

Wanted: Forgetfulness

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Kostya is my name unless I have forgotten it before this sentence out. Zlata confused me a lot on the phone asking lots of questions about my health even though she is not a doctor just a specialist.

The ad was titled “I’ve forgotten my own name,” just below the breasts on Tvoi Den’s page 3. That seems to be the resting place for the ads for health problems that keep you awake at night. This one was for forgetfulness/dementia, and the operator who answered at the hotline snapped at me three times as I spoke even more absentmindedly than usual to her.

Zlata was not bothered about that when she rang me back.

She asked about my blood pressure. Did I forget much? “What pills are you taking? Why do you not have any children?”

“You really should take care of yourself, Kostya,” she added, and I almost got offended at the lack of my imaginary patronymic.

She eventually diagnosed me as having arteriosclerosis, which she said meant the blood was not going to my head. We had been on the phone for 25 minutes despite a number of attempts to escape so I could file.

“Kostya, you really shouldn’t neglect your health. This is no way to behave,” she said, playing the severe female doctor masterfully. “But you must stay in touch and answer the phone.”

She fobbed off questions about her qualifications.

She was a specialist, she said, at the Scientific Investigative Center of the Family and Health. The first part echoes like “Scientific Investigative Institute,” the prefix of usually reputable institutes. This center has an address in Office No. 2 in a building in Tekstilshchiki. The name in small letters was on a number of the ads in the newspaper for different ailments aimed at the elderly.

Toward the end, I gave her 10 seconds to tell me how much the pills cost, but she scolded me silent.

“Seventy-five is not an age to mess around with your health.”

The pills, two a day for two and a half months, cost 12,000 rubles (\$380) but will then work for two and half years. She said she will stay in constant touch monitoring my health.

“OK, send them round tomorrow,” I said.

“Then you’ll lose the 2,500 ruble discount. You really should buy them today,” she insisted. “And, Kostya, you must stay in touch.”

She’s rung up four times since then, worried that the courier has not been arranged yet. It’s good to see that she is staying in touch — but the next time she rings, I’m going to say I don’t remember who she is.

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