

Igor M. Djuric

VAMPIRES

or:

IGOR K. - THE LOSER OF THE TRANSITION

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Igor K. is somewhat like Josef K., but not the same, only somewhat like, not even similar. Namely, it was not completely clear to neither of them what had happened to them in their lives. And yet, Josef K. worked in a bank, and Igor K. at one point, could not even enter one, not even as a client. In his lifetime, all that was left was a train to run over him, this Igor K. The rest he, more or less, felt and experienced on his skin, in his short lifetime. Because Igor K. is not an old man. Neither is he young. So, somewhere in the middle. He knows he is worth much more. It is not that difficult to be worth much more than where he'd been and how people have been looking at him. A lot more! But, now it is too late. Everything is gone. All that is left is to spend the little remaining time, to live out the given, which is actually more accurate to say: to survive the rest. The existence, or any kind of perspective or danger is not at stake any more: only to subsist for how long he has to, which does not depend on him.

There are two, and only two types of living beings (men and women): those who have filled the emptiness of life, the emptiness which is received upon birth, and those who did not. Let's just say that Igor K. belongs to the third non-existing species: he is neither the first nor the second. Nothing! A fulfilled or unfulfilled life?! A fulfilled or unfulfilled being. With a soul or without it. People tend to mistakenly set the scale when they are measuring for someone else: did the person fulfill his life or not? Firstly, and most importantly, others cannot do that – but only a human for himself. Secondly, that is not something that has to be proven, it is felt, briefly and intensively, usually at the very end, when there is no time left for correction, nor enjoyment. However, whoever feels it earlier, he belongs to the rare kind of happy people. Igor K. is not one of them, although he has comprehension, which is something after all. Igor K. is immeasurable on that matter, he belonged to the group of the defeated who have even lost their loserness and cannot even present their loserness as some kind of a win, as something material.

Success is one thing but the fulfillment of life is something quite different, even though the two are often mixed, out of human ignorance. However, besides the fact that they usually do not go together, it is not impossible for them to, somewhere and with someone, merge. If success fulfills a life then a human has done what he liked to do. There are, however, successful and rich people whose lives remained empty in spite of a full stomach. There are people of great spirit, successful or not, who somewhat understood the essence (because no one can understand it fully) and whose lives are empty. Regardless of their spirit. Because, in order to fulfill life to the fullest, a lot of things have to happen and coincide, before all, the enslavement to the material world must not happen, and on top of all, one has to love. (However, we have to live out of something, you have to eat even if you are not loved). And, when you love, then you are loved, sometimes. The opposite is more likely. However, the fulfillment of life is maybe undefined or inexplicable, which means we cannot even be certain for

the flawed life of Igor K. However, even though it cannot be defined, or even measured, it is, in most case scenarios, visible with the naked eye. If all of this could be known, as it appears that it could be seen, life would lose its purpose.

The fulfillment of life is an assemblage of plenty of influences, events, feelings, aspirations, talents, experiences, surroundings and a life path – inserted into a human life, into a soul. However and therefore, immeasurable with a scale. You can be a beggar with a fulfilled life and a billionaire with a flawed one, although most would not agree with this, and they may have a point. Yes, an unfulfilled life is a flawed life, and a fulfilled one is a flawless one. When you miss in life, you do not hit anything else with your miss. It is so, life is not a target, life is a fired arrow flying towards the target and the end of one's life is a hit or a miss of the same. Igor K. personally thought, in one period of his life, that by missing the goal, he was hitting everything else. The only problem is that, his life was the goal, so he was aiming for life and he had missed it. What in the hell's name, was everything else he hit.

Generations close to Igor K. did not do well in life which befell them, mostly and majorly, because they were kids raised with the fact that the key to their house can, without a problem, be held under the flower vase or the doormat in front of the house door, with the whole neighborhood knowing where it is. Then, suddenly and in a blitz manner, different times arrived when the key was not even safe on the inner side of the home lock and those who belonged to people raised in such a manner, became the losers of the transformed value system. Besides that, they were thrown into wars in which they did not participate, but did get killed and killed each other. And, just under ten years before that, they all took an oath together, that they will defend their common state. The last sentence of that oath, many shouted out mistakenly, making excuses that it's a joke. Instead of saying "*and to give MY life in that fight*", they were saying: "*and to give THY life in that fight*". At the time, it seemed like a good joke, but later it came true in the worst possible manner. Those were the wars in which everyone "gave" someone else's life.

The wisdom states that it is not important "whether the cat is black or white, but whether it hunts mice". And they, Igor K. and his peers, were raised with the fact that the color is the most important thing, and whether it hunts mice or not, was of less importance. It can be, but doesn't have to. For them, the form of the cat, was the same as its essence. That is why they poorly managed practical matters. Or at least most of them. Those who were on the sidelines, who did not even recognize the color of the cat in the old times, who had no value in the former value system, have risen to the surface. This is because they were not burdened by heritage or habit, or any knowledge from that past. They were empty and this helped them manage in the times of transition and wars, because they started over, on new grounds, they did not have anything they could give up and forget except for their reputation and honor. Considering they didn't even have that, the problem was easily solvable for them. While others

moralized, perished, philosophized and decayed, they were getting richer and more powerful. The others, normal ones, woke up one morning and realized that their value system had passed away and that a new one is in power. That was the final point of them being screwed over. They decayed totally.

They belonged to the generations, Igor K. and his companions with whom he attended the dances at the *Cultural Center*, who ate sweet wafers while drinking beer in the army, wore volunteer uniforms when attending youth work actions and *shanghai* sneakers in the Physical Education classes. Also, they belonged to the generations who, at one point, switched all of that with *Thompsons* and *Kalashnikovs*, and who started to correct the national frustrations of our “beloved” nations and nationalities of our former country. At the same time, with the national and religious competition, another process was taking place, in which the dark and unearthly forces led their wars and were practicing their filthy will and desire. But, all of this is already stated and known, except for the last one. Everything was chewed up and overrated from every side. Attacked and defended. A question only remains to be asked: how could the boys, who ate wafers with beer, kill each other later? And what were the dark forces that were inside of us and around us, and how did they come up to the surface in an outright manner without us being aware of it?

They belonged to the generations of arrows, the girls from the city and Igor K. who was in love with some of them, who did not have healthy and wholesome tendons, so the arrows could not have been fired too far, and the precision should not even be discussed. A generation without a given chance. The lost generation. They could have been vampires, they could have been fuckers, they could have been already dead, yet they remained and became only one: the losers of the transition. They could have been everything, a chance was given to them, but they remained humans and did not want to take advantage of filthy opportunities.

Who was he at the time? A typical offspring of the lost generation. In that time, it was considered that he was ahead of his time – after a while the same time ran him over. He listened to a different kind of music than the majority at the time, he read, was favorite in his social circles – but! – because of his good sides and qualities and not because of the social status of his family, as is the case and custom today.

But – inadaptable to changes and new times he remained where he was, namely, where he once was in every way possible, except in the fact that today he did not have any more illusions that something can be changed to the better. As if time stopped for him. They were the children of the “directed education”, raised in a manner that nothing in their lives will happen or change, and that nothing, after all, will depend on them. They were born too late to feel the benefits of Tito’s borrowing, while the same money was being spent, and just in time to be caught up in the crisis connected to the repayment of the debts in every manner, and after that the bloody wars. When everything changed

drastically they were run over and remained the same: unadjusted. They became: statistics and numbers!

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Today...

Under a walnut tree, in front of his house, he spends the majority of his day, when the weather is nice and when something, in the form of rain or snow, is not falling from the sky. Even when it gets cold, he prefers the most to sit on a wooden bench, near a table covered with a chapped oilcloth. The oilcloth is, of course, garishly colorful and he found it there, together with the table. It is attached to the table board with unnecessarily many, already rusty nails we call *patenti*. He really did not know another name for them. And the locals here, his rare neighbors, could not explain to him why those nails were called so. Just like the oldest villagers here could not remember, why they call the beer caps *prints*. Neither down to the road, at the village store (which everyone is still calling *the collective*) he didn't find any answers, although he doubted that there even was a sincere desire from their side to help him, considering that his problem was pointless, opposite their existential ones.

When he is not under the walnut, then he is at the village store with old-man Jova, his son Petar and his daughter-in-law Dobrila. A family business, as Americans would say. Petar and Dobrila do not have any children, so old-man Jova is constantly inspiring the present ones he trusts, and Igor K. is one of them, opposed to Mile who is not, to somehow help him gain a successor. With him, the feeling of ownership and the continuation of his family is stronger than the feeling of jealousy or shame, due to the fact that someone can lay with his daughter and make her a child. If he would catch anyone doing it out of passion, old-man Jova would instantly pass a judgment on his behalf. For the continuation of his family, on the other hand, for making a child: he has understanding.

- They are God's creatures – he says – it is not important whose they are, when they are God's. I would make one myself, if only I could – he concludes melancholically.

Old-man Jova would sometimes sit and sip with them, in front of the village store. He would not exaggerate, of course, he was a fine housekeeper, but he was capable of prolonging, from time to time, and sipping a few more than he usually does. He would then buy rounds to the ones who are present, which in normal circumstances and on other days, he would not do. Mile would say to that:

- God condemn the enterprise for not making the glasses rise!

Old-man Jova has been doing trading since the times when there was not much private businesses and when you could not live as good from it. He owned a tavern, a store, a harvester, and worked on his homestead as a true

housekeeper. And little by little, he got rich. Big and new houses, mechanizations, full barns and cattle pens, barrels and meat fumatories. Straw mattresses were probably full of money as well. He is now slowly retiring and his businesses, especially the store, are managed by his son and daughter-in-law. Son procuring for the most part, and the daughter-in-law behind the counter. She leans her tits on the counter and the folk rush to the store. Men and women. Men to stare at Dobrila's tits, and the women to stare at their men and to, if it is somehow possible, lure them away to their homes. Everyone hates them in the village, both of them, for different reasons which can all be reduced under two terms: envy and jealousy. And, yet again, everyone is kind to them because they need them.

But, as we said, they do not have children, Petar and Dobrila, which is quite depressing for the old-man. When he gets a little drunk, the old-man embraces one of the people he is drinking with over the table, and a few trustworthy more, if they are present, embraces them so that they lean their heads towards the table in a conspiracy manner, and tells them silently:

- Fuck my daughter-in-law, she might get pregnant, I need a successor so that my seed does not meet its end and so I can leave all of this to someone.

He would nod his head and, in a serious facial expression and tearful eyes, repeat:

- Fuck her... feel free to...

And then he would show, with the same eyes, towards the door of the store, behind which his daughter-in-law would be involved in some store business.

- Go now, over there, she is all alone, you have the warehouse in the back...

At first, it was uncomfortable for Igor K. He would find himself wondering. After a while, he realized that it was some sort of an occasional ritual which would occur almost at the same moment, once a month. The old-man followed the blood trail around the house, and then calculated his daughter-in-law's fertile days. Old-man Jova desired a grandson more than keeping his honor. He had another son, a younger one, as it always happens, whom he loved more, since he reminded him of himself. He got caught up in the mobilization of the latest wars and never returned. He did not return at all. It is not known neither where he is, nor what has happened to him, he is recorded as "missing". This provides a little bit of hope, but the kind of hope which allows to easily live and survive, and not the kind that someday, Petar's brother will actually return home. This is why old-man Jova needs something more certain: a grandson. An alive grandson. It does not matter who made him, but whose he would be and whose land he would inherit. And whose last name he would carry on.

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I was released from the second custody because it was confirmed that the girl was pregnant with some Puerto Rican fellow, who was hanging around the corner, selling drugs. She made a statement that she lied about me, that I had never touched her, that I only looked at her but that, as it seemed to her, I couldn't get it up, that I am impotent. That is how she defended me. No one wondered: how did she know about the last part if I had never touched her? And, the answer is simple: she touched me...

He wrote the previous lines at the same near-the-road store, on a white piece paper in which the sold goods are wrapped, greasy on one side, and paper-like on the other. Why he wrote segments from his life, and in such places, he could not provide an answer to himself?! What kind of a place this is, he knows. A store by the road, a village one at the same time, which has a bench and a long table in front, and reminds more of a tavern than a variety store, as it was stated on a board above the door. If we are going to be honest, there is more drinking at this store than buying of lively groceries. Beer is the mostly sipped beverage of choice but “strong” drinks of every kind can quite regularly be purchased, especially home keeper Jova's plum brandy.

The village is by the road, on one of many narrow asphalts which intersect Šumadija along and across. On one side of the road, towards the valley, is the river, where we have fields and gardens. The village is spread across the other side, towards the hill. The locals mostly have old house and infields in the hills, and new houses, the ones they have recently built, by the road, on the plain and floodplain. Also, some newcomers snuck into the old house on the hills.

The locals accepted Igor K. unconditionally because of his late grandfather, his mother's father, but they usually do not care for newcomers, especially the ones from other parts of our former country who have escaped lately. They do not love, to be honest, even those from the neighboring village and they only don't complain about the inhabitants of the village's *gypsy-mahalla*, on the very edge of the village district, even though the number of inhabitants there was never known for sure, because they are considered as a sort of a village lucky charm. They would forgive them a few missing roosters, around Saint George's Day, and sometimes a sheep.

That is where the name of the village may have come: Zlodošljaci¹. The name itself speaks about what the locals think about newcomers, or: what the former autochthons thought about those who came here a long time ago. Although, the name of the village wasn't exactly without a reputation of its meaning. But, it isn't as sinister, as it may seem on first sight. Their non-hospitality is benign in nature, more on words and less in action, and more towards those who want to stay and less, or nearly none at all, towards guests.

¹ Evil-newcomers

Igor K. came from somewhere and moved into the old house his mother inherited. A fat martyr, she died immediately after his escape, her son could not attend her funeral, although he later heard that his friend held an excellent speech over the coffin (and that speech was the first in the many that would come after that), that he mentioned him and his late father as well, and everyone else in order. He told him, sometime later, that there were a few expensive jeeps with darkened windows on the funeral, and that the crooks wanted to kill him at his mother's funeral, if only he had showed up.

- Not even the mafia killed in such circumstances, they followed some rules instead, but these apes today are not aware of any order, nothing is sacred to them, those motherfuckers – his friend would tell him over the phone.

He would call him and didn't tell him where he is or where he is calling from, and how much those overseas conversations cost him. Although, they didn't cost much, he realized when he found himself over there. The expensiveness of phone calls is just another foreign worker's² legend they liked "to use" when they would harass their relatives, when spending their summer vacations in their homeland. He knew that he would betray him, his friend Zoki, if he had revealed his whereabouts and what he was doing, after the second slap on his cheek, but not because he is a bad man or because he doesn't love him, but for the simple reason that he was a soft man. He was some sort of a poet in his soul, a word-stacker, and not a tough lad from the streets, his only friend Zoki.

He would visit the store every day (we should return briefly from the past to the present). It was the main spot for the villagers to gather. When they head for the fields: they stop by. When they are coming back: as well. This is where the bus, which took them to the city, had a stop. He went there early, before noon, and came back in the evening. Finally, this is where the postman did his business, never setting foot in the village further than the store. If someone wanted their mail he was to come there and take it, and the rest he would drop on the counter, where it would remain for days, until someone takes it or sends it after someone to the recipient. He would purchase already old newspapers at the store, drink something or simply sit and kept silent in front of it. It was rare, that he could keep quiet. It was not possible to be quiet in front of the store. This is why he did it in front of his house, in the shade of the walnut tree from which a headache can occur sometimes. He would go there to talk and not to keep quiet. He would always hear if something new was happening, what the village news are and the rest.

Mile could be found there as well, the village tippler and joker, who also lived in a friable house, never did any work, did not have any income and was constantly drinking at the store or would leave for a couple of days: somewhere. He would return pale and worn out. And silent. He would say:

² Gastarbeiter.

- Everything is bullshit, except for pissing, but pissing against the wind is also bullshit!

Then he would lay in his lair a day or two and would come out to repeat everything, as soon as he recovered. Mile spoke in phrases, wittily, in proverbs, always lasciviously and on the border of good taste, which never presented any problem for him. Because he never thought about tastes, let alone discussed them. If it wasn't for Mile or anyone else, then one of the landlords or the landlady of the store would come out and chat with the guests. The store was, officially owned by old-man Jova, but in fact his naturally endowed daughter-in-law Dobrila was the landlady of it. She was endowed all around. Almost nothing depended on his son Petar, except that he brought the goods and the drinks, did labor on the property and at the store, and it appeared that he always ran away from his concerns or dilemmas in his constant hard and never-ending work.

Unlike Mile, Igor K. can today live slowly but solidly. He brought back some money from America and is getting his rent from the apartment and commercial property in his hometown. The old house where he was born, and where his father kept his tailoring workshop, was demolished in the meantime and in its spot, and the yard behind it, a new, multi-story building was built. In return, he got an apartment and a commercial property. This is what he lives of now. For the other apartment, which was supposed to belong to him personally, and for which paid with his dick and ass (his cheek and honor are not important now), he didn't ask anymore. He didn't have any papers for it, and, even if he did, he didn't want to be reminded of the pain and humiliation. He didn't even feel like searching for witnesses. In hopes he never sees them again. He has some of his mother's property here as well. Something small, a small field, which he "rents by half". He now has pigs and chicken as well. The plum tree near the house provides him with some brandy. He will not have that much wheat this year, but the plum was fruitful last year. Igor K. found a place he would die at. The only thing is, he has to live here while waiting for death. Igor K. is not complaining. He is finally peaceful and calm. Not even the vampires are watching and following him anymore. They also probably realized that he was safe here, that they are also – with him being there – safe.

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When I liberated myself from the fear, the boundary for my achievements was moved far ahead of the place I was standing on: at that moment. And, again, I only remember fear and I am afraid when I think about my past: the childhood and boyhood. The adolescence is something else, I was insane in those times and so I wasn't afraid as much. Insane and often drunk. It can't be said that it was a real life, because not a lot of good had happened, if we consider life and health as a top-notch good and out of the competition. It can be said that it was a half-life which had its good sides. Namely, as everything

was behindhand, the work was done in the same or any at all manner. Everything went by in slow motion, everything was done with a delay, everything which could have been left for tomorrow, was left for the day after tomorrow.

Igor K., therefore, got generationally fucked for years. That is simply what befell him. His, personal fucking-up, started one day, a nice spring day which was promising, a few years ago, in Serbia, in a medium town, two hours of driving away from the capital city. The center of that settlement, the main street, near the place of his birth and growing up, was built in a socio-realistic manner, concrete and grey facades, and this scenery was somewhat disrupted by the old buildings of the gymnasium, court and the town tavern. The surrounding streets left an impression of a former town peacefulness, they were adorned with small, ground-floor houses with their yards, and here and there, cubed cobblestones. There were some small commercial properties in those streets, craft workshops which were built next to the houses and whose shop windows overlooked the street, and could also be entered from the fenced yards.

In time, the crafts died out and those commercial properties were re-decorated and became various trading stores. Only his father's tailoring shop remained old and collapsed, leaking and damp. He personally sold out the machines, cheaply, and he did not have the money to fix the store, or anything similar. On the town's edges, the failed industry and colonies of ugly two-story buildings with tasteless fences could be seen. Igor K. got fucked up when he tried to come out of the lethargy, shortage and drunkenness. When he thought that he could take matter into his own hands and paint the greyness, in which he has been decaying, with vivid colors.

It all started harmlessly and unplanned. This refers to: it. The whole intrigue and misfortune which struck him, which drove him away from the country, from the town he was born in and in which he, so successfully and nicely, suffered. Actually, he planned everything quite seriously, no matter the harmlessness and un-planning of the initial situation, but it didn't go according to his plan, as it usually happened when it comes to him. The courtesy visit to the powerful and wealthy, but distant relatives, in which he was supposed to leave a good impression. That, only that, nothing else. Nothing more was needed and necessary except that: to leave a good impression. This is because of the fact that, in the later phases of their encountering, if any might've happened, he could ask them for a favor.

His former position was already immensely processed in the literature: a poor relative in relations with the wealthy, powerful but problematic offspring's of the family. The Russians were ahead of everyone in this matter. And the rest. And us, as well. Except that Madam Minister Živka who was, opposite to these relatives, a flower of intelligence and high aristocracy concerning the manners and behavior, in: noblesse oblige. What can you do?! – sanctions and isolations

happened, and with them the oil, tobacco and various excise goods and who knows what else. Today, you must not even mention this to them.

And everything would have been in order. The occasion for their encounter was the christening of their granddaughter, so Igor K. needed to explain to them how they were supposed to find the old godfather in some village under Kosmaj. They had some sort of a necessity to renew their godfather connections, without the knowledge of why they wanted to, it is assumed because of political ambitions of the controversial relative, but maybe because of the newly composed relationship towards tradition and faith. Of course, they weren't planning on inviting him to the christening but this chance appeared sufficient for him. If he is smart and quick, he will use the smallest possibility. Unfortunately, it is proven long time ago for him that, he is neither smart nor quick. Most likely it would be: the complete opposite to that. He lived in his world – of music, some books (nothing spectacular but significant for the local conditions) and intoxication.

However, it appeared, at least in the beginning, that he is leaving a solid impression on the influential relatives. It appeared that they also feared who they were going to deal with, and were, to some extent, relieved when they realized he was a normal and decent young man. Now, to be precise, he was neither normal nor decent, but he tried his best to make it look so, because he really needed the help. They were his last chance of changing something to the better – so you can now clearly see how far he has gotten himself?! He was already in an age when there was no mention of youth. He wasn't intrusive but he made an effort to show that he wasn't mute and that he has the quality for some future position, which would belong to him after their intervention. Yes. By the way, he didn't even slurp when drinking his tea.

To be honest, already at the beginning, it was presented to his knowledge in a by-the-way manner that *they don't employ relatives because it was proven to be counterproductive*, because they (this is referred to the relatives), *think right away that they are more privileged than the others, do less work and this affects the rest as well*. They probably had similar experiences, so they knew that they should put that out right at the beginning. Igor K. didn't mind that, because he was “shooting” for something better after all. He knew, from stories, how their workers are treated in many of their companies, and so he didn't even think about wanting that. He needed an actual favor and not a punishment.

- You live with your mother, right? – his tawdry relative asked him.

The quite fat one, with tasteless make up on, was wearing about a pound of gold.

