to... make it look like a mini-explosion that will cause little damage so you can die again?

-That's exactly what I want, yes. I have the right to peace! To find my Pierre again for an eternity of love!

"Listen to me, we're going to make a deal, okay?"

"You're trying to pull the wool over my eyes, aren't you?"

Which one?"

"Not at all, but I need to think about how to proceed..."

"Okay, I'll give you seven days and I'll stay quiet during that time."

Pierre thought about her request but couldn't possibly carry it out: it was sabotage! He tried to explain it to her, but she wouldn't budge: her obsession was going to come to fruition, and that's all that mattered. He returned to his studio once the central unit was back in order. Sleep came around dawn, just as he was about to resume his work receiving his team.

"After croissants and two black coffees, I'll feel better!"

Head spinning, he headed to his office and gave his orders to the weekend guys: there was a huge noise coming from the corridor leading to the operations room. Everyone jumped in shock. Pierre was the first on the scene, shaken by what he saw. In front of him, the laboratory had just exploded: within a minute, three people would have been seriously injured, even at the very least.

'She promised me, she didn't keep her word!'

He realized: she'd made a huge mistake!

'How am I going to do what she's asking? I can't, I'm the head of security here after all.'

The men surrounded him, surprised by his silence:

-Pierre? You're not hit? What a sequence!

-No, Sébastien, thank you, but it was borderline dangerous for the three of us.

-I just realized, yes. What could have happened? We'll have to investigate! Get to the bottom of this case.

-I don't know yet. Okay, shall we get started? Shall we clear this up?

-Yes. Hey, you guys, go get some coffee while we look for the cause... to determine this crucial fact.

-Good. First, the cleanup. Then, the event itself. Then, the preliminary report. Finally, the final protocol.

-I'm coming with the gloves, shoes, and all the gear to

accomplish this task. We can't wait any longer in this place.

-Well, yes, boss! Here, drink this coffee, it'll do you good!

-Thanks, here, and let's get on with the laundry and tidying up...

-I'll give you a hand, it'll go faster with two of us.

Meanwhile, Pierre looked around like an investigator: he knew, but had to pretend anyway.

'I'm in a phenomenal mess!'

Yet, he was discouraged and disheartened at not having been able to reach the heart of the beautiful child who had been mistreated throughout her existence and her years of purgatory. Sébastien and he worked in the laboratory, reinstalling what was needed, repositioning everything, picking up every scrap, and creating a more welcoming and organized room for professional use. They were united in this misfortune that had hit them hard.

'Instead of working to manufacture, I have to remotivate the team to come tomorrow to make up for this day, so I can deliver on Monday.'

All morning, the employees devoted their energy to ensuring their unit functioned properly. In the middle of the day, the two managers wrote their report, which they recorded in the safety anomaly log. They had barely finished writing it when an incident occurred in the manufacturing workshops: all the containers were moving, bouncing around in all directions; it was terrifying!

'She's having fun levitating inanimate objects!'

Nothing seemed to touch or propel them: a strange phenomenon... Pierre and Sébastien racked their brains, to no avail! Only mysterious events were occurring with increasing frequency. The two men began to resume their work. It was noon: everyone wished each other a good weekend, saying 'bye, see you Monday!' Pierre found himself alone in the factory. He'll be back tomorrow... alone.

'I'll do the work of three people tomorrow. On Monday, our client will be delivered normally; I promised to be the boss.'

It was then that another inexplicable mystery recurred: he was about to close the unit when a cool current enveloped him. This wind threw him to the four corners of the room, catapulted him toward the office, and brought the computer system to a standstill. The column and its various control machines went haywire, flashing more and more violently, then suddenly stopped. These sudden changes did nothing to reassure him!

'I'm held morally hostage by this demon she's become, I must absolutely get rid of her or I'll die.'

Pierre then shouted his fury at her, who refused to make any concessions. It was a duel between two frustrations!

-I'm sick of you, a real slap in the face, of your catastrophic actions! You promised to stop for a while, right?

-Me too: I just want to be done with this life once and for all! I want to go back to him, that's all.

-You don't realize your perilous actions, come on!

-And you, you don't want to get your hands dirty in front of me! You're scared.

-You're a real mule, a rebel, and an anarchist!

-And you're a coward, a wacko, an oddball, and a coward!

-We could all have died! And that would have put you back where you started! You don't think about anything but yourself!