- Yes, me and my mother, we live together – answered Igor K. meekly.

- What do you do? – an impolite relative included himself in the conversation – Do you do anything or do you just fuck around? Your mother is old and weak, you have to be there for her, she has done a lot for you, you lost your father at an early age. I knew your father very well, he was a good man, a

good artisan. He sewed the first suit, in which I left to Germany. Why don't you fix up that shop, and do something, you dumb fuck!?

Igor K. thought to himself: of course you knew him, you were relatives after all, and he has, as far as I've heard, gotten you out of jail a few times, through his connections, in which you've gotten yourself into because of juvenile crimes, first and foremost because of car thefts and breaking into newsstands, and he especially mentioned a few times, quietly and with anger that you have never paid for that suit, you also didn't even come to his funeral, I guess my father's fabric made you feel uncomfortable. He thought, but never actually said any of that. He wasn't that much of a fool, after all.

His father was a schneider³. That is what they called him as well. The tailoring job was once an appreciated profession. You're sitting in a clean and warm environment, mostly working for gentlemen and wealthy people. While the father of Igor K. had work to do, they lived quite nicely as a family. But, because of a specific relationship with life, Igor K.'s father never planned on passing the craft onto his son nor leaving the profession to him. Maybe he realized that the crafts are dying out, even then the ready-to-wear industry was taking over his job, but then again, it probably meant that he wanted his son to get a great education and become the one whose measures would be taken and suits sewed.

His son neither got his education, nor did he learn the craft. The old tailor, right at the time when his son was finishing high school, had gotten sick from the worst disease on his lungs (and he has never even lit a cigarette) and passed away. He hasn't even managed to finish the graduation suit for his son. Already the last few years of his life, there was work barely enough for them to survive. People were buying ready-to-wear suits. Admittedly, he had regular customers, who were less in number as the city cemetery was being filled. The ready-to-wear industry, in which the tailor's meter or chalk weren't used but only a few numbers got sewed in the lining, was beating him down. This is why he only did corrections on those numbers, mostly narrowing and shortening, grunting all along "how this is isn't any good".

The father of Igor K. didn't prefer to be called the schneider. He preferred: *abadžija* or *terzija*⁴. He was some kind of a local-patriot. Not knowing that those words originated from the blood enemies. There is, to be honest, some truth in that, because the artisan tailored and sewed, from time to time, folk costumes for tourists and various folklore societies. However, to be completely honest, he was before all the borough's tailor, and then everything else.

The father of Igor K. was a patriot in the broad sense as well, because he unfoundedly persuaded people that the fabric from Paracin was better than the English one, and that (at the time) our *Bagat* sewing machine was better than the *Singer* one. And he had both of them, but mostly did his work on the latter, the

³ Tailor.

⁴ Local titles for the tailoring profession.

foreign one. And, when he would get his hands on real English fabric from Bradford, he would firstly scorch the fringes a little bit to check if the wool is clean, and then he would caress it more gently than he ever caressed a woman, while bringing it closer to his cheeks. Huh, well, there is some truth in that, because it was said for him that he is a good artisan, precisely because he was always at the store and running away from his wife and kids, with open windows and doors in the summer, and in the winter next to the furnace in which he put logs of dry beech wood. In a word, he was a peculiar man. Igor K. inherited the house, the workshop, the machines which he had sold out after some time and the peculiarity: which no one sought. The last one quite necessarily.

- Yes, mother is old and sick. She has gained quite some weight lately. I play a little, in taverns mostly, but no job can be found anywhere – the poor relative spoke after a short break.

He considered that this was an ideal moment to raise the question of work and employment, to play the emotional string of the relatives, which, to be honest, the mentioned did not have. The relative knew nothing about emotions, with him only urges existed, the animalistic ones.

- What are you talking about, no job can be found?! You youngsters don't want to work, you lazy fucks, sorry for my language aunty! Here, for example, that son of mine, got married, made a child, and now I'm running around to christen the child. After that, I'm going to have to bring together and send-off the guests as well. For fuck's sake! I created this wealth out of nothing, with these ten fingers – and then he raised his hands, with his palms facing up, showing his sausage-like, swollen fingers, stacked with golden seal rings.

While he was saying this, his wife was rolling her eyes. She said to him:

- I asked you like a hundred times not to curse...

He waved his hand away:

- Anyway, tell me, where can we find that Radovanović family? Our silly great grandfather couldn't find a godfather properly, somewhere near, but had to find them in the fuck knows where!

- Don' blaspheme godfathers and God honey – said his powdered pig in the form of a woman, to him, and then crossed herself fittingly.

- Forgive me God – the relative crossed himself as well, although it looked more like chasing flies away – but seriously, I mean, now I have to fuck around some hills and I don't know what to do with all the work I have. Those like you, that whine that there is no work, when I leave them at the company alone for a day, they steal everything they get their hands on – said the relative gowk and waved his fingers again around the golden cross the size of a child's hand, that shined from his chest, which meant that he had crossed himself again.

Igor K. tried to explain to him, as much as he could and knew, by memory, from his mother's stories. He wasn't even sure where those old, family godfathers were located, in fact, he had no clue. He just didn't want to miss the

opportunity of bonding with the big shots, so he presented his knowledge of the under-Kosmaj region a little bit better than it actually was, when they asked him: if he knew exactly where they are? They didn't even ask him in person, to be honest, but instead, they sent some meathead to do it. Only when he confirmed, was he invited to the house for the first time.

The cousin noticed he was wriggling and that he wasn't sure:

- Do you even know where they are, you dumb fuck!? Forgive me God!

The great grandfather, a mutual ancestor, while retreating across Albania, pledged mutually with some Kosta Radovanović, who lived under Kosmaj, that they would be godfathers if they come out alive out of that hell, even if only one of them makes it, that he is to go and look for the family of the other one and fulfill the pledge. People promise a lot of things when in trouble, and forget the promise even more quickly when the trouble is gone, and yet Igor's great grandfather and Kosta kept their word. And that is how they became distant godfathers. He was christened by a guy named Radivoje, who was informed by his father for that occasion, with a telegram, a month before it was to happen and gotten an affirmative telegram after only three days. He said to them what his grumpy mother had told him before departing to their house, while shouting:

- Beg them to give you a job, for God's sake!

*

And then, considering the excitement, stress and weak stomach (since it wasn't easy to beg and kiss ass, although Igor K. hasn't gotten to that part yet), and the fact that he got up late, because he was getting drunk the night before, ate almost nothing and was in a rush to get there in time, he skipped his every day morning, a bit of a ritual, bowel emptying: so his stomach rebelled. He had to take a shit so bad it hurt, to make an already simple matter even simpler. Even more than that: he insanely had to take a shit. He restrained himself as much as he could, tried to think about other nicer matters, promised all sorts of things to God if he could let him go and rescue him just this time: all for nothing. At the end, he calculated the lesser damage and decided to ask for the bathroom, and quickly went there even though it was rude to the hosts, which they pointed out, after all. Better this than to shit in front of all of them, on an expensive ottoman, and to spill everything, God forbid, on an even more expensive Persian lamb carpet (he deemed it was a Persian lamb carpet although he never entirely understood the connotation).

- I you would excuse me, I have to go to the bathroom – he stood up.

The housewife pointed the direction in a frowned up manner. Her frowning was additionally enhanced by the fact that he was her husband's relative after all. That means that he was a hated persona in her house from the beginning: non grata persona. In her castle. Hand to heart: his relative behaved

arrogantly and preferred younger women, so it was no wonder. To an extent, Igor K. understood her.

The relative only shook his hand away, angry that after everything it is still not clear where to look for the old-man Radovanović. Igor K. was already heading for the toilet. That “nervous stomach” of his is a family heritage. In every important moment of their lives: they needed to take a shit. His father was like this as well. He told him about missing the opportunity of his life to become an officer, because of his nervous stomach. He was an exemplary soldier, literate, the elders clearly stated that they are counting on him, and when they were supposed to pick someone in front of the squad, someone who would go to the reserve officer’s school, with a chance of being activated afterwards, he had to take a shit because he was nervous, so he chased off from the squad without asking anyone. Instead of a praise and reward he was punished. That is why he had to become a tailor, which wasn’t so bad for some time.

It was only that relative, to whose closet he was heading at the time, that was different, because, it is said that he was able to buck up and stand in front of a rifle barrel, in the days of making his first million. On the other hand, the rest of the family remained failed travelers as a family, and parted with their closets heavyhearted. Although, besides the inherited factor, his irregular life was not to be disregarded. He wandered, drank, ate poorly. A warm soup and home rarely awaited him at his house. His mother surrendered to her own world, cooked almost nothing, and only repeated to him: “Take something over there, if there is anything”; or: “Eat what you have brought from the market”. Of course, he brought home nothing, because he did nothing. And, when she would get her pension, she would wait for him to leave, and then order kebabs and hamburgers, which she would eat all by herself. If anything made his life worse in America later on, it was his nervous stomach. As soon as he would descend into the subway, the fact that he didn’t have a choice made his bowel go crazy for a while, which would last until getting to work where, of course, there are closets and no such problems. The nervous bowel problem is in fact the problem of not having an alternative. When there is a choice, then there are no stomach problems. We really unnecessarily dwelled to long upon this topic, even though it is not meaningless.

He finally reached the toilet, locked the door behind him and felt instant relief. The spacious bathroom was almost the size of his little house. Italian ceramics, German electronics which regulated everything, French personal hygiene products – all pointed to nouveau riches and maintained the spiritual state of the newly composed and controversial influential people of the Serbian present days. Everything was on a world class level in that bathroom, except for the shit which was being flushed there. Shit is shit, someone would say, but it’s not like that. No matter what kind of a bathroom a human takes a shit in, he can never run away from his shit. It is like a heritage. However, there are the

misfortunate ones who cannot even run away from other people's shits their whole life. That is actually bad luck, and not heritage.

He didn't have much time for grand philosophizing. The philosophy comes later, when a man settles in comfortably, when it pours out of him, when he gets the blessed expression on his face. That is why Igor K. rushed to unbutton his pants, drops of sweat already started to drip down his face from the torture of restraint, he ran towards the toilet seat and the next thing that happened to him was: IT!!!

There are cases, very frequent to his regret, because all kind of evil happened to him, when the seat on the toilet doesn't fit down well. For different reasons. The most common reason is incorrect installation, or when it is damaged and one of the buffers from the lower part of the seat, which actually serves for the seat to properly fit on the porcelain toilet, is damaged and falls off. Either way, the seat didn't fit properly, and it was made from quality and thus damn heavy materials. In the moment when he was running towards the toilet while unbuttoning, he was lowering the seat and starting to shit at the same time. And he sat: as he was not supposed to. His manhood was at the wrong place, in the wrong time (as through his entire life, after all), on the juncture of the seat and the toilet (because of the rush), and at the moment when the seat was being lowered and because of the said irregularity, it moved once again like a rocking chair, and pinched the skin of the penis' tip (luck in an accident: only that). At the same time a diarrhea-like mixture flowed out of his asshole. Such pain can hardly be described. Admittedly, such situation as well. He howled as much as his voice could. It appeared that his employment wasn't going to happen here.

What happened afterwards isn't really a grand story. A painful and unpleasant injury, a shitty ass, an ambulance, the fight of the spouses and their hosts in the background, words which are coming through to his blurred consciousness: "*Diiiiid I teeeeell youuuu or nooot..*", with him answering: "*Shut up you slut, for fuck's sake, you had nothing until you married me!*", and finally the ambulance ride to the hospital with cheerful jokes between the paramedic and the driver related to his unpleasantness. There, a more painful intervention followed, disinfection and bandaging. It isn't necessary, because of others before all, to get into details. He suffered enough for everyone. It was a must not for him to even think about peeing or sexual arousal, which included the elevation of the mentioned organ. And he had to piss already that day if he could not achieve the fucking part. But, it just so happens that things, about which we dream our entire life, have a tendency to happen exactly when we are not prepared for them.

The doctor intervened routinely. Nothing can surprise those folks anymore. He said that the injury is not catastrophic, and that he was fortunate (?!), but that it would be unpleasant, in the following period of healing and rehabilitation. "*This is how it is with the injuries of the mucous membranes. This is only a severe and uncontrolled circumcision*" – he said that or something

similar to that. He made an appointment for bandaging and ointment care for tomorrow and left him to the hospital administration to tear him into pieces for the next hour, because of the fact that he didn't have his health insurance card on him (who thought this would happen?!), as well as, the fact, that when the mentioned card arrived, when Zoki brought it, it wasn't validated. He thought they would keep him in the hospital, that they would nurture him and subject him to strict aftercare. They burst into laughter once again. He didn't have any experience with the Serbian health system until then. Some administrative matters were important to them, otherwise they were intending on dumping him on the street, as soon as possible. And he was scared of going outside. He thought that everyone knows already, and was embarrassed (and, scared). "*I won't even be able to drink these couple of days*", he thought as if that was the most important thing now.

In the meantime, a beautiful day was developing outside. It is springtime. Everything is blossoming and becoming green. The streets are also cleaner somehow. He felt bad even beside the nice weather. He was barely dragging himself home, not listening to Zoki's questioning, and thus not answering him, which didn't stop the other one to continue talking. When they finally released him, realizing that there is no point in going about it with him, since he didn't have the money to pay them, they could've only kept him as a hostage. He was hurting. Both his dick and his soul. Everything was hurting him. His pride also. That is him, as he is on the street after the release from the hospital. That is the spitting image of where he has gotten himself in life, what his perspectives are. A musician without his instrument (the talent is also questionable). A man who doesn't have his entire organ. A mature man, with an invalidated health insurance card, who doesn't have the money to pay a few grams of ointment and the unskilled doctor's hands which were meddling around his penis. That is who he is: no one and nothing. He thought: "*At least I had been sleeping peacefully until now*". As if he felt that he would lose that as well?!

In just one second, a normal day turns into a living nightmare. He thought he had it under control, that it was just another routine transition of the afternoon into the night, and then in a glimpse of a second everything changes, and what is even worse, a man accepts such newly created situation so quickly and already after half an hour, that he acts according to the new rules, as if the old ones never existed. Until yesterday a healthy man, which couldn't believe one bit that something could happen to him, is already deadly ill the next day and as if he wasn't healthy ever. A human is like that: an adjustable animal. Igor K. is like that: he almost never decides on his faith, but someone else does that almost always, usually the damn chance. And, he instantly adjusts to the bad. He doesn't know anything about the good: he hasn't tried it.

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Why did my dreams betray me in those couple of nights?! I wouldn't remember a thing in the morning. My ex-girlfriends or fake friends never came to my visit. Was I alone in that prison? It was clean and sterile, my clothes were clean, and the seat on the toilet, and the solitary confinement, and the circle to which I only went out once. A standard! That is America. In that sleep, if I was dreaming, because it couldn't have been anything else, a lawyer had advised me to stay out of crowds and to spent my time in the cell. He has told me that they do not like pedophiles here, and that I should watch myself. He finally said that the diplomatic representative of Serbia refused to meet me or provide me with any help. Tomorrow, everything was over. The next night, I was flying across the Atlantic...

Generally (whatever this filler means), he didn't forget the call and the accepted obligation until the moment the unpleasant incident with the toilet seat happened. And, he had forgotten it briefly, until he didn't come home and saw that he has prepared clean and new (his only) clothes on the bed. He planned his day that, after the visit (he was hoping: a successful visit!) to his relatives, he goes to see Jelena that same afternoon. Frankly, he didn't even know why he was going there but a hastily accepted invitation to visit her, couldn't be corrected now. He didn't have a cell phone. The call was accepted because something was smoldering inside of him, ever since the high school days, maybe a hidden and unfulfilled desire.

And when she called him, the day before, on his old house number, in an even older family house, he needed a good couple of minutes to clarify who that was. That person was erased from his memory, the conscious part, for a long time. No wonder, she went somewhere and he hasn't seen her anymore. Considering everything that went over his head in the last couple of years, it's no wonder that he had forgotten even some closer people, whom he did encounter once in a while.

- Which Jelena? – he asked (again) delirious from last night's drinking spree (yes, he drank quite a lot at the time). He felt like vomiting, his head was cracking up, and he didn't have any aspirin or at least some seltzer water.

- For God sakes, we went to high school and graduated together – said the female voice packed with erotica from the other side of the line.

- Jelena, Jelena... - he repeated and with the end of his mind he already thought it was an invitation to something, some anniversary maybe, to which he was usually invited by the most successful specimens from his generation, who also organized them, to brag about their success first and foremost and to rub their success into the noses of the others. And, already a number of years passed since they graduated, fifteen-twenty.

- Jelena Kosić, we lived downtown, I still have an apartment there.

Those were some other times. He wasn't always a loser. He was once young as well. You could've been poor in those times, you could've been from a marginalized social group, but you could've always fought your way for a position, for respect. Whether you did it with your intelligence or fists, now is not important. It's not even important that later, however, everything came back to its place, but in the young days everyone fought for their place in the society with their personal qualities. It is different today. A spot in today's society is conditioned with money and other material goods. And there is only one way to succeed: crime. That crime can be of various kind but its moral background and ethical base is the same. You can be a bandit who robs banks and stores, you can be a drug dealer, a politician, a transition businessman, but you can fight your way to a high spot in the society only through crime. Igor K., it is already stated, didn't have the balls or the stomach for crime, so what was left for him was to justify himself with ethical values.

Then he remembered. He honestly, didn't remember that he has spoken three sentences with her during the two years of their joint schooling. This was, namely, the time of the famous "directed education" (so the high school couldn't make itself meaningful as it wanted). And for those two years they despised each other – silently. He despised her because of her privileged position of the local communistic official's daughter, and she despised him because of the decadent rock and roll-nihilism or to clarify: because he was smarter and more advanced than her. If we were to generalize the matter: she was a snob and he was an artistic soul. At that time and probably not even now, she wasn't smart enough to define the cause of her contempt, which was presented in the above written lines. That is a twenty year old belated observation. At that time, she actually considered that Igor K. was a hillbilly who didn't live on the countryside, unworthy of even consorting with, that tailor's rascal. And he didn't mind this. He didn't even think about her at the time. He had his hands full of other affairs: girls and alcohol (already at that time?!).

He remembers, however, that she was bothered by his noisy boasting in his class and at school (although he doesn't quite remember what he boasted about) and according to her, his popularity in certain school circles, which was substantiated by nothing at all. Perhaps she was right, concerning the substantiating part. At least time proved so. But, time played a bitchy game with all of them, and in that manner the spot of the "avant-garde" belonged to the communist official's children, and what remained for the others was, for them to be losers. It doesn't matter that his father and those alike him were the guardians of capitalism and democracy in communism, they kept alive the embryo of private property and entrepreneurship, they had their small workshops, paid their taxes and put food on the table for their families by working in their private companies. The others enjoyed the privileges of communism and social property, and had gotten wealthy. Today, people like them are teaching how we are supposed to live in the progressive world of democracy and liberal economy.

On the other hand we have criminals, i.e.: businessmen. In the middle we have the rockers and artists of their time, completely maladjusted to present times, different from their fathers and the others. In other words, nothing has changed, only the facade!

And now, God knows how, she intimately called him to meet “*for the sake of the good old times*”. She is back in town again, she said, she wasn’t around for a while, stayed in bigger cities, in bigger states, and so on. Anyway, they’ll talk when they meet. Igor K. was a skeptic concerning that matter from the beginning. He doubted that something was wrong, that a “but” exists?! He did not have any more illusions that something good can happen to him and before all, something that will qualitatively push him forward. Of course, he assumed that she needed some smaller, local favor, maybe something concerning their apartment which has been empty for years in the downtown area, something about finding a handyman or something similar. Not even a buyer: she would seek someone else for that.

Yet, all of this bothered him. He had almost forgotten about her, and wasn’t even aware, for a long time, that she even exists. It was talked about, among the people from that generation, that she succumbed to a bad company, drug and sects in the big city, she did come back a couple of times earlier and she did look strange. She wouldn’t even call him those couple of times. And then, she stopped coming back and he didn’t even think about her until the famous call.

The pain from the injury cleared his perspective, helped him regain his sense and put him down to earth. You are who you are, don’t try to be anything else, it is too late. It was too late for that. He washed himself with lukewarm water when he arrived home, changed his underwear and clothes, and put on some perfume. He felt equally uncomfortable. He did after all, shit himself just a little before that. And hurt his penis. We think that the combination is ideal for a man to feel uncomfortable. He decided to get over with this visit briefly and politely, considering the newly created trouble, it wasn’t that important to him at the moment. This Jelena, even though she was the prettiest and most handsome girl in school, didn’t attract him at that time. He was always realistic in his demands. He was never attracted to girls he knew he couldn’t have. This is what saved him a lot of trouble and spiritual pain throughout his life and brief love career. He had friends who always aimed high, even though they did not have the capacity for it. Zoki was like that, for example. Their life turned into a hell full of unreturned love, humiliation and finally into incurable complexes which Freud himself couldn’t untangle, if he was resurrected by some case. Well, recently Igor K. had a bad experience, but he was already an old fart at the time, and he didn’t have any illusions about how he can lose anything more than his integrity with this failure, which he, by the way, didn’t have at all.

Jelena Kosić was a cuddled and looked after kind of child. The parents, especially the father, were communist officials, who exceeded the borough and

headed to the capital city. Jelena had everything she wished for in her life. Especially considering the fact, as news reached his hometown, that her father managed just fine in these new times. She was however, based on the arrived gossips, unsatisfied with her life and sought a purpose of the same, wandering the world and collecting a lot of bad things from (and out of) the same. It was said that she had flirted with drugs, that she is socializing with suspicious people, that she joined Satanist sects and that she, absurdly from everything stated, was an activist in a non-government sector, against the war and war crimes but she stayed in battlefields all along, while socializing with the greatest villains. And, among the folks, there was an established opinion that there is no major difference between the one and the other, and that they are both bloodsuckers of the nation, so according to that, she acted completely natural. Bloodsuckers, exactly, at that time we didn't have a clue that we are soon going to deal with true bloodsuckers: vampires!

She greeted him in a fluttering dress and skintight black blouse. It appeared that the years agreed with her and that they filled the spots which were scarce when she was younger. She really did look attractive and ravishing. It couldn't have been possible that she was doing heavy drugs, as was said for her around the town. And right there, an alarm about which it was already spoken, turned on in the cerebellum of Igor K. He realized that something was wrong and that this wasn't for him. He suspected that such kindness couldn't be intended for him without a reason he would regret. She ran across the doorstep and cheerfully kissed him on the cheek. He felt her firm breasts on his chest. And felt pain between his legs.

The apartment was spacious and located in the best spot in the city. At the very center of the city, in the pedestrian zone. The furniture gave away former fame and power, but it was obvious that no one had lived there for a long time and that nothing has changed, for at least ten years. Heavy pieces made out of wood, a library filled with communist editions, dusty carpets.

- Come in, come in... - she repeated while holding him under his arm.

- Sit down, for a moment, next to me, and tell me everything about yourself. Afterwards we'll drink and have a bite to eat.

As she sat down, her skirt a la carelessly lifted up to her panties. She didn't wear a thong but nice silk and lacey underwear, which cover the whole butt and which he liked. In this case, they covered a nicely shaped and firm butt. *"All the compliments to the owner of the mentioned buttocks"*, he thought painfully. As a true world woman, she wore socks without garters. The part between the socks and the panties, that visible skin, made him almost lose his mind due to the pain.

He wasn't dumb. That much. Let's not exaggerate when belittling someone's wit. Anyone's. What the mind can't do, which he doesn't have, maybe the instinct, which was given to us since the times we were animals, can achieve. We know what we know, especially our place when it comes to the

point where you should know that. A different time has arrived. Now, everyone has their spot and it's difficult to change it up, to be better. It can go down, if there is space to the bottom. He liked her as she was, he got aroused (the arousal was hurting him), he could've easily fallen in love with her, the unreal her, but nothing of that would be worth, so why should he torture and hurt himself while being so tortured and hurt already?!

Igor K. became a transparent kind of man and such were the majority in this country. He doesn't have any more demands, no place for feelings, only mere survival. Because, he has already lost plenty of time for him to believe he could gain anything. He doubted that anything good can happen to him, even when it looks like it, without him instantly seeking the catch, or the whereabouts of the deceit. He knows they are deceiving the meaningless him, for something, most likely for the sake of fun. And even if she was honest, this Jelena, which she most certainly isn't, the fate already determined that he cannot have her even when she is giving herself to him. If she honestly wants to have something with him, at exactly that day the penis situation happens to him, he cannot do anything about it, even though he has the desire and strength for it.

And, he knows it is not like that, that he got lucky but that something is happening in the background. What?, he will make an effort of discovering as soon as possible, so he can go and tend to his wounds. He isn't even annoyed about it (he is more bothered because they are unnecessarily shattering his monotony which suits him now, while just a few hours ago he wanted to change his life, and that monotony as well) because there isn't a human left in him. He is just a body without a soul or pride. He doesn't think that but others have assured him that it is so. The practice proves it so. Life has taught him.

The tip of his penis hurt him. The glans penis. For that and everything stated he decided to quickly and efficiently end this state and leaves. He didn't know where to go. He didn't want to go home. He didn't want to remain by himself with his trouble, pain and mother. He'll manage somehow, he thought, he just had to leave as soon as possible. He'll get drunk, everything will hurt him less. And in the morning, when everything hurts even more, he'll manage somehow when it comes to that. Slowly, step by step. He's in no rush. He was wrong, of course.

- Listen Jelena, you weren't around the town for a while. And you are not well informed. I am nobody around here. Whatever you need, or whatever you called me for, you're on the wrong path, because I can't help you, nor get you anything done. You were probably misinformed, miss Jelena.

- But Igor?! It can't be possible that you would say something like that to me, on our first encounter after so many years?!

- We never really "tolerated" each other. To be honest, we didn't even hate each other. We just, while ignoring one another: despised each other. Let's keep it that way. We don't have to despise each other but we can ignore one another. Also, I understand that you are in some sort of big trouble and crisis

since you had to turn to me for help. Trust me: I can't help myself at this moment. I don't even have a cell phone.

So he headed towards the door. She kept sitting quietly on the bed. He only noticed with the corner of his eye that she skillfully pulled her skirt down and covered her butt unnoticed. He went out.

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He went home, lied down on his ottoman and was silent with his eyes closed. He was pretending to sleep so his mother wouldn't ask him about his condition and the results of the visit. She didn't have to, everything was clear to her when she saw him. He heard her say in the background:

- He will always remain a nobody, just like his father.

He kept quiet and contemplated confusedly, on the edge of hallucination. He tried to comprehend everything that has happened to him on that day. He was less confused about the situation that he self-hurt himself, from the fact that beautiful Jelena had invited him over. He could not comprehend but he understood that it wasn't as important. He doesn't comprehend a lot of things but a lot of them are surpassing him as well. A lot of things were now starting to scratch on him. He wasn't ready for them. Then he heard the knocking on the door and his mother's yelling from the kitchen:

- Someone is looking for you, they interrupted me in the middle of my tv-show, for fuck's sake!

He went out. A young man was at the door. He handed him a wrapped box. The box contained a cell phone. It started ringing. He was staring at the screen, which was lighting up for a few moments, and then he pressed a button which had a green, picked up phone drawn on it. A female voice on the other side of the wire said to him:

- There, now you have one.

Then she kept talking:

- We have to see each other again, I'll be open with you. It is up to you and it won't cost you anything but you can benefit from it really good. How you never have and never will. I'll be waiting for you.

He went a little later to her place, after the talk on the phone. While still at the door, and handing her the phone over, he asked:

- What exactly do you want from me Jelena?

She didn't want to take the little thing, showing it to him with stretched out palms pointing towards him in the "that is now yours" manner and responded:

- Finally the right question! I want you to marry me.

- I don't feel like joking Jelena, I had a very painful experience today, so I can't even laugh normally, let alone get married and perform marital duties.

- Unfortunately, I had never been more serious...

- Unfortunately?!

- ... Yes! Marry me and I will give you this apartment. We won't even get married at a church or municipality, so you won't have any administrative complications. You would be my husband for one night only, not even that much. Therefore, concerning the, how you put it, marital duties: you would have to do them only once and in one spot. Nothing more.

He would gather a few bucks here or there playing at taverns or hopping into a quickly assembled band for a wedding or an army send-off celebration. It was getting harder and harder to do so. No one sought worn out and mediocre guitar players. The damn electronics killed of live gigs, recordings were made which replaced half of the band and the other half was replaced with a rhythm machine. Only thanks to the goodwill of some acquaintances who held on to the accordion (which was, by the way, repellent to him as well), he did some gigs. A time-struck old maid could always be found in the tavern, wanting to hear *Look into my eyes* or *It is the sea's fault*⁵, and wanting to express contempt towards today's times in that manner, before all and only because it is not the time of her youth anymore, where he would hop in.

Of course, his fee would be proportional to the influence a guitar player had in such a folk-tavern band. In other words: miserable. So a downtown apartment, in his situation, appeared elusive for three of his lifetimes. He couldn't even afford cigarettes, from his work. All of a sudden: "here's an apartment, just fuck me". If he wasn't hurting down there, he would've thought that he's dreaming, however, the pain reminded him that he is plenty awake. That pain, however, hadn't regained his senses, for him to comprehend how can such a thing happen to him, without a catch involved, something that would cost him a lot more. The bait was more than convincing. He was ready for everything just to escape from that little house and his mother.

The friable house in which he had been living with his mother (and he has lived there before, since his birth to be precise) has its advantages and disadvantages. The advantage is being in a good spot of the town, near the center of the city, by the church, and that is where his father the tailor, sewed suits and other tailoring things. The disadvantages are its old age, frazzle and his mother. In fact, the biggest disadvantage of that house is that he had to live with his mother in it. Next to the house, there was a friable store, once a workshop, empty since his father's death. In order to rent it out as a store, a renovation was necessary and he wasn't capable of that.

His mother wasn't a bad person but she was a "difficult" woman. It wasn't as bad to have a coffee with her, to sit a while, but it was unbearable to look at her and listen to her every day. When he thinks about it, she didn't act as a parent, instead her behavior was more characteristic to neurotic mistresses: possessive, demanding, jealous, wanted everything to be as she wants. She

⁵ Serbian ballad songs.

wanted to be the supreme authority in every choice or dilemma. She always wanted to decide what is good and what is bad for him. Of course, when he grew up, she hadn't managed to do so, but was persistent which made his stay at the house unbearable. He would've put up with her if she had given him enough money but unfortunately, there was no way that could happen. She gave him, not: "plenty", but: "nothing" – she was like a church mouse concerning that matter. Finally, lately she had completely given up on him and began to act as if he didn't exist, let alone that he was her son.

- I didn't re-marry after the death of your father just because of you – she would tell him grunting in climacteric tears.

- And, it wasn't like I hadn't had opportunities... and, this is how you repay me?! – she would continue in one breath – you're dragging yourself around with all kinds of hookers, spending your nights at taverns with various people, you don't come home for days...

His mother was a bosomy woman. There was plenty of her. That is why he ran after girls and women as flat as a board, his entire life. He even sometimes, secretly wanted young and pretty men, gracious in their lack of bulges in their chest area. Or, young, very young girls. Even after her death, at the other side of the world, as if she wanted to see the end of him, because she left a seed of illness and perversion to germinate inside of him, which he would find when he least needed it and on the worst place possible. And, as it usually turns out, busty and big butt women always offered themselves to him and followed him throughout his life.

However, he only had one desire: to run away somewhere from that house, anywhere and in any way. And to run away as far as possible from that woman whom he started to hate. He didn't have the opportunity because he was a proven incompetent weakling. And at this moment, an opportunity without a cause presented itself to him, for him to get an apartment in the center of the city. And what an apartment it was?!

- Today they buried a person who committed suicide in the city's cemetery. There wasn't a eulogy, the priest refused to perform one. That is why I rushed to get there... ?! ... No, not to perform the eulogy, don't mess around. I am asking you to make love with me tonight on that grave. And the apartment is yours. And we will never see each other again... No, I don't know if taxes are paid for gifts but do you really think that matters now?!

Jelena drove all night. From Belgrade, which after all wasn't her permanent place of residence lately, along the famous *Ibar Highway*, she drifted to her hometown (the nearest definition). She didn't make any stops, didn't stop to drink coffee, and she wasn't even in any rush. The motives of her trip are hazy and misty. She didn't know why she headed there, what she would find there?! It looks like she only knew where she was heading, which was also pretty unclear, at least concerning the route. The car is relatively new, a middle class one, she got it from her father for her birthday last year, but she wasn't

quite sure if she was heading in the right direction. The highway doesn't have any unknown's concerning the main road but she had to get off of it at some point, and drive to her hometown for at least a while. She wasn't quite sure where to do that during nighttime and she couldn't rely on the signaling since there weren't any. And if there were any, already after a short while, truck lights which were heading in the opposite direction were bothering her. Actually, she had never driven down this road, which was called by someone in a pretentious manner "a highway". A few times, right after her relocation to Belgrade, her father drove her. From the moment she started to drive, she never headed in this direction again.

Last night she was tipped off that there is a grave she needed, where she can perform the ritual and service, but that she has to hurry and to where exactly: right in her hometown. She was yet to make an effort with the incubus', and she thought about that while driving through landscapes which looked grim to her. And then she remembered that wretch, that Igor K. He couldn't have succeeded in life, it was noticeable on him even when they were going to high school, she thought to herself. She would offer him something he couldn't refuse and get the job done, which was the initiation for entering the high society of devil's subjects. After that, nothing that she didn't do, to get the favor of the Evil one, would exist, and he would provide her with unseen strength. She would become a Lilith.

- Go now – she told him – you have to decide within the next hour. If you don't want to, there's people who would. Are you still friends with that Zoki guy?

*

He headed towards his house once again, Igor K. That day seemed immensely long, it appeared that it was more intense than the last twenty years of his life. He contemplated. That is all nice. Finally an opportunity. A choice. In just one day, the opportunity of "getting" his own apartment appeared. He also has a cell phone, at last. He could "have" one of the finest chicks of the generation as well. Maybe he would get his own guitar afterwards, so he wouldn't have to beg that limp Aleksa, who doesn't even know how to play, to constantly borrow it while he always comes up with ways of humiliating him and always finally giving it to him.

But come on people! This morning, today before noon, he seriously injured his genitalia, not to say: the tip of the thing. He pinned and bled his mucous membrane. He can't even piss right and let alone make love, on some grave. Even if he were healthy, he is not sure if he would get an erection in such circumstances. How to explain that to Jelena?! *"I'm sorry Jeco, I'm calling you that because we are supposed to copulate, so I thought I'd break the ice, but I can't fuck you for your apartment, because half of my penis' tip was chopped off"*

on a toilet seat, just this morning". She wouldn't believe him. She'll think he's backing down. The only way is to pull down his pants and show her or bring a doctor's assurance and try to postpone it for some better times. But, she was in a rush, it was supposed to be done the same night. He had to turn her down some other way. Not to talk about all of this. He was humiliated enough already. There is no other way. Or?! Clench up?! It was worth to go through some trouble when a downtown apartment is involved, on the best possible location. Well, it had to be checked if the apartment was really hers?! If they hadn't sold it already?! Or if it was still on her father's name?! Nonsense!! Even if he wanted to endure the pain, he doubted that he could get it up under such conditions. Maybe if he took a large quantity of a painkiller?! Or if he got high?! How can he afford to get high?! Or the painkillers, if we're being honest?!

He found Zoki in front of his house. He was sitting in front and waiting for him. In the last couple of years his friend Zoki was obsessed with a mania of composing mortuary sermons. Yes, exactly that friend Zoki. The telling of last words above the catafalque of a deceased, appeared as an exciting occurrence to him, the best form of artistic expression. He fought against it, alone with himself, but was quite unsuccessful. As soon as he was alone and distracted by nothing, he would start to spell them out. And each speech was different, he adjusted each word to the person it was intended to. He already held eulogies for the nearest people in his vicinity: to relatives and friends. In his mind. And they were all alive. When sometimes, God forbid, a death occurred, even having his long prepared speech, no one would invite him to say the final word. It was always given to a senile pensioner who would lose every measure and would give mammoth speeches. And he would, if he could, do it with so much style, lyrically gleeful, epically strong, thorough in form and symbolic in meaning. All for nothing! Never and to no one, had he given a speech over a catafalque.

He didn't have to come at that delicate moment for him. Igor K. started to see him as competition after Jelena's final words, as someone who can take his apartment away from him. He was goofing around in front of the entrance to the house. He was sitting on the steps and moving his lips. He was giving a speech to someone. He wouldn't have been surprised if it was him. (A number of years after that, he had gotten rich. He later wrote a book *A hundred best speeches over a catafalque*, which got sold in tens of thousands of copies. Now, everywhere around Serbia, Republika Srpska, Montenegro, abroad, all over the place, his speeches are read. A movie was also made, various human fates were described so that every one of them starts with their eulogy, after which a story develops. He started a publishing house which exclusively dealt with publishing biographies and necrologies of deceased people, which were paid by the bereaved families and were handed out at the funerals and commemorations, as well as, a television station and radio which dealt with direct broadcasts of

funerals online, so those who couldn't attend them would be present as well. The publishing house, television and radio were all called *Pomen samizdat*⁶.

- I've heard, you were in a visit today?! – he acted clumsy although he probably knew everything.

- I have no idea what you are talking about?! – Igor K. acted silly as well

– Who are you “giving” your speech to now?

- To your mother – he answered.

“*At least something*”, Igor K. thought.

- Although, it probably would've been better to give one to your relative – said Zoki mysteriously.

- What relative, what are you talking about?! – Igor K. wondered.

- The one in whose toilet you chopped your dick off. They shot him, less than an hour ago, nothing was left of him. He headed where you have sent him.

Igor K. turned to stone. Will this day ever end? There, at that moment, however, he didn't comprehend the newly created situation. He wasn't even aware what kind of people his relative belonged to, he wasn't even aware why Zoki is putting and emphasis on the sentence “where you have sent him”. He soon realized everything. It was too late, as was his usual custom. The things were, therefore, additionally and finally complicated by the news that, that day, his wealthy relative perished somewhere under Kosmaj, looking for his old godfather. He got shot with around fifteen devastating bullets from a moving vehicle. They found him in a jeep, with his head leaned on the steering wheel, honking on it, about fifty yards from the road, in some meadow.

- A lovely speech can be said over his catafalque – said Zoki.

It wasn't all the same to him, even then. He did send him there after all and knew he would go there. And, that is what happened. In just under twenty minutes he has gotten the word that he is the main suspect for “ratting him out”. In the manner that he has sold the information to the competition about the movement of the above mentioned. To be honest, since the toilet seat accident he didn't even think about him. But, no one would believe him anymore. He thought he was dreaming. God, what has happened to him, in only a couple of hours, and he hasn't moved an inch from the path tavern – home, in the last twenty years?!

The cell phone rang.

- Trouble?!

- Hmm... yes... you could say that.

- What did you decide?

- I'm not sure yet.

- Decide quickly, time is passing by. Finally, I think that you would need the money to get out of town. You will get it easily by selling the apartment.

- Why should I run?

⁶ Commemoration samizdat.

- While we were young, you weren't that naive. But I understand you, we were raised for different times and relationships after all. I want an answer in twenty minutes.

When he parted with Zoki and his interest about the phone he was carrying, he went across the street to the tavern where they still sometimes allowed him to open a tab. They heard a couple of things as well, so don't want to cause trouble with him now. He started to drink. And then stopped. Then started again. In only a few hours his life turned into a living nightmare. It wasn't an ideal life before, but in its mediocre failure at least he didn't have problems because of which he had to run away from his hometown. How could someone even come up with a crazy idea that he "ratted out" his wealthy, and controversial relative?! He doesn't even know to whom he would rat him out. And even less: in what way. Then, in his tipsy head with a blurred consciousness, without any connection to rationality, he realized that only that relative's slut of a wife could frame him with such accusations. The relative wasn't unique or something, but he was, as I've said before, controversial and was such as a businessman.

Encouraged with alcohol he decided not to run (and, he doesn't even have where to) nor go anywhere (and, he doesn't even know how). And not because (which would make the most sense) of the fact that he wasn't guilty and which he would prove otherwise with his escape, but only because the brandy made him feel brave and cocky. "*I'm gonna fuck all of them up!*" – he shouted. And then he ran out of a will to drink. The painful sobering up was ahead: the alcohol was to be digested and disposed through piss. He doesn't know what he was scared of more.

He called Jelena and accepted her offer. She directed him: what and how. He waited for nighttime. Then a young and inexperienced policeman knocked on the friable and dried out door of his house. His cell phone rang at that moment. Jelena called him once again to confirm and warn him not to get drunk because she had felt in his voice that something was wrong with him. He responded that he had gotten home, to rest and tidy up.

- Good, so be it, don't mess around – Jelena, as time passed by from his acceptance, started to lose her initial kindness and was getting cockier and more direct.

The policeman was looking at him and listening while he was on the phone, and then discreetly escorted him to the police station in the vicinity.

- Where did you get the cell phone, when you didn't even have money for cigarettes this morning?! – the inspector at the station, only a couple of hundred yards from his house, was getting into his face. The inspector and him know each other pretty well – they are school mates.

- Who gave you the money?

- No one, the cell phone is mine.

- And just so it happened, that someone gave you a cell phone today? Why didn't anyone give one to me, instead I had to buy one from my salary?

Igor K. remained mute.

- We can't do anything to you right now, we don't have any evidence, but your kinswoman is claiming that you are the only informer. No one except you two knew where her husband would be that day. Who would even think about setting an ambush on some local road, under a mountain?!

He was silent. He couldn't understand what was happening.

- We can't do anything to you right now, we don't have any proof and this is hard to prove anyway. But, I think we won't be your biggest problem at the moment, if you know what I mean?! I am advising you as your school mate, watch your back!

They told him to wait in the hallway. He sat on the wooden bench and closed his eyes. *"I can't help you if you hadn't blessed your holy water with me, I don't have you on my list, you don't cut your slavski kolac⁷"* – a priest said to him and he woke up instantly. He was still sitting on the wooden bench, in the hallway of the police station. Tired, he sat down to rest, and fell asleep for a moment and dreamt of the priest's refusing of the church to help him, now that the Satanists started to besiege him.

- You're free for now! Go home, and sleep over there! – the policeman from the reception shouted to him.

They let him go, he sobered up. He knew because his head started to hurt. He went home to wash up and get prepared. The end of his conversation with Jelena, when he accepted the offer, was going around in his head, because he didn't explain his current state to her.

- Such chance won't occur ever again. People don't commit suicide every day in this shithole of a village and they are not buried right in the time of my fertile days. The child, if there is one, would no longer be yours anyway. Is your limb bloody? Well, that is even better.

... He woke up in the hospital. Everything was hurting him. He was battered, ruinous, with his face deformed. His limb was hurting him, but, it was hard for him to admit, his ass as well. From an unknown reason to him, at that time (he remembered later) he felt like his asshole was ripped apart and that something warm was leaking out of it: he suspected it was blood. He later remembered...

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He decided to do "it". The fear of death overcame the pain he was enduring from his hurt limb and the fear of some Satanist cemetery rituals, because nothing else could be at stake. The fear of death didn't have anything to

⁷ A Patron Saint day cake, which is cut by the priest or the head of the family on that day, for blessing.

do with Satan, but with his close relatives. But all this insisting on the cemetery couldn't be explained otherwise, other than some Satanism ritual about which he knew nothing about, but he suspected it was the case. For everything to end on a grave of a suicide man who hung himself in his house, after a Sunday lunch with his family in a seemingly harmonic home atmosphere, it couldn't have ended differently than with the devil.

In the dark night, as he was instructed upon agreement, he headed towards the city's cemetery, which was, as most our cemeteries, a little to the side and near a hill. Igor K. didn't feel anything except emptiness. Even the fear which was floating over him was somehow foreign to him, as if it belonged to someone else and their nightmare, even though it was a part of him, as if he hoped that everything would stop when he wakes up with his head tucked in on a thick feather pillow, which smells of starch and the damp of old houses.