-I don't care! I would have managed to infiltrate with you! I would have been among the victims listed.

-Good heavens! When will you understand that I can't let you do this? I'm in charge here! Of everything and everyone! I have to keep this unit running, or men will be out of work... and their families will be ruined.

"Unemployment? What's that? I don't understand that word."

"They'll no longer have jobs! And without jobs, no normal life! Then no family, no health insurance, starvation."

"You figure out the peace you want, and I won't bother you at all after that. That's the deal: I die, and you're out of

here."

Pierre exhaled deeply, exasperated: he was going around in circles!

"What if I electrified it? Let's find a fair solution between us! Yes, how could we touch the chemical plant?"

The circumstances in which he found himself couldn't give rise to melancholy, but on the contrary, they were becoming elusive. He only moderately enjoyed this intangible situation: he couldn't make a resolution and stick to it against all odds. He was in a zone of flux, frustration, conflict, and total uncertainty. He was fighting someone he wanted to help without finding the ideal solution.

'I must rest and then I will achieve my purpose.'

Fortunately, with the engineer, he had a much better handle on the problem! The latter had given him the papers detailing certain more or less murky cases, thereby revealing the beginnings of a truth: all that remained was to dig deeper to approach a more or less coherent and, above all, definitive solution. Now, he was approaching a clear solution and a clear result. If only this could really stop!

'I'm worn out between them, the team, and the work...'

He was beginning to feel truly weary, reclusive, and exhausted: all he wanted was to rest.

'I don't know what it's like to be in the arms of Morpheus...'

Really. To lie down, close all the channels, and depart into that coveted realm of sleep. He had lost sleep when he worked the three-shift system. This working method had disturbed him so much that he had never again, until now, recovered true restorative sleep! During the night, he slept more or less well, for more or less time, more or less dreaming, between two awakenings.

'Sometimes I have trouble orienting myself, reemerging from the limbo of dreams into the raw and naked reality, swimming between two spaces.'

During the day, he had to cope with his daily routine: work, activity, life. At night, he dozed gently with periods of conscious reflection, bursts of relaxation-meditation in alpha waves, intense desires for rest accompanied by discouragement. He would fall asleep peacefully, and then at some point, sleep would slip away, leaving him frustrated and tired. He felt abandoned, neglected, dispossessed.

'I want to achieve, alone through my own efforts, this sleep that has eluded me and played tricks on me for so many years now.'

He could have continued to sleep soundly thanks to artificial sleep, the kind provided by the almost daily intake of pills, sleeping pills, or antidepressants: he was becoming even sicker with it. No modern approach suited him, so he tried to find old ones: plants or science; nothing positively achieved the much-desired compensatory rest.

Nightmare nest, emergency call, return home. So much so that he wondered if he should stay overnight at the factory directly. Untimely awakenings, getting dressed quickly, driving to the unit, checking the damage, repairing it as best he could, putting the safety device back into operation, returning to the studio with the car, undressing, trying to go back to sleep and when he fell asleep, another phone call.

And so it went: the eternal cycle of his daily life!
'Exhausting was the sadly appropriate word!'

One anomaly and the cell phone would ring... And there were countless problems... A gust of air for a minute and... a stuck button and... a window that opened and... a can that spilled and... a furtive shadow that walked and... an electrical wire that came loose and... Everything was or became an excuse. No respite was possible: everything was conspiring against him!

'I have no choice but to give up or triumph. It's either a do-or-die situation...' The damage will be difficult to manage...

Between the flying ghost and him, a sort of truce was calmly

taking place: they had managed to unearth some very important supporting documents concerning dubious transactions. This had led to the elections due to the change of leadership at the town hall, and the solution appeared of its own accord: the insurance company paid the engineer's widow a sum that allowed her to save her house.

'I saw your prominent friend who fought to have your integrity recognized as a balance of honesty by the insurer.'

She was able to continue to make financial progress without any problems!

'I want to thank you for your tenacity for my husband.'

Her heiress was saved at the last minute from bank failure. The children lived a fatherless life but succeeded in their studies in the memory of him, finally reconciled and cleared of all suspicion. He thanked his friend and him and went to his family garden. The case was then closed, and Pierre then devoted himself to the white lady: he planned his monthly schedule.

'I am relieved of one burden and I want to resolve the second. I can't wait to sleep to recover my mental strength.'