When he arrived to the cemetery, he realized it wasn't easy at all to manage among all of the marble monuments in the dark, whether they were *Impala* or *African*⁸, which somehow did contribute to the peaceful atmosphere with their stability and peacefulness, rather to some cemetery creeps, as it was expected. He knew he was desecrating the place but didn't feel bad about it, which was probably caused by the numbness of his feelings and muscles (he took a painkiller, and a sedative – stolen from his mother – before he departed, he wouldn't have gotten there differently).

He followed the instructions of getting to the grave, tripped and got lost, got scared a few times because of some damn birds who would get scared of him and would start flying and screeching, they were most likely of the pheasant kind. He got even more scared when he collided with the gypsies who were stealing flowers and wax, and who ran away, ten times more scared than him. He tripped a few times and got hurt good while falling. With all of this put together, already at the beginning he looked terrible and incomprehensible to a normal human. But, this had nothing to do with normal, it was more than obvious. All of this is the scenery and shape of his life and his state. He wasn't at the tavern that night, drunk and with foggy consciousness but was at the cemetery with foggy consciousness as if he was drunk.

Then he spotted a silhouette, and a fresh tumulus underneath it. It appeared to him that the ground on the tumulus was even darker than the night, darker than consciousness. It was probably more a matter of the mind than real colors. Jelena was standing on the grave and when she lit the candle, Igor K. noticed that she was wearing a black silk dress, more of a nightgown, and that the candle was black as well. His eyesight adjusted to the darkness so even the tiniest source of light, such as the candle, made it appear that he sees things a lot better than usual. She had nothing under that dress, it was obvious by the nipples which were pointing out and threatening to breach the silk and the bush between

⁸ Types of marbles.

her legs which lifted the soft fabric, as if it was cotton. And that is where the erotica and romance end. The cross from the grave was taken out and placed upside down in the ground. Only then did Igor K. realize what kind of a stupid move he has made by coming there. It was too late.

Jelena handed him a cup.

- Drink up! – she ordered him.

A beheaded rooster was still wiggling next to the grave.

He refused. She didn't insist. She drank the whole cup, a dense blood-like liquid dripped from her lips, she threw the cup away, lied down on the grave, spread her legs and called him over:

- Come, ride me, my sacred goat! Shove it in me on this holy place!

Surprisingly, beside the fear, this aroused him. And it instantly started to hurt even though he took the painkillers. The hurt and insulted limb was erected and Igor K. instantly felt that something was leaking from it. More blood. The wound re-opened.

- Come, come! – Jelena was shouting and spreading her legs.

While he was lowering his pants to his knees, he noticed for the first time that they weren't alone, that there are other silhouettes on the surrounding graves, which were silently following what they were doing, as monuments, still and quiet. This was to be presumed. *"I'll do this for the apartment, and get the hell out of here"*, said Igor K. to himself with some strange confidence inside, which didn't adorn him until now. Yet, he asked:

- Who else is here?

- Come, earn your apartment and enjoy the sweet sin which serving the Satan provides! – she moaned and shouted hysterically, she moved around on the grave and scattered the earth from it, held on to the upside down cross, and was already dirty and torn apart.

He lied over her, it was painfully stinging down there, he was trying to penetrate the frenzied Jelena without hurting himself, but that wasn't going to happen. She grabbed him with her hands and legs and pulled herself on him. He doesn't know to which extent he penetrated her because the pain was blurring his consciousness. In the background, in the mist he heard some mumbling and could only recognize a few words.

... you are... your children... through the path of evil....

Jelena was screaming on the grave, and was aroused by the situation itself and not his limb. When she brought her mouth closer to him in that frenzy, he could feel the smell of blood from them. He was then sure about the content of the drink she had earlier. He was still hoping that it was the blood of the beheaded rooster who stopped wiggling.

... chaos rules in the hearts... to you Satan...

He doesn't know how long the torture lasted, those attempts of having sex. Jelena, it appeared, was in a climax at one moment, she was screaming and shouting, and the moment she felt that his sperm was pouring into her, she, as if

someone flipped the switch: fell instantly silent and calmed herself. She pushed him away with visible disgust. He fell sideways, facing the ground and grave. He could still hear the mumbling behind him.

... *give us what you have... give us the superhuman power...*

And then he heard how the silhouettes and the shadows behind him were moving, and were becoming living humans. A few of them jumped him and started to kick and hit him. He was shouting:

- Please Jelena, don't!

- I am not Jelena, this is just the body of the bitch you know! I am Lilith, and you are a worm who serves me and will be a servant as long as you live!

They beat him so much he stopped feeling pain. Then with the corner of his remaining consciousness he heard Jelena:

- Stop it, that's enough, don't!

Is there something humanly left inside her or is the orgy not yet over, Igor K. couldn't think about that?! He didn't think about anything. All he wanted was silence so he can be quiet. And to fall asleep. It wasn't over! One of them, while he was almost unconscious and beaten up, pulled down his pants holding him to his trouser legs. Then they raped him, one at a time, a number of them. He felt them on his back but it didn't hurt him anymore. He could only feel hot sperm as each of them would ejaculate. Nothing hurt him at that moment anymore. He even felt some sort of pleasure, briefly, before he had lost his consciousness. The pain on other spots reached its peak and after that it stopped hurting. It'll appear again later. Then the dark appeared. He was dreaming...

A skinned and roasted wild boar, with red and crispy skin, was running by the river. The hits with giant stones on the back of his head and forehead couldn't calm him. After each hit, just for a brief moment, the boar gained human face contours. A familiar face. Just for a moment. Until the new swing and hit. He would stop for a moment, apparently dizzy, switching his head from a boar to a human one and vice versa and looked at him questioningly (with both shapes): "*Why are you doing this to me, why are you hitting me?*". And as if he would fall down at any moment but would then totteringly keep crushing the stones under his strong hooves. He kept running on the clean and smooth river stone. The water was clear and fast...

...The gravediggers had found him in the morning, unconscious, naked on a torn apart grave. He was beaten up, raped, filthy. The news spread quickly through the city. He was transferred to the hospital, where he got an infusion, some medications and where his injuries were sanitized. His limb was hurt once again, his asshole torn apart. Beside the pissing, the shitting and laughing became painful as well. He was hoping, at least that much, that his lips were hurt from the punching. He knew about his ass, he remembers a little bit, especially after the hot streams. After a while, like a beaten up and raped whore, who no one cared about, he was sent off for home treatment, which was a euphemism for throwing him out of the hospital.

The police was also with him at the ambulance. They took some kind of a statement, as much as he was prepared to give them. Then they told him that he would have to come to a hearing one of these days, so that they wouldn't have to bring him in, in such condition, there is a lot he would have to explain from the last twenty something hours. As if they knew, knowing him, that he has nowhere to go, so they didn't take any precautions. And he, immediately after that, in such condition and state, had to run away because even gloomier news awaited him about his murdered relative: he was adjudicated, bald big headed criminals in black Audis and jeeps were looking for him. Igor K. finally completely felt as everyone from his generation should've felt, the same generation which wouldn't fight for their piece of bread and values. There.

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- You are making a big mistake young man, for even pondering this. If there was only an inch of possibility, to even step my toe outside of this city, I would be a lucky man. But, the job bound me, I have a family to feed and enable, for at least a part of them, to leave.

- If you are not happy here and now, while talking to me, you won't be happy even tomorrow and over there. Especially if your luck depends on the length of one toe.

Igor K. was obviously maundering, especially because he had the strength to say such nonsense in such a moment. The famous city lawyer visited him at his house, right after he left the hospital and presented him with his situation. The mafia was looking for him because they suspected that he ratted out his relative. The police was looking for him for the same reason, with the addition of the Satanist crap on the cemetery, and the relatives of the deceased whose grave was desecrated were also asking around. He was hired by a well-intentioned individual, who wanted to stay anonymous not to get in trouble as well, to enable him some money and connections, so he could leave to Belgrade immediately, and afterwards, as far as possible, at least for a while. He didn't want to respond to Igor K.'s repeated insisting, to reveal who the person that wanted to help him was, so Igor K. thought that it could've been one his father's friends or maybe one of his school mates. However, he couldn't get a single name. His mother was mumbling something in the kitchen, fighting with him even when he wasn't present in the room.

- We won't discuss those matters now. A person, who wishes you well, hired me to secure your urgent escape out of the city. You have to understand the gravity of the situation. They will kill you. I've managed to get you a job in Belgrade. You start tomorrow, you will be driving a gentleman, a doctor, a top psychiatrist, par excellence, he is going on a study trip to Bosnia, and he is in a need of a driver and assistant with technical matters. An easy, but well paid job. And after that, you'll manage yourself.

He realized that he is in a dead end and that this is his only way out. He quickly prepared for the trip to Belgrade, and hadn't told anyone, except Zoki. He didn't even tell his mother because he knew she wouldn't keep her mouth shut.

- I will say beautiful words over your catafalque – he was telling the half-bloody Igor K., while hugging him – What has come upon you, my dear brother?!

He didn't know what to say. His mother shouted from the kitchen, uninterested, cold, without any concern about his appearance:

- Some people were looking for you. Did you fight them in the tavern last night again, you calamity, I didn't re-marry because of you, and I could've.

Igor K. was sent out of his hometown, his life. To nowhere and without a life. From nothing: into nothing. In just about twenty minutes he was driven to the near town and put on a bus to Belgrade. He was holding some note in his hand. He felt pathetic, and looked even more so. Death didn't look as scary at that moment. It was more scary to feel that you are not a human, because you do not get to decide about your own fate. You are not even an animal, at least a hunted and unprotected one, because an animal fights to the very end.

Igor K. didn't know, at the time, that you cannot run away from your fate. He just didn't know. Running from one misery into another brings nothing good, not even a solution to the first problem from which and because of which, one was running away. To be more precise, with this running away the problem is simply doubled. That is how you get a double or triple dose of problems. By running into a different problem, you will never solve the problem you are leaving behind. The problem will be waiting for you (or: come with you) and you will get into more, greater trouble in the meantime. Wherever you go: you are with yourself. And you are the cause of your trouble, if you were someone else or different: you wouldn't even have them. That is the essence, and the point at the same time.

Mortified, hurt, pathetic. Almost without a penny in his pockets. He was running away. Running and didn't even know, what from? Who he was running from, was more or less, clear to him, but why: he didn't know?! In one moment, everything changes in a life. From a complete loser he had become completely lost. As soon as he stepped out of his loserness he had gotten himself in the situation to be run over. He had realized that his loserness was the only safe place for him and those like him. It was a shelter, a safe hideout. Out of it, only suffering awaited the unprepared and incompetent him.

He knew little about Belgrade, as he knew little about any town in the world, where he would sometimes go or where he had resided constantly. This is because he would always stick to well-known tracks and paths, because he didn't like to experiment and wander around, out of his countryside. He felt best between four walls, if possible, four walls which are not his mother's house, but one of his corners or at least the tavern. That is why, because of not being

familiar with Belgrade, he made arrangements to be picked up at the railway station. Since they were already picking him up, he didn't understand why they needed a driver, because the Journalist kept driving all the way to Drina, and then he switched places with him once they crossed it, but he had gotten sick pretty quickly, didn't feel good, so they threw them on the back seat to nap in agony. And also, considering the fact that he was a terrible driver. Maybe they picked him up in order to do a favor for someone or it was better for more of them to be together, where they were going.

The Journalist was writing a story. Doctor Jezeljkić was looking for his son. Igor K. was running away. Fate has brought them together (and Jelena's connections, which would turn out later) to not do anything big. Just to meet each other and find out a little about one another, before they part forever. They were all silent at the beginning and thinking their own thoughts, which were, it was obvious, personal and gloomy with all of them. Later, on the road, they cheered up a little bit (some a bit more, started talking as if they were near death), and because of the bad road and weather, wanted to share their troubles with the others. As if the others needed someone else's trouble?!

The doctor gave him some pills which made him feel better, a little better, he was broken, in pain, shattered, humiliated, depressed. It was all the same to him. In that indifference, he accepted doctor Jezeljkić and the Journalist as people he had spent his entire life with, probably because of his, at the time, completely narrowed perspective. That day, those days, neither yesterday, today, nor tomorrow existed for him: only the car cabin and those two men. In trouble, because of a lack of choice, because of impossibility, his soul accepted the first people it met after the painful experiences. They could've been whoever, they were the best in the world to him. He didn't have any others.

Doctor Jezeljkić was looking for his lost son so he might've found a part of his son in him. That is why he was kind to Igor K. All the parts of the real one, he had lost a long time ago, and now even surrogates of the same meant something to him. They say that the thing with fatherhood is pretty fucked up, namely, a man is not himself in those matters and in front of them a man's personality built and created for years gets shattered. When you are a father, you are not a personality, not even a human (you are when things go well, when things go badly, then you cannot be a human, it is not acknowledged for you). And maybe he sympathized him because he understood that they both failed: Igor K. and his son. It could be spotted on him and for the other one, it was heard and assumed already.

The Journalist was writing a coverage about war criminals and war dogs, honestly, he had already stepped in deep, without being completely aware of it, into the vampire story. The metaphor was lost somewhere along the way and instead of style figures, the vampires started to appear in his real life. He has already come a long way, and needed to visit doctor Jezeljkić, although, in that little fellowship it was unfamiliar who had deviated the most and who needed

psychiatric help the most. Actually, the two were brought together by that vampire story, after a series of texts written by the Journalist. Doctor Jezeljić invited him and suggested the trip.

Igor K. was therefore, emotionally and spiritually empty but not as much as to not be scared. It wasn't all the same to him, which meant that he didn't empty out completely. He didn't get to the level where it's all the same to a human and he should have, considering what he had gone through in just a couple of hours, not even days, or months. For the first time in his life he was ripped out of his loser conformism, which is a loser one but a conformism in the best sense and meaning of that word. For the first time, after a while, since high school, he was ripped out of his inactivity and pointlessness. He was tucked into the system in which you were no one and have nothing, which also meant that you had nothing to lose. He was completely unprepared for a life out of his house or street, out of his usual habits of not working and wandering around. For the first time, which is more important, he was circumcised, almost beaten to death, fucked and haunted to be murdered. He wasn't no one and nothing anymore and he could barely manage that new state of his first and last name.

They were going through settlements, villages and towns, they were passing through plains and hills, and they finally started to climb up a mountain, he didn't remember the names of all the settlements, rivers or road signs, he would just stare at the hills which were above them, and they were climbing through a serpentine road, which was getting worse by the minute, as they were getting higher and higher. However, he would occasionally look out the window, since their departure, and would then fall into his ill half-sleep again: *Brotherhood and Unity Highway*, Šabac, Banja Koviljača, Kalesija, Živinice, Banovići, Zavidovići, Donja Lovnica, Čardak, Borovnica, and then the unconsciousness again, and further and further, through unknown areas, with more forests and wilderness. Until a cold mountain air hadn't entered the inside of the car, and into his bones as well. When the coldness took him over, he felt life again a little bit. He felt that he is alive.

- Like Transylvania – said the Journalist to himself.

He was in his own story, it appeared he wasn't even with them, but with someone else, someone who isn't from this world. Igor K. started, at that moment, while being more aware from the coldness and the seize of pain, to see his obsession...

*

The Journalist was truly obsessed. At the beginning of his work with vampires, he “consulted” Vuk Stefanović Karadžić⁹, he had to set up a good foundation in order to build a good story, even though he honestly didn't even

⁹ A philologist, linguist and a major reformer of the Serbian language.

know what his story was and where his research would take him. He knew, however, that this was not an ordinary story, that he isn't experiencing it as a job challenge, but as something which is irresistibly pulling him towards itself even though he had felt that it wasn't good for him, and that it wouldn't end up well for his condition. *"An honest man cannot turn into a vampire, unless something jumps over him while he's dead. They appear in greatest numbers from Christmas until the Feast of the Ascension of Jesus Christ. Just like they take a black stallion without a mark, and take him to the cemetery and pull him across graves, because they say that such stallion will not, and must not, cross over... Because he is only afraid of the pointed hawthorn stick... As a human turns into a vampire with the Serbs, so the Turks narrate that it turns into a pig with them"*.

However, he considered that he should stop here. He wouldn't go down that path, because he would agree to a lie and the lower resistance path. He would nibble on his paycheck in a conformist manner and wouldn't be a real journalist as well. He is on the clue to something which cannot be eradicated with a hawthorn stick nor be found with the *stallion without a mark*. He was on the trail of truth about ours and all the other world slaughtering. He was on the trail of: blood!

That is why he easily disregards the overused phrase that the word *vampire* is the only Serbian word used in other world languages, although it seemed to him that *tenac*¹⁰ was somehow a more Serbian word (although, considering everything, it originated from the Bulgarian language). He thought, what the hell, if it is so, than with some genetic logic of their ancestors they started to accuse us lately, that we are bloodsuckers which the world hadn't seen lately.

He easily disregarded Vlad the Impaler, Dracula and Transylvania as well, and his mutual slaughter with the Turks, when they proclaimed him a pig, and then a vampire and bloodsucker. He disregards Bram Stoker and other similar nonsense, like Nosferatu. He disregards, even easier than the other, Pavle Arnaut from Medvedja, Pavle Blagojević "vampire von Kiseljeva", Ruža Vlaina, Sava Savanović, and Miloš the vampire. He disregards the reports of all the Austro-Hungarian monarchy's boards, which often investigated the cases of vampires with Serbs.

The new editions of literature, TV-shows, movies and some sort of *vampire diaries* he didn't even look at. He doesn't need them for such a serious work. He didn't even need the above mentioned. He is not doing this, i.e.: he is, because he thinks he had encountered something real, serious and dangerous, something that exists and can be the end of him. With something more humanly. With something that is not being a matter of trial in Hague or some other court. That is why he neglects Čajkanović's writings, old legends and folk stories,

¹⁰ A Serbian synonym for vampire.

doesn't question around about the famous Istok and Metohija's vampire Metodije, who turned human and became a man when the people have gone and he remained alone with the ghosts and demons of the abandoned and burnt down place, and who is the only example in history, where a vampire turned human.

A few of his texts published in the papers for which he works, he doesn't consider as anything serious. He had to fill his norm and earn his salary, he had to flatter the editor who doesn't have a clue about anything, especially about these matters. It was important to him to satisfy his mentors, political and financial ones, that it was spoken and written about what suits them, about war crimes, mostly on our side, because if we ever said anything about all war crimes, we would inevitably reach his sponsors as well. His fear is of a different nature than what could be assumed. We are slaves to stereotypes which were imposed on us by the literature and cinematography, so we joke about very serious matters. He isn't afraid of the sharp fang, he is afraid of the knife, Heckler and Koch and Kalashnikov: and the sharp fang. And the death that follows and not the eternal life, as we are taught by the idlers.

He is looking at the newspaper cut-outs, agency news, which only give a hint about some things, but don't penetrate the essence (because they do not know it). He wanders around the internet and comes back from those journeys even more confused. Those are all dead letters on a paper. He will soon go to look and find them: alive! And: real, as they are, almost the same as us, only with small disturbances in the evolution. The trails they had rarely left behind them, paint the picture of a completely twisted legend about them. Will he return from that journey: he doesn't know?! He is letting the written come out of the laser printer, and then puts the papers with the texts in an envelope, which he puts on a visible spot in the drawer of his worktable. Then he rushes to the editor to get his final instructions and the work order signature, so he can get on his way.

Do vampires have faith? If they do: is it their special faith? Or do they (dis)respect the faith they practiced while being alive? Are vampires born or do they become such? He is thinking about so many dilemmas which needed clarifying while his editor is looking at his text and is adding or crossing over something from time to time. "*Vampires are mercenaries who come from all the sides, where the war has started*" – his editor reads out loud, while spelling it out.

- Not bad. Through the vampire metaphor, write a series of texts about mercenaries who came to fight on all sides, with a review about Bosnia and the Mujahideens and their latter settlements there, but also about the other volunteers who fought on the Croatian side, especially about the Russians on the Serbian side. Of course, only with a review, but the major thing is to talk badly about the Serbs, as the guy from the European Union said, I forgot his name, fuck it, their all the same to me: "Everyone should deal with their own crimes, that is the path towards national and general catharsis" – said the editor.

“When it is spoken about vampirism then it is spoken about the structure of people ready to commit war crimes without any reason, because of their inner predisposition. Someone would rightly ask what reasons can exist to even commit a war crime? Well, for example: vengeance!”. This is what the Journalist wrote, however, he thinks and knows that, this is about real vampires, but he can’t even think about revealing the truth about how he believes and knows they really exist. They would declare him as insane, he would lose his job.

- Vampires are war dogs?! Remarkable! Excellent symbolism, nicely said, this is what we need in the process of self-sobering. Make an effort that there are more vampires on our side, as you know our newspapers were bought by the Germans, so we can’t publish everything we want to publish, only the politically correct and if possible, self-critical content— said the editor wisely and with exulting.

He was silent. How else could’ve he reacted?! He didn’t have the strength to explain himself. No one would believe after all. A peculiar fellowship has gathered for this departure to the field, for which his editor is signing a work order just now. The Journalist was running away from the war, but it kept catching up to him, they kept sending him back. This doctor was running into the war and it kept slipping out of his reach, and the third one, as they’ve said the dickless one, is hiding in the interspace, in the limbo between war and non-war, because there will never be peace among us. He is looking at his manuscript later, while riding the bus home, with a signed order in his pocket:

“Wherever a war starts, that is where vampires from all over the world come. The number of vampires in the world is limited and by some inexplicable laws of their nature: strictly controlled. It is a special kind of people: they love blood, they can live without it, they can move when it’s daylight, they are not afraid of the crucifix or garlic. For them, blood is a drug, pleasure, wealth, an aphrodisiac before all – but not necessary for them to survive.

Vampires are born rarely, they die just like other people, their parents are normal human beings who never find out, in their lifetime, that they gave birth to a vampire. There are vampires, and most of them are like that, who never tasted a drop of blood in their lifetime. A good part of them doesn’t even recognize their vampire essence. Vampires who get addicted to animal blood can get ill: physically and mentally.

With some vampires the need and urge for blood is very strong and they can hardly restrain themselves. They are quite similar to heroin addicts, so their condition is explained like that by their environment. When it comes to blood, the quantity isn’t as important as regularity, so an average vampire can be satisfied with very small quantities. Blood cannot be kept and consumed afterwards, it has value only if it is consumed directly from the vein: hot and strong. The amount that can be licked from an open vein is quite enough for a

vampire to quench his thirst, to feel good, to grow stronger, both mentally and physically.

As soon as war and killing starts somewhere: here they come!

Most vampires aren't aware of their uniqueness. They usually think that something is mentally wrong with them, that they are ill, they hide their urges and needs by being enslaved to stereotypes, when it comes to humans and vampires. The fact that they feel the need for fresh human blood, they consider an anomaly, like the urge of a pedophile to abuse children. They look at the world around them, watch their parents, their surroundings, school mates, work colleagues – and none of that fits in with the legends they know about vampires. The sun doesn't kill them, they love garlic, go to church regularly: there isn't even a mention about them being vampires, except the fact that they get madly aroused when they see blood coming out of a wound or while they watch the pulsating on the neck in which they would sink their teeth in with pleasure (therefore, there is truth concerning some general matters they have heard, that we have heard). They, looking at the above mentioned examples, get sexually aroused which additionally complicates their self-recognition and self-control as well.

They don't have to be sadists, although there is a number of them. There are more masochists among them, but they are specific in their masochism. It appears that they are first and foremost attracted to lawlessness, chaos, regions affected by a war, where after a while, nothing, which could be called abnormal, no longer exists, and where every bizarreness becomes normal. It is impossible to recognize a vampire in your surroundings. As I said, they are small in numbers, rare and normal in their appearances. They reveal themselves only when the normal life becomes anarchy.

Their time is the war time. Their wars are civil wars, the same ones where there is no separation line between the sides involved in the war, where everything is mixed up and chaotic, where a lot of civilians get hurt. Although, every war is their war, and even the conquering ones, where the conquered territories are crossed over and where the civilians are left to the mercy and ruthlessness of the conquerors. They rarely fight in the wars, only when they have to. They are interested in the most filthiest part of them: the brute force over the prisoners and civilians. They aren't even particularly brave. They like to prettify themselves, to pose and act. When an assault on the enemy trench starts, they know how to move aside, to lay down near a dead soldier and to benefit from his hot blood”.

This is where he had stopped reading. It is quite enough for this article, he deems that he has fulfilled his norm, the editor doesn't have the reason to scold him for negligence and inactivity. This is a quite good, general introduction into the series of texts that would follow, which he already has finished, for the most part, and as a sequel of the already published ones, which were the ones that led the feuilleton to be considered. He bit off more than he could chew. For the first

time in his career he has the opportunity of addressing the readers day after day, through his feuilleton. He has an interesting story, if he is satisfied he would continue. His status of the outside and part-time associate is fucking with him, the need to write as much as possible, in order to get paid even a little bit.

Although, it is not completely clear why he is wrapping the story about war dogs and war criminals into the vampire wafer. Why does he need that metaphor, what is the style figure? Why doesn't he write a genuine journalistic text about the Mujahideen, their atrocities and mountain village across Bosnia, which they populated after the war and now have their "mini Jamahiriyas" over there. The story about the doctor's son who converted to Islam and has slaughtered many Serbs in Allah's name, would fit in nicely. Finally, he would mention other paramilitary formations, our, Serbian ones, and others, to indulge the editor. Of course, it doesn't even occur to him to state that the majority of vampires belong to his nation, even if the Germans had bought the newspaper five times, and not just once and for what kind of money. That dumb trip and going around Bosnia, with two obscure fellows, was the least he needed now. But, he had to live off of something and a story is not chosen – it chooses you. And whatever happens, happens, he knew.

*

- Vampirism, that is fanaticism, Serbian fanaticism. Yes, give me that! – the editor was drooling – We should repent, hit ourselves with the hawthorn stick right in the heart of the national identity. Find me the Serb who has slaughtered for Allah and you can hope for a bonus. They want to give bonuses when the job is well done. And, there is your journalist professionalism: you would seek criminals on other sides as well, and you will only find Serbs. It outstandingly matched!

The Journalist didn't comprehend anything but understood a little bit what the catch was. He couldn't deal with the rascal. Nothing is sacred to him, he knows nothing about newspaper editing but he is there and no one can do him any harm, as long as his political party is ruling. When they go away, some others will come, same as him, only from a different party, or he will change his political party and still remain where he is now. He wrote some lines this morning and wanted to debate them with the editor, but then he realized that it's not happening, which is why he returned the paper to his folder. On it, the next lines were written:

"The non-governmental sector financed by the western and Arabic world, well infiltrated into political parties and government, has the mission of presenting the Serbians as unsurpassed bloodsuckers and Serbia as a cradle and brood of vampirism and blood-thirstiness, therefore, of crime. In the era of auditing historical facts, the auditing of vampirism is on the scene as well. The Turks didn't impale Serbs on stakes but were actually killing vampires, Gavrilo

Princip didn't shoot the Austrian hegemony, the dungeon of people, colonialism and slavery, but in fact the vampire Serb slaughtered an Austrian human, Serbs weren't slaughtered in Jasenovac, instead it was actually the place where Europe liberated itself from the vampire descendants through the Croats".

How in the world would this dumbass understand this?! That is why the Journalist gave up. Of course, he will try to push it into the final text because he knows that this bastard rarely reads the entire content.

- Serbians wanted blood from other nations, the other nations didn't want Serbian blood, they merely defended themselves. That is the official attitude of the European government, and, ours too, as you can see lately – the editor continued to pretend to be “smart” and the Journalist was just trying to escape from that cockroach, as soon as possible.

“Yes”, the Journalist was thinking, so he wouldn't have to listen any more to what he was saying, *“The Germans were, in 1941, defending themselves with bombing, the Croats were defending themselves with Jasenovac, the Americans were defending themselves with tomahawks. They were all defending from Serbian-vampires, on Serbian territory, where those vampires live”*. He liked this, so he took his pen out and made a note in his journal. He would later add in the text, continuing what he had already written:

“Many drank blood, and are still doing so, from this unfortunate nation, the unfortunate ex-country. Everyone wanted to benefit from this war and bloodshed. The bloodsuckers are warriors and peacemakers, politicians and humanitarians, businessmen and artists. The only part of the nation that suffered, as it always happens, were: common folk. If you were “common”, it meant that you were the potential victim. Being “uncommon”, however opened the possibility of joining the bloodsuckers”.

His idea was to widen the list of bloodsuckers, that it doesn't only remain on war criminals, and only Serbian ones, like this bastard would want. However, the editor wasn't that dumb, he felt a trap, and assumed who would get on that widened list, and didn't even want to hear about any changes. He warned his subordinate in advance:

- You just stick to war crimes, I repeat, Serbian if possible, at least as much as you can! What don't you understand about this?!

The Journalist understood everything. He only thought about getting out and sipping a *Rubin's vinjak*¹¹ offhandedly, and lighting a cigarette afterwards. He resented himself for putting up with such a charlatan, he wanted to shout into his face: *“Your politicians, non-governmental organizations and their foreign bosses are bigger bloodsuckers than many others!”*. But he didn't say anything to him.

He tried to explain that and much more to the editor but the editor didn't even want to hear. Vampires don't have to be the only bloodsuckers, the

¹¹ A brand of wine brandy.

Journalist thought. Everyone who sucks life out of someone is a vampire, especially the ones who suck the life out of an entire nation or multiple nations together. Anyone who lives out of someone else's misery: is a vampire. That is why, he is trying for one last time, before departing to the Cursed village, to persuade the editor to widen the theme:

- Politicians can also be vampires! The vampirism church today, is the government building and the monasteries of vampirism are the headquarters of non-governmental organizations.

The editor jumped, as if he was scalded with boiling water:

- Are you insane?! Have you lost your mind?! – he was shouting – You want them to get rid of me, for me leave this place. You don't think I know what goes on behind my back?! Well, it's not going to happen, just so you know!

The Journalist backed up immediately, apologized, justified himself with professional ethics. He realized he had made a mistake, that you can't meddle with that wasp nest. By that reaction he realized who the editor was most scared of but also understood who he should be scared off in the future. His tongue was quicker than his mind, he picked a damn fine time to think about professional ethics. Now he remembered, after twenty years of work experience, that he could be a journalist a little bit. The editor isn't afraid of vampires or Mujahideens but is afraid of politicians and the non-governmental sector, in contrast to whom the first ones are little babies. Which they are not. If he doesn't believe in vampires, he knows pretty good that the religious fanatics exist and are ready to die for their idea, and being ready to die meant that they are even more ready to kill. And the journalist got scared. He realized he had gone too far. He hoped that the editor would take him of the assignment, that he would call of the work order and wages. None of that happened.

- Go, find those fucking Talibans. Find the one who changed his religion. And find another dozen more of Serbian war criminals. Did I make myself clear?!

- Editor, didn't we agree that I go and look for real bloodsuckers, vampires?

- They are just a metaphor, you dumb fuck. The metaphor for Serbian bloodsucking in the last century! You have completely lost your mind.

- But they exist!

The editor calmed himself a little bit, as if he understood that he was dealing with a man who wasn't completely sane.

- Alright – he said conciliatory – write the reportage about the war criminals first and afterwards if you find the time, do the other thing as well, and I'll take a look at it.

The Journalist went out and the editor mumbled for himself:

- He wants to deal with high politics, him and his fucking vampires.

While approaching his stop, on the bus, where he was supposed to pick up a bag from his apartment and depart for the trip, he was squeezing a letter in his hand and was looking at it with the corner of his eye:

“Where did you even get the idea, to write about us in that way?! Why don’t you stick to fantasy and horror, like the rest of them, Bram Stoker and Vlad the Impaler, Hollywood and Nosferatu?! In that way, everyone would be pleased. This way, you are confusing the people (the few people who read your feuilleton: are the people).

You are near the truth, even grasping it a little bit in some places, but you didn’t reach the essence and that is the most dangerous matter. Do you want us to go back to the Middle ages, and get the mob with torches in their hands at night to decide who would get burned as some kind of a monster? You shouldn’t have even started to deal with this topic and misuse the trust that some reckless vampire has given you, probably under the influence of the Hollywood production. If you are expecting a threat now: there is none. I’ve been living and working my whole life honestly, teaching at the University for almost forty years, haven’t licked a drop of blood, I am not a pornophile, but I am a vampire. I am no exception at all: most of us are like that. Since I am sending you this anonymously, do with this letter what you please, although I wouldn’t want it to get published, and, even if you do so: no one would believe you”.

The letter was typed on the computer and printed from a printer without any personal trails such as a signature or anything similar. He got it after a text was printed in one of the latest issues of the newspapers of whose quality he didn’t think that much. He considered that it was too general:

“When they can’t choose, the vampires perform on the “give us whatever” system, no matter what the war was like or where they’ve found themselves in all of that.

(He realizes that his sentence was supposed to be at the end of the last part and paragraph, but he carelessly skipped it).

Vampires don’t have anything to do with the “other” world, with life after death – they are very much alive creatures and function until they die just like other people. They are gone after that. Maybe they are some sort of ill people, it is obvious they have a disorder, but they can’t die from it, just like they don’t live from it. As far as blood is concerned, they only feel the need for satisfaction. Consuming blood is the pleasure of needs and urges to them, similar as the need and desire for sex with other people. While he’s licking blood, the vampire feels a pleasure identic to the sexual one. After that, he is calm for a while. But, not for long and not forever.

Most vampires are vampire-pornophiles, or: voyeur vampires. Those are honest and moral vampires. They are aware of their urges but don’t do anything drastic to satisfy those urges. It is enough to only watch sometimes. To watch how blood gushes everywhere. They don’t consume but they watch. That’s not: it! Neither is a porno movie any kind of action, but it still gives some sort of

relief to the one consuming it. Just like the fact that not everyone in a war is a criminal, in the same manner, not all vampires reveal their true nature. It is in human nature to be a criminal, it is his choice, however, to restrain that nature. It is a long-term and evolutionary process, it takes centuries, humans were raised to suffocate their crime instincts through norms, laws, customs and faith.

A human mostly resembles a wolf by nature, and the wolf is, after all, the closest one to vampirism. As a human, a wolf also kills without a reason, although sometimes he does so for the sake of his survival (just like people kill millions of animals every day, to feed on their flesh and blood). However, out of all predators, only the wolf slaughters more than he needs to. He jumps over the cattle pen fence at night, but doesn't slaughter one sheep which is more than enough, but slaughters as much as he can, if possible all of them. Vampires are also suffocating their nature, especially in more civilized societies. Although, in such societies they have the most chance to achieve some of their obsessions. They enlist into the army, go around the world, usually into far away countries where no local law can do them any harm.

There are also addicts who can't live without blood.

They all head down the path of war, often find themselves in them, because the war comes to them. In regions where one ethical or criminal group is terrorizing another one – a lot of vampires move there eventually. Also in the regions of lawlessness. However, vampires today, love to live most in megalopolises. They don't like the rural surroundings, don't wander around crags or watermills, they love the city crowds and settlements with millions of people. They love wars, however, the most.

As much as the Sun is killing people today, the same applies to the vampires, because it is all the same.

They sometimes find and recognize each other: and are most dangerous at that moment. When they unite, their breaks get loose, the need to quench their thirst is greater and they do greatest evils at that moment”.

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Doctor Jezeljkić put the newspapers down on the table. The article about vampires is lousy but true, with the symbolic or without it. Doctor Jezeljkić wasn't looking for them. He was looking for an answer to a different question. He was looking for his son. The son who left to wage a war, even though he didn't have to, even though no one called him, even though his father had the power to find him a safe place until the misery passes. All for nothing: he left one day and there was no sign of him for some time. Doctor Jezeljkić Radoš, his father, knew where he was. He also knew that his son didn't go there because of narrow-mindedness, patriotism, ideology or out of spite to his father – as it appeared. No! He left because an urge stronger than him pulled him there. Some

invisible but tangible force was attracting him like a strong magnet. Jezeljkić saw blood in the eyes of his son.

The first news about him, from the war front, were devastating. He switched sides. He left to serve the enemy, changed his religion, converted to Islam. Doctor Jezeljkić doesn't know how it happened, where and when his Dragoš switched sides, nor why he did it?! He was hoping for some time that those were all lies, propaganda, who knows what?! Up until Dragoš' dagger became so famous that there wasn't any dilemma left.

From a quiet boy, a good pupil, student and even better son, he became a cutthroat and bloodsucker. And such: of his own people. He was slaughtering his own people and for someone else's account. Although, his father knew that different accounts were at stake, that Dragoš picked that side for reasons only known to him, probably out of pure practical impulses. He was killing for the sake of blood, and not for the religion, nation, ideology or territory. In his long psychiatric practice, doctor Jezeljkić had faced various situations. Now, as a father, he is facing the most insane and unsolvable one. Because, what would happen even if he finds his son?! What to do with him?! What to do with the widely famous butcher for whom all the states in the vicinity are looking, nominally even the one he served.

- I didn't get raped – a buxom girl was justifying herself to doctor Jezeljkić, brought from captivity in the time of the last Balkan civil and religion wars.

- They were keeping me in a nice room, fed me well, didn't beat me.

Doctor Jezeljkić knew that a "but" existed.

- The only periodically hung me on a hose and extracted a little blood with a needle. They were telling me I was sick, and that they have to do some examinations so they can find the cure.

Already then was doctor Jezeljkić looking for them. He wasn't some Balkan variant of Van Helsing, but was a depressed and concerned father. He sent the girl to further testing, to examinations where the physical injuries could be established, for which he knew there wouldn't be any, only if the girl, in the meantime, ran into some other, some: people. Everything was messed up in the head, it all seemed strange to the doctor. The girl was saying that they came to her in all sorts of uniforms and titles, incompatible in different circumstances, hence hostile ones – they seemed united and not estranged and they were waging a war among each other.

Following the trail of his son, while looking for him, doctor Jezeljkić started to meet vampires on that path and to come across clues they were leaving behind. The real vampires, about whom we are talking here. He wanted to check some rumors about a village in the mountains, in the middle of nowhere, without electricity or roads, which they called: the Village of the leprosy, or the Cursed village, or the Devil's village, or dozens of other names. It wasn't on the maps for him to check. This is where, in quite primitive conditions but far from

curious eyes, war veterans and villains of every kind and from every side live in. They say that the local authorities are keeping both their eyes closed, and it is difficult to find and catch them in the middle of nowhere, with no roads and where they live in abandoned and newly built communes and mountain settlements. It is further said, that they came from all over the world, that they took of their cockades, chessboards with the letter U¹² on it, and green half-moons – and that they do not mention politics, wars nor their involvement in them.

While going around the ex-republics of the former mutual country, doctor Jezeljkić mostly came across the same problems. Either he was boycotted or they wanted to use him for propaganda purposes. No one wanted to help him sincerely, for the sake of the truth. If there were honest people, then they were uninformed because the honest ones, in their time, weren't interested in such matters. They were minding their own business. Mostly, about where this village is located, or some other clue, they either didn't know, or didn't want to say.

- No one believed me that I was slaughtered for the blood, that they were voraciously licking my open artery and that it was a miracle that I stayed alive – another victim was telling him, a man questioned within some project involving helping the war victims, in which doctor Jezeljkić involved himself only to reach as much information as he could, which would eventually lead him to his son.

Doctor Jezeljkić even thought a lot about turning to his colleague from his college days for help. The President was the authority at that time, the people loved him, colleagues however: some did, some didn't. How he was needed and did something for someone. He quarreled with the General, as it was assumed: about authority, but was powerful besides that. If he wanted to, he could've done anything. He once even tried, right at the end of the President's rule. He got an answer from his secretary: *"I can't help you at all. We are looking for him as well. When we find him: he will be trialed"*. Therefore, they wanted to find him themselves and to pass a verdict. They were speaking about his son, for whom he was begging.

What was he begging for? He doesn't even know. They didn't reach that point. He thought that the President would invite him to talk in person, so that Jezeljkić could explain to him, as a colleague, that the boy isn't healthy because he did what he did and that he shouldn't be trialed but cured. Although, Jezeljkić didn't know that either: what his son had done. Legends were known, but nothing was ever proven. If his son did indeed slaughter Serbs and drank their blood, then he is certainly not sane. That is for Jezeljkić to know as an expert. None of that happened: the President didn't even dignify him with a phone call. He shouldn't have once thought of him as a demagogue (not quite good one, as the villains were saying) and a poor poet. Jezeljkić was also saying that he was a

¹² Stands for Ustasha.

bad expert. His former colleague was, at that time, returning the favor. At a most difficult time for him.

They went to college together, but were two different worlds, although they met each other more often than it was expected, for people who aren't friends. They did have some mutual friends. His soul was aching him and his pride was hurt after the: "*Help me President!*". And the answer he did(not) receive. He should've known. You are never in the clear with the shifty poet souls. As soon as you think that you are on the verge of some comprehension, they act completely unpredictable. That is why neither psychoanalysis, nor psychotherapy, gives wanted results with them, because their entire behavior and creation, is in fact a constant auto-psychoanalysis.

As we have stated before, even during their studies, they were two different universes. The President disheveled, always surrounded by artists, nationally charged and pathetic, and Jezeljić was bent over his book and science, mostly in the inner circle of colleagues, of a poor financial situation, and living a difficult life. The President was tall, epically sublime, Jezeljić was kind of short, pragmatically definite to start earning his piece of bread as soon as possible. And, now we reach the thesis of impossibility to get a read on those artistic souls: all of a sudden the President becomes the authority out of that poetic dishevelment, practically and in fact, he succeeds in the realistic and filthy world of politics, where four eyes have to be wide open, and Jezeljić gets lost in the practical life, he did however, have some success in science, but nothing spectacular, he lived a solid life, built a house, bought a car, but didn't reach further than a specialist doctor in some *Community Health center*.

Their generation belonged to the luckier offspring, at least in the first half of their existence. Born right after the war and revolution, they grew up and were schooled in the golden age of borrowing, when there was no mention that the borrowed had to be returned. They had, built, lived. Going to college was free of charge, student dorms and food as well. As in most big cities, it was nice to live in Sarajevo. There was no sign nor indication of a soon slaughterhouse.

It was odd?! – the recent calamity was soon forgotten, even though they occurred only a couple of decades ago, no one mentioned Gavrilo Princip's shooting, the pogrom of Serbs immediately after it, (although they liked to write about pogroms in the European press those years), no one even mentioned Usthas, *Handschar* or *Devils's divisions*, Chetnik dukes, Partisan commissioners. Everything was forgotten, or: it wasn't allowed to talk about those matters. It should be admitted, some sort of liberty and certainty was felt, under the condition that you don't meddle in politics, or meddle in a wrong manner. Such was the President. He wrote poems, socialized with artists, but his eyes glimmered with life mostly and only when politics and the national question of Serbians were mentioned. When the oblivion, or ban about which it was spoken about here, was mentioned.

They graduated at almost the same moment, at the Medical School of Sarajevo, sometime around 1971. The attempts of employment followed, as it usually happens, they both wanted to go to Belgrade, as most Serbs from Bosnia at that time. It even so happened that they traveled to Belgrade together one time. Jezeljkić was more fortunate and had a better connection, some family officer, but at the end his active membership of the *Socialist Youth Alliance* and *the League of Communists* ruled over. They didn't want the President on Voždovac, he went back to Koševo, and soon after that started his specialization. While Jezeljkić was doing his own in Belgrade, the President had to do his all over the place: in Sarajevo, Zagreb, Belgrade and New York. He became a respectable neuropsychiatrist of Jung's orientation, was concerned for the human souls, wrote poems and even went to jail for an economic crime, for some weekend cottage, or something?!

It is true, they didn't keep in touch, Jezeljkić didn't bother to help him in the difficult trial and captivity days, but it wasn't expected from him. Already at that moment, the President had all sorts of different people around him. They would meet occasionally, in seminars, symposiums, maybe once even at a generation gathering event at their college, or something like that. It was already noticed that wherever the President was, he loved to take the lead. And, besides all of this, Jezeljkić expected more than his (non)response to the cry for help: "*Help me President!*". He expected the human dimension of insight, a human approach, to leave politics and ruling aside for a moment, to feel the need to help a human, an individual, and not just the nation and state. What is a nation or state without an individual?!