The ghostly form was tenacious, truly intent on causing chaos: it never stopped its sleight of hand, whether fanciful or dangerous. So much so that Pierre became angry: he was emptying the contents of a barrel when it came rushing up behind him and sent him flying into the section of wall opposite the chemical column, which was running at full speed because there were orders!

'Good God, good night! When will this stop, for God's sake? I can't go on like this! Inhumane!'

He found himself soaked in resin and dropped the canister, which exploded on the floor. The floor had just been cleaned: everything had to be started again! The noise alerted the workers, who came to the rescue, and what they saw made their hair stand on end: their leader dripping, the contents on the floor, the container in several pieces, a laughing figure

mauling everything in its path...

'Ha ha ha! Ooh ooh ooh! Hee hee hee! Oh oh oh!'

Some crossed themselves, others were stunned...

'Well, boss! What state are you in!'

Pierre grumbled, ranted, grumbled, snarled, and came to blows with the phenomenon, which ended up moaning, crying, lamenting... its fate, that of fate... With ringing ears, breath made foul with fear, wobbly legs, and nerves on edge, Pierre and his family recovered with great difficulty from this painful experience somewhere between the supernatural and the real.

'You are all wicked, bad, evil...'

The feminine spiral gradually disappeared, leaving behind a memory of a heavy weight to bear. Pierre regained his senses and collapsed onto a chair, his legs stretched out in front of him: his shortness of breath spoke volumes about his actual state. The employees remained silent for a long time, then chose not to ask any questions that might have seemed outlandish. Who were the most outraged?

'I think she'll leave us a little peace now.'

The minutes ticked by in a vicious circle. When his breathing returned to normal, Pierre sat down properly and looked at each of them in turn. He said nothing at first, then dared to ask them what they had seen or... heard. The men stared at him incredulously. They were surprised by this strange request since they had witnessed this phenomenon.

'It's paranormal, and we need to put it back in place, that's how it is.'

Sébastien then spoke to the assembled group:

"Pierre, we saw and heard everything, come on! Why dare you ask such a question? You were center stage!

"Just to see if I wasn't dreaming it! If it really happened, right now! It's so unreal it's unbelievable."

-100% and no mistake: we were all around you!
-What energy for a future... dying woman! Astounded!
-What do you mean? We don't understand what you said...
-The form you saw is the one causing all our worries at this moment, our wasted time, our troubles.
-We owe it all? But why is it doing it? Is it playing?
-Yes. It wants me to blow it up to free itself from this space-time and finally so its soul can die in peace.
-She's crazy! With all these chemicals...
-I keep telling it to her, but so far to no avail.
-What if we isolate it to achieve this without blowing everything up... let's think about it seriously for peace.
-I've thought about it, but it's not really easy to achieve... with the other factory next door... double production, double danger. -Let's think about it... If we all pull together, the solution will emerge, right?
-Let's be positive and believe in it. Do it like professional fireworks technicians.
-That's the firefighter talking, not the safety officer.

The day continued with its share of annoyances, both usual and unusual. The two managers, after saying a brisk goodbye to the workers, found themselves alone in their office. They consulted and agreed on a simple but effective strategy, one that was less dangerous for them as humans. She returned full of energy, with the firm intention of fighting, and they accelerated their initial plan.

'We each have our role to play in this matter; since she's not giving up, let's go ahead without any remorse!'

Everything went as they had planned, and she fell victim to the men once again. They isolated her and injected her with an electric shock strong enough to kill an ox. She stirred, wriggled, and vanished into endless star-like particles into the surrounding air. Once the operation was complete, all they had to do was bury her ashes in a neutral place so she could finally rest in peace.

'What a fate, really!' Pierre thought to himself, nevertheless relieved by the end of his current worries.

The factory resumed normal operations and everything returned to normal: the men continued their manufacturing work, the managers their personnel and inventory management. Management was docile and flexible regarding this new production unit. With supernatural phenomena definitively excluded from the factory, Pierre devoted himself to moving his family to Burgundy.

'I freed myself and became a full-fledged manager.'

He felt less lonely and became the man of the situation once again. His team bonded day after day, his hard work and management skills paid off, and his promotion was amply rewarded for his efforts. The moral of this story remains that one must remain attentive to one's senses and one's heart when faced with this restricted dimensional universe that is very close, in both directions.