And so, while both of them helped patients who were seeking their soul or wanted to release themselves from a sick soul, time was passing by. At first, unnoticeable, and afterwards more and more clear, the upcoming decay of the common state and the bloodshed which the decay would bring, was pointed out. It was noticeable on the public appearances of the President and those alike him on the opposite sides. Jezeljkić saw it in the rising questioning of his son about the acquaintanceship with the President and his rising interest for national issues and the correction of historical mistakes. The whole state, all of its nations were becoming mentally ill and of deranged behavior. Depressions, psychosis and neurosis, weren't only individual diseases anymore, a collective insanity was in the making.

Jezeljkić was hoping that he was on safe grounds with his family, that he removed them from the Bosnian crater on time. Honestly, he didn't even care anymore what was going to happen over there, and was keeping silent about his superficial acquaintanceship with the President and some other people from the political and war top. There were more and more ill people and they came to the hospital less and less. They remained on the streets and it could be felt. And then one day, his son Dragoš knocked on the door of his office. He told him that he would interrupt his studies at the *Faculty of Philosophy*, that it is not the time for

education but the time to fight for his nation and that he is leaving as a volunteer tomorrow to the country of his ancestors: to Bosnia. At that moment, the parenthood hell started for doctor Jezeljkić, who was becoming more aware that he couldn't help anyone else, until he helped himself.

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Are you aware that some of the found corpses didn't have a drop of blood in them. There weren't even signs of leakage around them or at any other spot. It was justified with the moving of the bodies, hiding the trails. I don't think so. The exist, they do! – the Journalist was saying while driving.

- In wars or stressful situations, some mental occurrences come to light more than usual. However, science explained it all, it was mostly schizophrenia and paraphilia of every kind – doctor Jezeljkić joined the Journalist's monologue and Igor K. hears it only in sections, lying on the back seat.

- Well young man, if you jerk off all day long, that is also an illness, a kind of the one I mentioned, paraphilia – the doctor tried to joke with Igor K.

The joke didn't work.

They couldn't listen to the Journalist anymore but they had to in such a small space. He hassled them with his vampire fascination the entire trip, mentioned that he had met them earlier, talked to them, that they wrote letters to him. Igor K. was preoccupied with his pain, so it was hard for him to listen to that or any other story. He was more concerned about how he would survive the next shit he was going to take, because of his injured anus, and wasn't drinking almost any fluid so he could bring the pissing to a minimum, because of his hurt penis tip. That is why he was in the danger of dehydration and his worn out body needed liquid more than ever. He was worried about how he would take off the stitches they sewed him with, so he was waiting for the opportunity to ask doctor Jezeljkić, who was some sort of a doctor after all. He thought, they first had to finish a regular medical school before becoming doctors for the soul. What fucking soul, he needed a doctor for his ass!

They parked the off-road vehicle, a luxury one, which gave away the financial state of the doctor, on the spot where the mountain road was ending, in the area where the beech wood forest was overflowing into an evergreen hill. They continued by foot. They were walking through the forest and up the hill. Igor K. was suffering immensely, he couldn't walk, felt that he was bleeding, was stopping and falling down a lot. The other two were helping him, it was clear that neither of them understood: what he was actually doing with them and what his purpose was?! They couldn't understand at all, neither of them, who in fact, recommended him and brought them together, how did it even come to that? As if some other side, or force, or interest, was directing this entire venture and that this unfortunate young man was a part of that force or whatever. But, in the condition he was, what kind of fact could he represent, what difference can

he make, other than to disturb them? The doctor, while brainstorming and trying to remember who recommended the young man to him, took out a pill from the bag he was carrying and gave it to him. It was obvious that it was a strong painkiller because Igor K. felt a lot better after some time and wasn't in pain as much. The only thing that was obnoxious and unpleasant was the blood wetness which he felt on his entire body.

After a two hour walk, the snowy and bare peaks were visible. Then a smoke appeared in their sight and afterwards the silhouettes of wooden houses scattered around with no apparent order or system, although an order and a system did exist. Under the karst peak, where thunder strikes regularly, about twenty or so houses were scattered around, with high and old, pitched two-sided roofs. The houses were raised above the ground with layers of stones, so that the rain water, which descended from the hill, wouldn't breach the mountain house and so that house snakes, venomous ones at the same time, could find shelter under it. Everything was poisonous around here, even the herbs. Some from the wilderness, and some from the wild people. In the middle of the village, there was a chiseled out beech wood tree in which the water from the spring was pouring, shyly, drop by drop, but quite enough for the inhabitants, human and cattle ones, to always have the mountain treasure: the water. A mountain without water, that is true agony. On the side, under the hill, there was also a well which never dries out. Those two springs are the basic reason why the village is there, under the karst. The main reason these people were living in the abandoned (nolens volens) village is its inaccessibility and impossibility to approach it unnoticed. And it could be approached only by foot or horse. And from above, from the sky.

They were walking with caution and fear but no one was preventing them from approaching the Cursed village. There were no guards, no security. As if they feared no one, who can approach them from the earthly side. Only when they stepped between the first mountain houses, odd shapes started to come out, bearded and messy, and more and more of them appeared, until they surrounded them with their bodies and the three couldn't move anymore. Jezeljić recognized his son in one of the silhouettes. Igor K. thought he saw Jelena behind some wooden door, just for a second. The Journalist was sure that he was seeing vampires around him. Everyone actually managed to "see" their materialized fear at that moment.

In a blink of an eye, they surrounded them. They seemed unsurprised, as if they knew they were coming. Either that or they have invisible scouts or someone tipped them off? They mumbled something amongst each other, until one of them came out of the crowd and referred to Igor K.:

- I hear you converted to Islam as well, praise Allah.

The one that was talking to him didn't look like someone who was a believer, let alone a Mujahideen or anything like that. He was wearing a camouflage jacket and jeans, and was walking around barefoot in opanci¹³.

- I didn't, where did you hear that? – answered Igor K. confusedly.

- Well, they say that you were recently circumcised – he answered and a number of them burst into laughter.

Igor K.'s reputation was rushing ahead of him, in a very fast manner, apparently. He looked angrily at the joker, as much as he had the strength to do, hurt and exhausted, and turned reproachfully towards Jezeljkić and that odd journalist called the Journalist. They seemed by their appearance “that they had no idea what they were talking about”.

- Who knew that you Mujahideens know how to fuck around?! – said Igor K. bitterly.

The laughter stopped immediately, and dangerous silence emerged. As if they didn't expect such words. One of them said:

- Don't fuck around with that, since we're not yet sure what to do with y'all, it would be better not to piss us off!

Dragoš raised his hand and calmed them down. He turned to his father and asked him:

- Why'd you come here?

Jezeljkić turned around, looked at the poor village and the strange appearances that live in it, looked at Dragoš with a sad and tired look, and said to him:

- I don't know. At this point I don't even know why I'm here?!

- Since it is like that, go back immediately. And take the shattered one with you, before we change our minds, the journalist stays here, we have something to talk about with him. The conversation won't last long – and by the time he finished his speech, two of them were already holding the Journalist under his arms and dragging him towards the corner of one of the log cabins. He was trying to free himself, but didn't have the strength to give a stronger resistance because of the fear. The fear completely paralyzed him, he looked like a sheep being taken away, not to be milked, but to be slaughtered. Jezeljkić tried to revolt, “*that he won't go back without the Journalist and that he would report violence to the competent authorities*”, and so on, but when Dragoš shouted, and the others screamed, it was a clear sign that they were involved in something serious and that there was no space for any quarrel.

- Go while you still can, I'm this close to keeping you here as well. You've gotten yourself and these misfortunates involved into something you can't understand, you fools! – Dragoš was shouting.

When Jezeljkić started to head back reluctantly and tottering, after only a step or two, to everyone's surprise, Igor K. collapsed on the ground and

¹³ Serbian peasant shoes.

remained lying on it, unconscious. No one even moved to help him, they were just looking at him surprised and apparently not knowing what to do with him. One of them approached and pushed him with a leg in his loins a few times, to make him conscious again. Igor K. didn't respond. Jezeljkić headed towards him, but was interrupted by something else, some sound which wasn't from this world, and he stood still as if he was buried.

That was the air hissing from the slaughtered neck of the Journalist. It was hissing as if it was coming directly from hell. Even though he didn't see, he felt the unnatural wiggling, he felt the animalistic motion of someone struggling for his life, unaware of what had happened to him and without enough strength to actually resist. He felt the powerlessness and the smell of blood. He felt and heard dog's tongues flapping somewhere, probably drinking the water from the chiseled out tree, although he couldn't recall if he had seen a dog anywhere, for the short time he had spent in that hell village. Not looking around, frightened, so frightened that the fear suppressed the parental instinct, he started heading down the hill, not thinking about the Journalist, nor Igor K., nor his son, having in mind only one thing: to get out of there as soon as possible. He was walking and didn't hear anyone behind him. He heard again however, somewhere halfway to the parked car, the surreal sound of air from the trachea, his own this time and briefly felt the erotic shiver of someone licking him around his carotid artery. "Arteria carotis communis dextra", thought the former student of the Medical School in Sarajevo and gave his soul away.

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Igor K. didn't know for how long he was unconscious and in delirium. Probably for a couple of days. He was lying in Dragoš's log cabin, completely exhausted and without any common sense. The only thing that was connecting him to the awake world was the nightmare air hissing and the screaming of someone being slaughtered. He couldn't recall later if he was conscious while they were slaughtering the Journalist or if he unconsciously heard and experienced that?! Was he hallucinating, and experiencing something in that state or was he still on his feet when the Journalist was wiggling around?!

In such a delirious state, he hadn't heard or felt anything for days, not even the pain. He woke up on a sunny morning, he was woken up by the sounds of sheep and donkeys, got up from the wooden bed and stepped totteringly towards the doorstep of the open door, towards the light. Dragoš was sitting on a thump in front of the house and was sewing some sort of skin with a strong thread.

- It'll be useful – he said when he saw him on the door and kept pinning with the thick needle.

Igor K. stepped outside, stopped, and cautiously sat on the high doorstep of the entrance door. They were sitting and keeping silent the whole time before

noon. Someone would occasionally peek from the other cabins and look at them. Before he stood up, Dragoš said to himself:

- It won't be any good.

He headed towards the cabin, and put his hand on Igor K.'s shoulder when passing by him and said to him:

- They'll catch you somewhere by yourself, I'm not going to be near you at all times.

The life in the Cursed village didn't function by some established organization. Everyone lived for themselves, they didn't even socialize. As if they had some relationship which was implied, so it wasn't necessary to prove anything. If a problem did occur, they would meet in the center of the village, by the water, and would try to solve it with an agreement. If that didn't work, then the law of the strongest came to force and the one who would survive would be the right one. For your rights and your position at the community, you had to fight for yourself. However, a few of them, including Dragoš, stood out with their authority and their word was a little bit more important than the majority one's. Each of the singled out had their own followers and enemies, but they lived peacefully and without a problem, even beside that. Mostly.

What was the most obvious is that, in the lives of those people, in that village, there wasn't any religion, any faith in the form that was familiar in those areas. If they did believe in something, they showed it in a special way and each for himself. They didn't pray to God, they weren't determined by nation, rarely even by old names and surnames. There were women in the Cursed village, less than men, but still were. There weren't any children or Igor K. hadn't seen them during his stay there. But it was obvious that some men lived with the women in some sort of a unity and that they shared a bed with them.

There were, as Igor K. would find out later, similar villages in the near and further surroundings, in which other "war dogs" lived, mostly religious fanatics, who created communities which were succumbing to the strict religious laws, by force. It wasn't the case with the Forbidden village. Those who had heard something about it were calling it differently, which is why it is stated in that manner here. No one, who didn't belong there, stepped inside the village and came back alive into the normal world without being one of the cursed ones. Except for Igor K.. He was saved because that is what Dragoš wanted and decided. And when Dragoš wants something in the Damned village, the chances are small that it won't happen. However, even though they are small: there is a chance! Dragoš knew that from the moment he chased off the vultures who were hovering over the unconscious Igor K., when he forced them to return their daggers into sheaths and to disperse, and when he took the misfortunate to his cabin with the help of Osman and Iva, put him in his bed and stayed awake over him for days, not because of the illness, since he wasn't curing him in any way, but because he didn't want to leave him alone. He knew, the danger for his life would constantly be over his head. Even without Jelena who was occasionally

wandering through the village, Igor K. was on the target of many others. And there wasn't anything odd about it, such was the unwritten custom. Dragoš is the one who wasn't following it.

Occasionally someone would leave the Leprosy village and would come back after a while with donkeys and horses loaded with groceries. They would be accessible to everyone, anyone could take what they wanted but they all lived in a humble manner. They didn't drink, smoke (besides Osman who couldn't live without his tobacco). They mostly did nothing, except deal with the cattle. They would sit in front of their cabins in their rags and kept their torment silent. Igor K. would later find out that some of them, especially Dragoš's ones, had money, and the possibility of living good lives, that there was a great and wealthy organization, scattered all around the world, behind them. However, no more than fifty of them chose such a life: ascetic, in misery and poor living conditions, with goats and cows – but completely liberated!

- Don't be fooled by their current appearance and calmness, their slowed down behavior and illusory disinterest – Dragoš told him – They are all beasts. Dangerous and capable beasts. They escaped here from the humans so more humans are left for some other generations of blood-drinkers. God forbid that a war starts again.

And really, it happened in a few occasions that, in the morning, silently and without a voice, they were saying goodbye to someone who was headed on a long trip. The one they would say goodbye to wouldn't be wearing rags anymore, but would be shaved and clean, in a modern outfit, and would be leaving somewhere, to the other side of the world, where a war was being waged, where the neighbors started killing each other. Igor K. doesn't know if any of them returned afterwards. Also, Dragoš told him that they had to remove a few who turned on them, and who couldn't be controlled by anyone. Igor K. didn't want to know what the removal looked like.

They hadn't killed him immediately out of explainable reasons, like they did the Journalist, and doctor Jezeljkić as it would turn out later, and since they hadn't killed him immediately, a chance was provided to him, which made sense. They didn't kill him later because, out of inexplicable reasons, Dragoš took him under his protection, took pity on him, even started to favor him in some sense. Dragoš found something inside of him, recognized something which was necessary to open up in time, to confess to him, to tell him his secrets and finally get him out and save him from certain death.

When they bonded a little bit and the Igor K.'s fear relented somewhat, he asked him:

- Why don't you get in touch with your father, make it easy for him, at least that he becomes aware that you didn't renounce him and that it wasn't his fault?

Dragoš was looking at him in a grim manner, was silent for about ten minutes, after which he spoke, to himself mostly:

- It appears he isn't alive anymore. I think that they didn't let him go home. They followed him, while keeping it hidden from me, someone went after him that day. You are witnesses, you watched how they killed a man. How we killed a man. I am certain that someone had followed him and passed a verdict somewhere along the way. I couldn't do anything about it. Which is a logical thinking from our perspective, nothing could be resented from him except the fact that he was my father. We were soon tipped off that the jeep was still in the spot where you had left it. Those are the rules, I did similar things as well. But, I have a confession to make to you: I didn't feel sorry for him at all. They killed him: so what? They will kill you too, if the opportunity is presented. Now I don't know what to do with you. I can't keep you safe forever like this. I will have to either kill you myself and put you out of your misery, or get you out of here somehow. It's just that, this wouldn't guarantee you to be left alive neither, they will follow you, the ones from here that don't like me as much or the ones that follow Jelena out there, who are even worse.

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Dragoš?! He hated never and no one, in his previous life span. He thought in fact, that he had loved. His people. He loved blood, indeed. He despised, pitied, feared, resented, laughed at, wanted evil – but he didn't hate anyone. And all of the above stated – mostly inside of himself, never from himself, to specifically, inflict harm on anyone. Hatred is something inner, as love, in order for it to be sincere, it cannot be forced upon. It cannot be taught, you cannot make yourself hate someone. Simply, you feel it inside and don't have the possibility (most often) to control it in any direction. Hence the weight and danger of hatred. It is pristine, permanent. It is the same as when you love.

He felt that he loves someone else more than himself, his brother by faith and nation. He didn't feel hatred, thank God. He would've known if he did, it would've been visible on him. He was delusional. Hatred is not a feeling, hatred is most commonly: an act! When you hate concepts, general places, states of the spirit, vocations, philosophies, psychologies, the mental and spiritual set of someone – that is not dangerous and it is not real hatred until you start to eradicate what you hate. Hatred is: an act! And when we use the word *hatred* in the previous context, it doesn't have the meaning as the original one. In other words, you hate in an imaginary manner and kill in a specific one.

Dragoš told him:

- She, the one you thought you saw, was and wasn't here, accept which ever fact you want and whichever is easier for you. As everything else around here. But never stop fearing her and getting out of her way, wherever you think you may encounter her. If she inflicted evil on you once, she will do it again. She was both there and everywhere. I had encountered her and those like her on every battlefield I've been to. There wasn't a more ideal place for the exercising

of her impure deeds. The Commandant fulfilled her every wish. She could've presented an unlimited number of human sacrifices to her Satan each day or torture them as she pleased. Yes, she was here, you did see her. She indirectly directed you here, probably. She tipped off my silly father of my whereabouts. Think about who, and why, suggested you this job and trip?! But don't think that she spared your life, because of a glimpse of humanity that is left in here. Who knows what kind of games she is playing, since she lured you here. If she felt pity then it wasn't for you as a human, but for you as a hound. Just like the Journalist was for me, you are a hound to her. And I am as well. All humans are. And God, any one and any ones. She has a lot of followers here, that is why you have to escape. She will be aroused by your pain someday again and everything you had experienced so far will be a child's game in contrast to what would await you. Considering she inflicted evil on you, and she is also one of those who had inflicted evil on me, we have a mutual enemy. That is something that in these turbid times, is of great importance even. This is an area where not a lot is mutual, besides the enemy. I have unresolved issues with her, and to be honest, she has some with me. She was close to the Commandant, and what happened to him, aches her to this day. So, a mutual enemy: that is where you got lucky.

In front of the mountain cabin which Dragoš doesn't ever leave even for a second, or when he does have to go somewhere he takes Igor K. with him, they've talked a lot those days. Dragoš was confessing more than them actually having a conversation.

- Don't worry, we've killed a lot for the Serbians as well, if that is important to you. We've killed everyone and for everyone. Although, they somehow counted less of the killed Serbians, that is true.

- Why? Why did you kill at all?! You cannot do good for anyone with killing. You know that.

- Blood is the strongest drug and an almost incurable addiction, that is what you don't know. If we didn't do the killing, someone else would, which is roughly the same. When the time of blood and killing comes, there are victims and executioners as much as you want. Always! But I've found out about that later. I left for completely different reasons.

He was growing up with the myth about Serbian-hood, about the story of his father's colleague from college, who was red-handedly conducting the revival of that myth, by which it stated that it was time that the Serbians finally liberate themselves from the yoke imposed on them by the communists and to live in one state. His father wasn't like that. Precisely because of that, as if he wanted to stand up to him, to tear down his authority, he headed down that path. That is where the decision, to study *History* at the *Faculty of Philosophy*, the trips and tours to the churches and monasteries, from the Mount Athos, across Kosovo and Metohija, up to the demolished churches across Croatia and Bosnia, came from. That is why he socialized with those alike him. That is why he was reading so many books. When the war in Bosnia started, his father, doctor

Ježeljkić, had a feeling what could happen. His hunches came true: he left and never contacted him again.

As soon as he reached the war front, which was a thick background, and saw with whom he was supposed to defend Serbian-hood, how he was supposed to defend it and what is already being done over there, his ideals were torn down like a house of cards. No one cared about national themes, it was a gang of villains and robbers who rarely felt a battle. He had come to the wrong place. And this is what turned his fate around. If he had gone to a real unit, which existed in a large number, if he had met with true fighters and volunteers, his ideals would've made sense, he would've been a great fighter and would've probably died with honor somewhere, because he wasn't afraid of the bullet. But here, he was stuck with some bandits, and in some way, became one as well. Dragoš left as a volunteer, raised with Serbian-hood and his Dinaric roots, but after an episode with the commandant and the prisoners, and because of unresolved circumstances, it was said that he converted to Islam.

- I never converted, those are tales for little children and propaganda of those such as the Journalist – he told Igor K.

The commandant of the paramilitary formation was deciding what to do with two captivated hostile soldiers. He made a verdict: in order for the rookie to prove himself to the unit, and to get some blood on his hands, he was to kill the prisoner. One of them. The other one should be freed. Which one he would kill and which one he should free, he was to decide for himself. That is how he would feel the power and appreciate the “divine” prerogatives of the unit to which he had come. He was supposed to take the tied up prisoners into a forest a couple of miles away, to make them bury out their graves, and let one of them go and kill the other. It was his will: he was to decide on his own. Dragoš wasn't a rookie at that time, at that is what he had told the commandant.

- You are a rookie, you are! You think I'm a fool! You hadn't killed a single civilian so far. You hadn't raped anyone. What did you think, that we would keep you like this, that we are the villains and that you are the only good one. And when everything is on the clear, and the Serbian territory remains intact, we are the executioners and you are the righteous one. That's not going to happen!

He announced the decision to the terrified prisoners – as well. They should find a way how to get the executioner not to choose them, and save their head by doing so. A completely sick situation. He didn't know to which army the prisoners belonged, nor where they were captivated. Until he saw them. He didn't feel anything towards them. He didn't hate them, nor pity them. According to him, the story didn't have a national or religious motive – neither is it known who is on which side in it. The story carries a human nature and could've happened to anyone. It could've happened in a gang quarrel in New York, as well as, in the Balkans. Somewhere on the war front, in the background however, this one did happen. The side could've been any ones. The biggest

truth of this story is that all of the sides in that war were the same and that each one of them, individually, could've been a victim or an executioner.

- I decide on all matters here! About life and death! And that is everything! I am God! – the commandant was shouting, while sitting on the school bench, in some school where he had set up a headquarter for him. The guests were drunk as well. Drunk from the brandy and the national enthusiasm. The commander was drinking a lot. He was burning up from the desire of fascinating the fuckable secretary of the repellent minister who was there because of some oil, or cigarettes, and didn't care about other people's lives or deaths.

The smoke, from the expensive and thrown cigarettes across the wet and filthy table, was flowing through the eyes and brains of the present like a mist. A true mist was hovering in the heads. And there was a war outside. One of the filthiest ones, for sure. And, one of the most pointless ones. Maybe someone would notice how all wars are pointless, but that is not the truth. There are wars with a purpose. They must've been necessary, since they were started. Something that is bad for a long time is either corrected or spoiled – so a new war could correct it tomorrow. The war wasn't the biggest issue here. The mist in the human skulls which caused insanity with some: that was the problem. People went insane: so a war broke out. Or, a war broke out: and the people went insane. Completely not important for the final outcome.

- I am God and you are my archangel. I am giving you a divine power to decide about life or death with these two men – he is saying to the grim and leaning Dragoš.

The secretary clapped enthusiastically while raising her butt from the chair on which she was sitting. This pleased the commandant, he achieved the wanted effect.

- They should be tightly tied up, with a steel wire to their bones, and he should take them when dawn breaks...

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Dragoš was stepping on the soft forest ground with his gun. They are going through the cold beech wood forest. Two young men are tottering in front of him, two of his peers, with their hands tied with a wire on their backs. With rags and soiled, it appears they have already stopped being human, that they were just shadows which were to be wiped out with a gun burst. There is nothing dignifying on them, everything is giving away bare fear and the paralysis from it. They don't have the strength to do anything, not even to realize completely what had happened to them. Like in a delirious state, in a dream, they are walking as if someone else is walking instead of them. They think that this is happening to someone else, that they are dreaming. The scenery is painfully simple, gruesome and humanly filthy. Everyone is silent. They don't

know what to say to each other. It is difficult in their chest: in everyone's. It is certainly more difficult to the ones that are about to be murdered. After a while, the silence stopped, talking emerged, started to be heard, a monologue with the ambition to become a dialogue.

- Let me go, man, I have nothing to do with this war and death. I've always been well and lived well with the Serbians – said the Bosniak.¹⁴

Dragoš is silent. He is holding his gun ready even though they cannot do anything to him, so gruesomely tied up.

- I was mobilized by force, man. They picked me up at the refugee camp. For a while in the beginning I didn't even get out of the house. The Serbian neighbors were digging trenches, I was helping them, brought them water. They kept a watch next to my house, my mother made them coffee every night and I sat with them.

- So why did you leave your home? – said Dragoš, while stepping on the leaves in the beech wood forest, walking down the stream slowly, as were the other two walking and stepping, only a bit clumsy, because of their hands tied to their backs.

- They came one day man, the neighbors, the good Serbian neighbors and said: run for your lives, they are after your sheep and cattle, they'll kill you all and we cannot protect you since it is the Chetnik army from Serbia, and they listen to nobody. Run, so we don't have to carry your blood on our souls. The head is important, you'll find more sheep, as you always have.

- And what happened to the cattle?

The Bosniak was silent. He was young but he had learned something during this war. He can't say it. Dragoš knows who took the cattle. Them, exactly them, who were pretending to care about their neighbors and warned them. What do Chetniks from Serbia need sheep for. They were looking for something else.

- Don't kill me man – he was repeating, more for himself, and would occasionally add – Don't kill him either.

The Croat was silent.

- I have to kill someone – said Dragoš silently.

They were walking and keeping silent, only the rustling of wet leaves under the foot was heard, someone would fall from time to time, and between that only: "don't kill me". Dragoš was already thinking how far he should take them. They've gotten pretty far already, a lot more than he planned. Why should he go to the middle of nowhere, when everyone at the camp already knew where he was headed. But he kept on going because he wasn't sure what he was going to do?! To banish his thoughts, he said:

- And you Ustasha, you are quiet?! Were you as silent while slaughtering Serbian children?

¹⁴ He was talking in the dialect of the Bosnian Muslims.

- I was never an Ustasha, but for you I'll be one. If I have to die, at least I'll die a man, right.¹⁵

- So you're pretending not to be afraid?

- For the devil's sake, of course I'm afraid, but I know, what's the purpose. You'll kill us both, you're just messing with us.

- You've got balls, I might let you go.

- I have balls as well man, trust me, I do – said the Bosniak.

- The fuck you will let me go. You wouldn't be where you are right now, if you were ready to be a human.

- Where exactly am I?

- With villains, that is where. You came here to slaughter and not to forgive.

- Let it go man, don't piss him off, it's not his fault – the Bosniak was trying to cool the situation down.

- And you, what the fuck are you doing here, from Dalmatia or wherever?! As if you are on your own grounds. I am, my father was born here.

- That is something else, I came here to defend and you are attacking, there I said it.

- Defend who, the Serbs.

- Croats and everyone else.

- I've seen how you defend yourself, a lot of them were defended with a cut throat, I saw.

- I didn't, well, what do you even know about that?!

- Well, you're wrong Ustasha, I know everything – said Dragoš.

- We'll see Cheto¹⁶, we'll eventually see who knows what.

Finally it was clear to Dragoš: he neither knows where they were going, nor what would happen next. He won't kill them – he knew that. But not for the sake of the poor fellows, but because of that pig in the headquarters. He thought worse of him than of these young men here. He is not going to decide about what he's going to do and who he is going to kill. After Damira, certainly not. But, what will happen afterwards?! He didn't know that. If he doesn't kill – he will get killed. He therefore cannot return there. He could lie that he killed them, he was already far away, no one would have the will to come over here and check?! They'll check, they most certainly will. That loafer doesn't care, he'll send someone. Or maybe he is already pretty drunk and would forget. He doesn't forget when blood is at stake.

Although, it would be the easiest to kill both of them right there, and to go back. Only one of them, certainly not, the villain wanted to frame him, to let one of them go. To kill one of them and let the other one live so he can testify about murder tomorrow. That deadbeat has been hating him from day one, since he arrived there. He was hating him for a banal reason. The hillbilly was hating him

¹⁵ He was speaking in a Dalmatian dialect.

¹⁶ A nickname for Chetnik.

because Dragoš was from Belgrade. Dragoš wasn't that much of an idiot. Yes, kill both of them. They won't be his first or last ones, although they would be the first ones tied up like this and powerless, there was some truth in that. Until now he had only killed in actions to which he went by himself, because he didn't exactly have the support of his unit in those matters. The Croat was right, Dragoš was thinking: "*If I wanted to be good I wouldn't be subordinate to that villain over there*".

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And what has preceded that "walk", he doesn't like to think about that. However, he told Igor K. everything. Dragoš had to see the Commandant. He had a dilemma and wanted to get to the bottom of it. Although, he doubted that he could get anything done normally with that mad man. He found him in his reeky room. He found him, as usual, hung over and sour from last night's alcohol.

- Did I ever refuse to go to the most dangerous places, the one's where no one wanted to go to?

- Say what you want?

- I want to take a female prisoner.

- Why are you asking me that, take as much as you want, they are not people, they are cattle. Fuck, slaughter, who's saying no to that?!

- I want to take her altogether, take her wherever I want to.

- Let her go?

- That is my business.

- You cannot let her go. Do what you please here, no one can leave this place. Even if I gave her to you, do you really think she would forget where her parents and brothers were left behind and what had happened to them. Now get out of here, I feel like vomiting, and feel sick, fucking booze.

She reminded him with her looks of his first love from school days, of the beautiful bourgeois from Dedinje, tall and graceful, with an angel-like face. That imprisoned girl was filthy, neglected and raped, but was prettier than the one from Dedinje, it appeared to him. She reminded him incredibly of her, with her looks. He wanted to save her, take her, get her out of that hell and take her to her father in Belgrade, to marry her even though almost the whole platoon lined up on her, it didn't matter, as long as she agrees.

He would often go to the former village *Collective center* where all those imprisoned civilians were being murdered and tortured, however anyone wanted to. He didn't come there because of that. He still hadn't turned to the blood, he wanted to kill armed villains, in combat, "one on one". He was the only one to go to action from the platoon. He would leave in the afternoon, enter the territory controlled by the enemy at night and would return all tired and bloody

in the morning. There is a difference between sick sadists and honest killers, between humans and vampires, he thought to himself.

As soon as he asked the Commandant for a shred of humanity: he regretted it. He knew that the beast wouldn't remain calm and that it wouldn't end at that moment. All he had to do was recover from the hangover, and he would start all over. The whole camp remained calm only when the Commandant was hung over. Those unfortunate people imprisoned at the *Collective* would catch a moment of peace in the dawn and early morning. As soon as he would start to drink, the orgies and killing would start as well. They most often did it randomly, who they get first, and would bring them to the school, or the Commandant would, well drunk, head with someone else to the *Center*, and would kill whoever and however he wants. His bloody conscience didn't let anyone get out pure or alive from that hell. There was no going back for him and nowhere forward to go to anymore. Everything was bloodier forward.

The local and state authorities kept their eyes closed. Everyone was keeping their eyes closed. Even the President and General. If someone would try to warn them about what was going on at the camp, they would simply act like nothing happened and pretended to put someone to investigate it. Nothing was ever seen all the way through. They had more pressing matters, to keep the war front alive, to supply the army, to organize the authority. Some to get rich. To be completely honest, the President and General weren't the last mentioned.

He didn't wait long. A few days after the conversation, he returned from some night scouting mission and lied down to rest a little. However, he was summoned to report to the Commandant in the evening, a dinner will be organized. He knew that wouldn't end well. When those dinners were being organized, there were mostly guests from the outside and the Commandant would make an effort to fascinate them, so he came up with various sadistic séances. The colorful company gathered that evening. When Dragoš entered the reeky and smoked up classroom of the former school, they were already drunk.

- You have to prove that you are with us! It is not enough to be brave and to kill the enemy, you have to pop your cherry in the blood of others as well, the innocent ones. The blood of the innocent is the most important in this war! The more it is shed, the less problems there will be after the war – the Commandant told him instead of a greeting.

Dragoš would like the most, to slit his throat, since he is already mentioning blood. But he couldn't. They were keeping him at a distance. And then they brought her into the room. Washed up, with changed clothes and make up. They made her wear shoes with a high heel, she was barely standing on them. She was tottering and barely standing up. She was trying to look calm and sexy. That was her way of fighting for the rest of the family that is locked up at the *Center*, Dragoš knew. He knew she was being blackmailed. He knew that this was his verdict, that he set this up. He was holding the handle of his knife

but he knew that he wouldn't reach the front table without being shot by the Commandant's bodyguards. And he didn't want to shoot. It was to humane and that would've been a reward for that villain.

- Now you are going to fuck her – shouted the Commandant to a few men. Then he turned to Dragoš:

- You will not. You are in love and those who are in love do not fuck well. And she needs a good fuck. You are going to watch and afterwards you are going to get a mission, which you will execute when the dawn breaks. I am God to all of you, to you, to her and to those in the *Collective*, to the President, to the General. God!

She didn't scream. She didn't cry. As if she was kind of laughing oddly and heavily. Dragoš wasn't a weak man neither. He heavy-heartedly looked at the animals who were raping her involuntarily, without a pleasure, and Dragoš didn't show a shred of emotion. Not even when she looked him straight into his eyes, with her head thrown back, while lying on the school bench. They were raping her out of fear from the mad man, in front of the audience, some were even recording, like that Jelena for example, who was occasionally circling around the Commandant, while coming there with various characters. It was at that moment, in the classroom of the village school, where the Commandant kept his headquarters and organized drinking sprees, that Dragoš had decided that he will no longer stay with them, as he knew that the Commandant was a dead man. All that was left was to shed blood from him. That blood is not for drinking, it is impure and filthy.

He doesn't know exactly what had happened to Damira and her family but he knew the final outcome. They didn't leave any witnesses behind even though she fought with all the strength of her honor and dignity, for the lives of her family members and other villagers. She fought with a smile instead of kicking, crying and screaming. At least it wasn't as sweet for the sick fucks. Dragoš knew that it didn't suit them if the victim wasn't showing that she is suffering. They probably slaughtered all of them the very next day and her, probably immediately, somewhere outside, so that she doesn't see her parents and brothers at all. To not let her tell them how they've promised her that they would, if she behaved good and listened, let them live and go.

The even sicker part is yet to follow:

- I am God and I will show you that I can make a smaller god out of you. To give you authority that no one can ever give you. To decide on your own like the Lord Creator himself!

Dragoš knew that these weren't his words. He was too dumb and primitive for a speech like this. Someone taught him that, the Satan's servant taught him that, the one that was recording all of this. It would turn out later, that the footage was used for litigations of people who weren't even present. However, it was up to those people to prevent such occurrences.

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- Our native land was Atlantis, so we came across Tibet, where we took shelter from the flood, to Europe, and from there we went to the New World by ships. There, if it is easier for you like that, my fellow countryman. Where we really come from doesn't even matter, and neither do our parents. You had seen what our parents mean to us, after all. It doesn't matter what religion we are, we are mostly unbelievers according to the classical manner of believing. We don't have an ideology: only blood. We do not want world peace, we want the world just the way it is. Of course, I made the whole Atlantis and Tibet thing up, but it sounds attractive in the spirit of literary and movie rubbish and there is something to be said when something needs to be said... I was a great student and then I came among illiterate primitives to reach my ideals of nation and religion with them.... She had chosen you to be her incubus and it is not likely that she would leave her male for peace and joy of others. She is jealous, all of them are, those Satan's..... All the gods are fake only the Blood is scared! Just like when a human is cured with a leach, we also have a healing effect on the people. We let the blood drip so they are peaceful for a while. I haven't even killed certain people, since their blood still lives inside of me. It is no wonder that these areas are known as the cradle of vampirism: where were more wars waged than here?! The war and evil almost never ceased here. No, we are not vampires, we are tax collectors, let's put it like that. Wars weren't waged because of territory and religion around here, but because people were thirsty for each other's blood, most often their neighbor's. Religion and nation only served as the jersey colors, to ease their conscience and first blood, to know who's jumping on who.... However, I have to confess to you that I've gotten myself into a quite controversial situation: lest I kill the Bosniak or Croat I later had to kill Serbs. I haven't proven myself enough as a human with non-killing but I had to do it later with killing. In this region you have to prove your belonging with a crime, a blood shed. Therefore, it is better for me to be a vampire than a Bosniak, Serb or Croat. I will kill for myself and not for others – I made up my mind. When the killing already had to be done, and it did....

Dragoš is telling Igor K.:

- I am not sure you understand, fellow countryman. The Journalist wasn't killed because he wrote about vampires but because he wrote about war crimes and criminals. He didn't seek bloodsuckers but those who threw blood around. We gathered it but some were throwing it away. And then it was heard that he'd gotten his hands on some tapes and through whom, you might assume. There are some more connections and shortcuts through which you've gotten yourself here and they all have one denominator: Jelena! She brought the three of you together, she revealed the position of the village. Before all, to make my life miserable.... There are some who sought blood but weren't vampires. To be honest with you, the rest of us remind more of the mafia, than of monsters. Our

community may be a vampire one but we are not vampires. Or: me might be vampires but our community is not a vampire one. We are stockholders of one of the most successful enterprises since the world exists: the enterprise for shedding blood. We are organized and practical and as such we have competition in various businesses.... They've been saying a lot of things. That I've converted to Islam and similar things. Well I had to go somewhere if I've already decided not to go back to the camp. But I didn't convert into any other religion, I didn't get baptized or whatever it is called, it was more for the public, to leave me alone, but I've killed everyone later, not only Serbs. Everyone! Wherever blood was to be shed: I was there. Well you're into Islam more than myself, judging by your below section....

If I'd gotten just a dollar, every time that was mentioned, I would've been a wealthy man – wrote Igor K. later:

Dragoš is saying to Igor K.:

- We are not servants of evil but we use unlimited freedom. Nothing is forbidden to us. Who is the free one then: you or us? You who obey various bans and laws each day or us to whom the taking of a human's life isn't even forbidden. That freedom was given to us, we took it ourselves and we are taking it. You don't have to believe in Satan to be like us, because we don't even believe in him, at least not all of us. Jelena is something else, she is a limpet, a complete nutcase. She was the secretary who was clapping while I was taking over the two tied up men. She is, from that moment, my archenemy.... There are some Mujahideens in some of the villages. After all, they don't even hide in the cities. But no, we are not like that here, although there are all kinds in the village and even some of them are. We are here, because we've chosen freedom, because we are peaceful here and people will, in the rest of the world, be peaceful as well. For a while. And then one day, the war times will occur again and us, and those like us, will again ride on the horse's back of lawlessness and blood. There will be blood and where there is blood, we are there. And the people will also take their share of the cake, as always. Regular and peaceful people. A neighbor had slaughtered his neighbor even then, my countryman. His, until yesterday, colleague from work. Sometimes even a kin. Regular people had been killing for nothing. At least we've killed for blood and pleasure. We've lived up to our reputation. But what about the peaceful and tame ones, the ones from whom something like that wasn't expected?! Maybe we are *war dogs*, only it is a smaller sin if we are truly animals. What about the *war people*, the ones who are calling us animals?! With those who have killed as humans and called themselves a human after those killings?!

Dragoš is saying to Igor K.:

- You don't have to believe in something, my countryman. And yet, you can. Whatever suits you. See, that is freedom. However, about human fates, and, about: war! They have to go together even though something like that isn't what we'd want. It was a filthy war. Filthier than many others. It was often unknown

who was fighting who, where the lines of the war front are, who the soldiers and who the civilians are?! That war was one of the most pointless ones certainly – globally speaking, but one of the inevitable ones in local connotations. The neighbors wanted to finally, after many years of lies and unpaid bills, calculate with each other those bills, thinking wrongly about their claims. They wanted to seal up their future and destinies with a bloody seal. In such times, reason had lost its first battles in the war, even the whole war, and was left (to it: the reason) for it to later collect its losses and try to lessen the damage that was done. Where reason loses – madness prevails. Madness could've been physically felt even though it was invisible in the space. It was invading our souls from all over the place: we were clothed in madness, washed in madness, baptized in madness, joint with madness, taught, raised, birthed, fed, buried... No one reasonable could've stood up to that flood because he would've been defeated already in his surroundings, by his close and loved ones. No one alive, not even us vampires. However, we are surrounded by people so their madness is transferred on us.

Dragoš is saying to Igor K.:

- If people hadn't been forced to love each other, they probably wouldn't have hated each other later on. Although, the hatred was deposited for decades, maybe even centuries: without hatred, what happened certainly wouldn't have happened. The hatred was destined and eventually adjudicated. Crime is a chain phenomenon. In war – of course. Everything looks innocent and surreal until the first crime happens. The first is always the hardest one and everyone is astonished, confused and frightened. After that only a sequel follows, as an endless sequence of dominos bringing each other down. Crime is a chain phenomenon in wars for multiple reasons. People look at each other and think they should do the same. Some are blinded by hatred and only wait for an occasion, others consider that it is an act of patriotism. There are situations when the others are forcing you into a crime because they want to direct you to a path without return. As some sort of an initiation, but truly, pure blackmail. We can't kill and plunder and let him remain honest and testify against us tomorrow – they are thinking. It is hard to remain with your hands clean in the war, my countryman, if you find yourself surrounded by villains and lawlessness: you will either walk the path of others or become a victim yourself.

Dragoš is saying to Igor K.:

- Everything looks different in the books my countryman: patriotism, heroism, honor, nation, honesty, even vampires. Everything is elevated and holy in the books. Everyone is an honorable hero, those from your nation, those who protect others from themselves and themselves from others. The enemy is the one, in those books, the bastard that is striking the weak ones, cowards and villains... No man in this world, former or future, born or unborn, can have the right to decide about the life of another human being. It appears sometimes that the right is claimed but it is fake and unnatural. I will not speak of God at this moment – the story will go in another direction. No man has an excuse to kill

another man even when the reasons are more than justified, when other lives are saved by killing or justice is established – it is sinful and wrong to kill another man in such situations as well. I knew that, then and now, and yet I've killed again, simply: because I am not human.... Everything looks different and sublime in the books, a vampire always has a clean and ironed black cape there, and is always pale clean, a gentleman with manners. In the real world, you get dirty and cover yourself in mud while killing a victim and you never wash the blood from your clothes, and the bloodsuckers are mostly primitives and animals. In the books, the victim calmly languishes while the fangs are penetrating into its neck, in real life the victim kicks and twitches her legs, screams and cries for help, gargles and hisses like the Journalist did the other day.

Dragoš is saying to Igor K.:

- And all of a sudden, you find yourself in a time and place where people kill each other every day, and to be honest, some are always killing more and the others are being killed more – it depends from which perspective you are looking. Everyone has someone to love and someone who loves them back, my countryman. Everyone deserves not to be humiliated. To humiliate another human being is the bottom of the civilizational degree of humanity – but what consolation is that for the victim? However, it is less of a sin to kill, then to humiliate him. That is how I think. The victim's probably: don't! The real war had begun with the animals fighting for a better piece of meat and a healthier female. The hunt is the fight for a piece of meat and a female without the prefix "better" and "prettier". A man is an animal, and so the history of his warfare had begun exactly like that. War isn't the same as hunting. Hunting is survival, both for the hunter and the hunted. War isn't survival even when you're attacked because an attack with war is unnatural and so is the state of the attacked as well. An individual wages wars in their micro world, and in the same way, nations wage wars, only with different means, in different manners and mass. It is always the fight for a bigger piece of meat and a prettier female and not for a piece of meat for the sake of survival and a female for mating, for the sake of extending the species. The state of war is: the state of madness. But the madness is caused by the same causes. The goal in the sub-consciousness is always the same and everything else are details and variants.

Dragoš is saying to Igor K.:

- The protection of cubs and packs can be a defensive war but it's not. Animals attack each other for completely different reasons, because of instinct and nature, opposite to people with whom the reasons for attacking are almost always insatiability and greed. With me something third as well: blood, my countryman! Now, you can say that human nature is such that they have to wage wars?! That claim is not quite correct because a human kills in order to plunder (or defend from the one who plunders, so he does have something that he has

earned, since he has it to defend it) and to gain the right to the best piece of meat and a lusty female with what he had plundered.

Dragoš is saying to Igor K.:

- Multi-ethnicity is bad and it doesn't work anywhere, countryman, except in the *New World* where the land is nobody's, where everyone is an immigrant. Multi-ethnicity in the *New World* succeeded only when it was killed off, when the natives were destroyed, the ones whose land it was. Multi-ethnicity in the *New World* succeeded when the slaves started to bring benefit to some, and the competition couldn't stand the free work force and led a civil war against the competition (and not the slavery). In the *Old World*, the motherland of the nation and vampires, multi-ethnicity didn't bring any good anywhere or the riches of difference, but only hatred and blood. The fact that somewhere in the western world it appears that people and different nations get along is the consequence of the dictatorship of economy and rigorous laws. They've been killing them with labor and constantly threatening to banish them, so they kept silent and worked. And built houses in their motherlands so they could burn and demolish them later. Because, you are either multi-ethnic or not? You cannot be tolerant in Germany or America, and intolerant in Croatia, Serbia or Bosnia.

Dragoš is saying to Igor K.:

- Three nations lived in the birth land of my father, who didn't want to live together but they had to. That is how I grew up, in an environment where hatred gushed and sparkled. It wasn't allowed for it to be manifested but it was always the cause of our misfortune.... Every war is the same, my countryman. Only the shades differ when the differences and specificities are at stake. There are, however, some differences between wars because of geographic, strategic and similar reasons. Are you attacking or defending yourself?! Mostly, when the war is brought to the individual, from man to man: then everyone is the same. At that point, all the worst and best comes out of humans. And only a shred of fate is enough and important to be decided which side a human will go: to evil, or good?! Also, vampires are always the same and unchangeable and unlike humans they don't hide their nature, when the time comes, they don't seek justification for the blood they shed.

Dragoš is saying to Igor K.:

- Every war is the same because there is much more evil than good. Every war is necessary and the same: if it weren't necessary it wouldn't have happened. It is the same with the killing, and plundering during the war. Depends on the context. If you win, then you've killed the evil archenemy heroically. If you lose, my countryman, then you've killed out of crime. When neighbors fight and wage a war amongst themselves then the evil, and good are much greater. Every war is the same – only people differ sometimes, but the ragtag always look alike no matter what side they come from. And vampires... I mean, think logically, it is complicated to slaughter a human with your teeth and even more impractical to drink the blood from his neck. It is hard to even do it

with a sharp knife, when two or three men are helping you, let alone to get his neck and slaughter. In some early evolutionary phases: maybe. However, from the times of the creation of first tools and weapons, there no longer exists a need for jaws, except with the exhibitionists which we also have, unfortunately – Igor K. hears Dragoš's words in his head, while waking up in his lair, somewhere, anywhere, in the future.

Igor K. still thought he was dreaming. Having a nightmare. Only the awakening never happened. No matter the words, heard or dreamt, Igor K. called them, for internal purposes: the toothed ones.

- He can talk like this the whole day – said Osman while rolling his tobacco, sitting on a stump.¹⁷

- He is a true philosopher, it could be said – confirms Iva who is lighting a fire, on which they boil and wash their clothes.¹⁸

Dragoš is saying to Igor.:

- Osman and Iva will help me. We have help from all over the place. But we have enemies from even more places. We will guard you and keep you safe. You know, neither us vampires, as well as, humans are not completely unanimous. So there, if there is a God, I'm returning what I have taken this way. I have killed alive humans so far, and now I am returning a dead man to God, so that he can continue living. That villain had a point: there is something divine in that.

- Well, it can't be that it's your first time, can't it – said mister Iva.

- Praise Allah, no, so help me God – Osman ended wisely.

- If you could've only heard how the Commandant was screaming while Osman was skinning him like a sheep?! We left him tied to a beech wood and skinned, for the animals to finish him off.

- Indeed, the villain's skin turned out beautiful, nicer than any other animal.

- Well, his was an animal's as well, for fucks sake.

- Sir Iva was giving him an intravenous therapy to keep him alive as long as he can.

- It's true, the man needed help, I was a medic in the army.

- Indeed, a true doctor.

- I've already started to sew it and make a talisman out of that skin.

And, completely unexpected, while looking somewhere far, as if he needed to say it, Dragoš said:

- Our vampire friends from Europe, told us then: "Go to Srebrenica, there will be blood as much as you want". Remember Osman?

- Well, how could I not?! There was indeed blood, mashallah, thanks to our European friends for their help.

¹⁷ He was speaking in the Dialect of Bosnian Muslims.

¹⁸ He was speaking in a Dalmatian dialect.

- And we should indeed thank them, if we're going to be honest, for all the blood that was everywhere, right!

- True, thanks to them!

- Indeed, indeed!

- True, I swear!

Igor K. said on the parting:

- I, Dragoš, don't know, even now, who you are, who all of you are?!

Dragoš smiled, maybe for the first time since they've met:

- We don't even know that, my countryman. We don't even know ourselves. Who we are?! Maybe it is better like that. When it is not known who we are, neither will what we are capable of.

Igor K. wanted to give him a hug:

- No, it's ok! – said Dragoš.

Instead of “goodbye” he told him:

- Keep your mouth shut about everything that you don't know from here. Keep quiet and I'll do my best to keep you safe. Maybe because of my father, although that is not important at the moment. You will be good for me if I ever feel that I am human. Something to grab onto, will be needed at that moment.

- Dragoš, do you drink blood?

- As far as blood is concerned, my countryman, I am a true drunkard. Now, go, on your way.

*

On the multi-hour flight across the ocean he read the Journalist's notes from his journal, a notebook which Dragoš put in his hand, when departing. While reading it, he didn't understand at all what lead was the Journalist on and why he “deserved” such a death?! Although honestly, neither did he, Igor K., understand anything. Probably because he was from another world. He doesn't even know where he'd been, who those people were and whether they were people at all?!

He was flying and reading. He wasn't afraid of heights, as he thought he would be. He was afraid of what would happen when he gets to the ground. He was afraid that those from the Journalist's notes do exist and if Dragoš's hand was so strong it could protect and keep him safe even at a distance.

From the Journalist's notebook:

STRIGO VIA – a vampire who rarely drinks blood but feeds off the life force of others. Energetic vampirism.

STRIGO MORS

PORPHYRIA – the ill person is bothered by sunlight

OTO – Ordo templi orientis?

ROSOCRUCIANISM – GNOSTICISM

Is there an illness which makes people drink blood??? There is, it is called the Renfield's syndrome or clinical vampirism. It is a disorder which leads humans towards blood. Human or animal, or their own. Depends on the stadium of the illness. Men mostly suffer, but it cannot be called suffering since it is connected to sexual will and desire. The desire for blood is the sexual desire inside of them. As all mental disorders, this one is also explained with childhood traumas. It is interesting that the illness was identified during the last Balkan wars, in the nineties, some psychologist Noll did it. The disorder is stimulated and reaches its peak in adolescence, and, especially during wars and stressful situations – that was a newspaper clipping that was in the notebook.

There are more articles from magazines, he reads another one: Vampires are real, scientists say in the report of a new study published in the expert magazine Critical Social Work. However, this doesn't refer to the mythical creatures that turn into bats and drink blood from the honest world. They were focused on persons who claim that they "need the blood of other people, so they have energy and be healthy". Dr. Williams who has been studying persons who claim they had been vampires for nearly ten years, examined eleven people from the USA and the South African republic and discovered that they don't differ much in other aspects of life from other people. However, they seek volunteers who are ready to cut themselves and offer them some of their blood, so they would have the strength for every day functioning. "They are not ready to visit a doctor, because they worry that they would be characterized as psychopaths or be banned to keep their social roles and have children", the study says. True vampires say that they don't have a choice and that they would want to not have the need to drink blood. "Most believe that they were born like that and that vampirism isn't a matter of choice", stated Williams, who wanted to encourage other experts with his study, to provide help to these people. There is an expert name for one form of vampirism – the Renfield's syndrome. Men usually suffer from it and it is considered to be connected with their sexual drive. Some people with the Renfield's syndrome feel sexual pleasure only when they drink blood and they believe that it gives them mystical powers – as if they can take over the victim's life force in that way. A couple of cases like that are mentioned in the media: an Australian man who raped a woman and bit off her tongue. He claimed later on his trial that he needs to drink blood in order to survive. Also, a nineteen year old Texas man was arrested last year because he broke into a woman's apartment and bit her on the neck. In custody, he told the police that he is actually a 500 year old vampire who needs to be locked up, because he doesn't want to hurt anybody – he simply has to! Psychiatrists consider that patients with the Renfield's syndrome get their disorder because of a traumatic experience in the childhood in which they've bled or tasted blood, and felt pleasure while doing so. After puberty such a feeling begins to be connected to sexual arousal. Clinical vampirism is developed through three typical stages, the first one being auto-vampirism, which, as the name states, represents the

drinking of your own blood. When that stops to please the patient, he starts with animals, and often humans as well. Cases of stealing blood from hospitals and laboratories are noted, and the persons who tend to be violent, can even rape, torture or kill someone in order to drink their blood. However, even if the “vampire” doesn’t get caught for his misdeeds, he is usually forced to go to the hospital – sooner or later. Because, drinking large quantities of blood can be very dangerous. Blood is rich in iron, which means that swallowing blood can cause heart diseases, liver failure and even some forms of cancer. If it is not cured on time, the consequences are fatal.

And another one, and so on: A vampire gave out an ad, seeking blood donors! An American who presented himself as a vampire put up an ad on the internet in which he seeks a blood donor. A young man from Seattle (21) wrote in his ad that he doesn’t want to hurt anyone, but that he needs human blood from time to time, the British media state. “Greetings to everyone reading this. I cannot reveal my name, but I want you to know that I am a vampire. I need a blood donor”, he wrote in the ad. “Being a donor isn’t fun, but it can be if we want it to be”. He stated in the ad that he was looking for a man or woman, who would be donors, adding that he prefers men because he likes them more when it comes to blood and sex. “It would be great that you are AB negative or 0 positive blood type because those are the blood types I’m used to. This would be an intimate experience”, wrote the Seattle vampire.

And another one, the Journalist was obviously studious: The Canadian newspaper Weekly World News published an article about a Serbian, from Bosnia, who sucked the blood of 5000 victims with his vampire fangs.

That is how I became a vampire hunter and a fugitive at the same time – he wrote on the margin.

Vampires can symbolize war criminals and vampire hunters can symbolize war criminal hunters. Surely not, or perhaps, the righteous ones or avengers. It is not the same. ?!?!

There are four blood types among people 0 (zero), A, B and AB. The erythrocytes (Red blood cells - RBC) are the present or absent substances, characteristic for a blood type...

Once he tastes blood, a potential vampire: either resents it, and gets damaged physically and mentally, or likes it, and again gets damaged because he can’t have it all the time. He changes instantly. Experiences say, human and from books, that calm people, silent neighbors, wonderful people, sensitive parents – turned to beasts.

Independent of blood type, in the RBC of 85-92% of people an Rh factor is present and in 15-8% it isn’t. The name was given by a monkey Rhesus macaque...

Blood is sex to a vampire. Sex induced with drugs or aphrodisiacs which stimulate – that is gushing blood to a vampire.

A vampire isn't death – he is life. Every-day life, around us. Death is humanly to a vampire, as his almost entire life is humanly as well.

Women can easily recognize a vampire in their vicinity: they are suave and desire closeness when the woman is having her monthly period. The most extreme variant and sure proof of vampirism is when a man desires to lick a menstruating woman.

The choice of blood donors: healthy men (hemoglobin above 80%) and women (above 75%) over 18. Women outside of the menstruation and pregnancy...

A vampire is always a man. There are theories that a woman can become a vampire through special ceremonies and black magic on a grave of someone who committed suicide, in a special ritual and orgy wedding. Women vampires are not such by birth but by choice, and even when one appears, she is more dangerous than all the men vampires.

Vampires look forward to wars: so they also looked forward to the civil wars in the former Yugoslavia. They've gathered in all the former ones: only those were some other because vampires aren't eternal and don't give birth to other vampires.

Blood preservation: on the +5 to 8 temperature, in a dark place, an icicle, cellar, pit 1 meter deep. Lower temperatures cause hemolysis....

Vampires mostly tend to be great villains. They like to watch blood, dead people from whom it pours out, they love to kill so they can be on the spot and on time, in places where the blood will flow. Fresh blood, it is important to underline. Again, not: all! However: most of them have the villain germ inside of them. And where and when does it germinate the best? During war times and on a war spot!

True vampires don't have their rituals, don't have their religion, nor leaders. Rituals are performed by various vampire cults, those who want to become vampires in an artificial manner: especially women. True vampires go to churches, celebrate holidays, vote on the elections, start revolutions, get sick from cancer. Vampires make children who rarely become as their parent. Only after a few decades is a vampire born again in the same family. Rarely in the first or second generation but without fail in a following one. Similar to having twins. There is some genetics there: as a layman would say.

Transfusion is a powerful and daily measure. It can be done directly or indirectly. With the direct one it is transferred from the vein of the donor to the vein of the receiver, with the help of various tools (Tsankov, Joubert, Jovelt, Beck, Oechleker, etc.). The advantage of this method is that the blood of the donor is located out of the blood system only for a few seconds.... (The doctor manual of the Serbian Medical Society, PS. Return to Dr. Jezeljkić, signed by the Journalist).

It is not a "personality disorder", those are personalities by themselves and in their own worlds. Those are special personalities.

Vampires aren't strong, they are very weak, like any other addict, after all. By their characters: before all. And, physically: often. But, concerning other matters, from case to case – it is not a norm.

A vampire is a human. A type of a human. He has some needs and vices like any other human being.

Vampires aren't aware they are what they are. That is the essence. Only from time to time, they recognize themselves in someone else.

Vampires don't have a problem with the lack of hemoglobin, or similar problems connected to porphyria.

Vampires are given by nature. If there is a God: then by God.

They are simply attracted to the smell of blood.

I've talked to a vampire... He wouldn't let me record him so I am writing according to my memory..... I am a Vampire. Blood excites me. I am lured by its smell. I like to touch it, to stain my hands with it, to look and smell them afterwards. To lick it: I like less, although do like it. I can smell blood from miles away. I can predict that blood will be spilled somewhere, with a high degree of certainty. I can slaughter a man so that blood is dripping out of him for hours, drop by drop and he lays paralyzed but alive, without the will to resist while being stunned (which is very important in order to enjoy the scenery and consummation). I am not a sadist, nor a villain, I am: a vampire. I've went to war because of blood. It is not important to me for which side I would fight and kill, the side which killed the most in that moment suited me the best, not in the quantity sense as much as the freedom of killing sense. Because of that I've switched sides more than once, went from here to there, as the luck was changing on the battlefield. I've watched blood, almost always came while standing up, and sometimes even licked the bloody knife. I didn't drink it, that much. My comrades assigned that to my savagery and insanity. They feared me, for a reason. Until one day someone similar to me recognized me and in time we, together, recognized others. We had become, also: in time, a fellowship. We are together even today, at least those who survived. We live high in the mountains, on the place where there was a large commune before the war, in the abandoned mountain cabins. We do primitive cattle breeding. I hear they are calling that village the Leprosy village or something like that, I am neither sure about the name nor if they are right. I think that this is the first vampire settlement on the Balkans in the most recent times. We also have our women, bitches, female vampires, whom we keep tied up and who are there to satisfy our needs.

The vampirism codex:

- 1. human history abounds with blood shed, the vampire one with gathering and using the same;*
- 2. infusion differs from transfusion;*
- 3. people have been shedding each other's blood for centuries because of their own savagery, vampires have been doing since they exist, and with the*

barbarian bloodshed, people suffer and vampires survive; it is illogical to consider normal that people kill other animals for food but to hold that against vampires;

4. people understand the superiority of vampirism only when they find themselves in life danger: that is when they try to extend life by giving their blood;

5. there are no humans, there are only vampires who correctly recognize their nature and those who unconsciously wreak it out – the latter is the sort called humans;

6. vampires are not creatures, vampires are beings;

7. vampires don't become such – they are born, vampires are not immortal – they die, vampires are physical – they are real, spiritual vampires – do not exist, emotional – no, there are character vampires – they are the ones mostly called humans who drain what they can from other people, values of every kind, and are mostly politicians, bankers, robbers, bandits, rapists and men who exploit women by blackmailing them with love and loyalty;

8. in wars those who call themselves human, erase all the rules which kept them on a leash that far – vampires usually just fill in the created gaps;

9. regeneration is possible to some extent, it is stronger with vampires because of the faster metabolism, which is created because of the taking of fresh blood, but, human wounds also heal, at a slower pace, to be honest, but new skin always replaces the old one;

10. a vampire will always and mostly deny his nature, when he stops doing so, then you will feel him on your neck and it will be too late to benefit from your comprehension.

WHAT SHOULD I DO WITH THE VIDEO TAPES THAT I'VE FOUND WHICH HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH VAMPIRES BUT HAVE WITH BLOOD SHED AND CRIMES???"

That was all that was written, except for a few more clippings of already published Journalist's articles, which Igor K. skipped because it was already too much for him, and yet, he still didn't understand anything.

"That is true", thought Igor K., "The Journalist didn't benefit from his comprehension".

*

But, before the flight and the reading, the plane which was flying to the *New World* had to be reached. An escape was necessary once again. Dragoš took it all upon himself: from the papers to the money. He did a lot for him. He was still a human, whatever he personally thought about himself. They sent him to Germany with a fake password and a tourist visa. According to the first plan he was to remain there. However, after some time, an opinion was created that America is a better destination because of the people (is it absurd to say:

people?!) that Dragoš's toothed ones have there. And, Germany is close to the Balkans as well. He spent about twenty days in some room, until they gave him a Spanish passport, a real one, with a different name, even the picture was of someone else, who kind of looked like Igor K. He couldn't have even imagined how they got it and how much time they needed, to follow Spanish tourists in order to find someone similar to him. About how they "persuaded" him to give them his passport and not report it stolen: he doesn't even want to think about. He didn't even want to look at newspapers those days, because he didn't know how to read and so he wouldn't recognize the news, with a picture, about how a lifeless and anemic body was found somewhere in some river.

Igor K. headed there according to the instructions, with a passport in his pocket and a thousand dollars he was given. He didn't even hope that he would reach the airport with such an obvious fraud let alone board the plane and fly. Without any problems, he boarded the plane and from the Frankfurt airport headed towards JFK and New York. The applause hasn't even stopped in the airplane yet, after the landing, while the airplane was riding on the runway on the Kennedy airport and he immensely regretted the adventure he let himself into. He didn't favor it, he did it because he was persuaded by others, by Dragoš firstly, because of his excessive worries that something bad is preparing for him. However, it was true, something was preparing, but wasn't there another solution?! Apparently not.

He didn't fear the unknown, as much as he feared his ignorance. The language before all, and then everything else, and there was a lot of ignorance tied to his endeavor. What and where? And: how? His dilemma was, at least for some time, settled by the USA immigration authorities, who arrested him right there on the terminal, where he handed over the fake passport. A fat black lady kindly smiled at him, told him to wait, said something into the earphone and instantly, a dozen gorillas in uniforms appeared around him.

He was silent while they were taking him to a smaller room, where they sat him at the table and didn't ask him anything for a good two hours. It was apparent that they were dealing with something else. When it was his turn, they put some kind of form in front of him, for him to fill out. They asked him if he needed a translator? He nodded his head. They lost another two hours with that matter. The night was already passing by and dawn was nearby. When the translator arrived: he talked. Taught: he asked for a political asylum. Circumcised: he hoped he would get it easier. Supplied: with fake documents (besides the passport and which he took out at that moment), with a different surname and general information and birth place (according to those papers he was born somewhere near Subotica) but with a picture of him. That man which is recorded missing even today, truly existed. Dragoš thought of everything.

However, he was arrested immediately. The fact that he didn't know a word of Spanish wasn't such a problem as was the fact that it could instantly be seen that the passport wasn't his. He didn't hide it however. They closed him in

some airport room, where they have taken everything away from him, filled out some forms (again), took his fingerprints and his picture. It was already daylight when they put him in a car and drove him through unknown destinations of an unknown city in an unknown direction, it would later be known that he was taken to the so-called *Service Center for Processing* or *Reception Center*, which was basically a detention house even though it was not exactly a prison. He would find out later what a real prison is.

It all lasted a couple of months. People from various offices questioned him, in the beginning, and then no one would talk to him in days, and then again, someone would show up with lame questions such as: “*Are you a terrorist?*”, or, “*Did you participate in wars and done war crimes?*”, they would ask him to sign some statements and then disappeared again. He was told that he should find a lawyer but doubted that anything was going to come from that. They had given him some card with a number which had become his name and surname, the number of the case and everything else. It wasn't too scary, all in all. Soon a lawyer showed up, he knew who had done that, and the procedure started in its own course. It was clean and relatively peaceful inside the detention house, because they were put in a complex where there were only asylum seekers and emigrants. The others weren't as fortunate because they were transferred to real prisons, because of lack of space, some were even private. There were a lot of Albanians, and here Igor K. started to restore his scarce knowledge of the Russian language with the Armenians and Georgians, which were pretty great in number as well. However, there was a largest number of *Latino people*.

While Igor K. counted his days in the detention house, he met an Albanian from Montenegro, a good man, who helped him with a lot of things, mostly preventing the other Albanians to harass him, who were great in number and not quite fond of the Serbians. Igor K. socialized the most with him, they played table tennis, walked around, talked. They had as much time as they wanted. His new friend loved Serbian turbo-folk, so that was one of the topics they could talk about, no matter how poorly Igor K. managed that topic, he did however know a few things as a failed musician. They didn't mention politics. They were transferred together, after some time, from the *Service center* which was located in Queens to another one which was in New Jersey, Elizabeth to be precise.

That is where he had gotten the good news (!?) that he would be released, that he would get temporary asylum residence papers (by no means a *green card*, he wouldn't even wait to get it, and with his return to Serbia he would seal the opportunity of ever getting one). The lawyer who represented him, acted kindly to him so he realized, based on that, how strong and influential Dragoš's friends are here. He brought over a family which would vouch for him and his temporary accommodation, a married couple with a thirteen year old, or so, daughter, our folks, apparently with a big debt towards Dragoš's friends. Why would they deal with him, if it was otherwise?!

He said goodbye to his friend, they promised to see each other as soon as he gets out. They couldn't exchange phone numbers and home addresses. They didn't have them. They were just case numbers and confused men. He had helped out Igor K. but Igor K. wasn't in the opportunity of helping him. That is what life is sometimes. They never saw each other again.

*

The folks accommodated him really well. When he needed it the most, which can rarely be seen and experienced over there. People over there, the Serbs, mostly prefer not to come across their countrymen and most often speak badly about them. The most favorite sentence of the Serbian foreign workers states: "*When you go over there, stay away from our people*". It was a completely different situation with the Albanians and Igor K. had noticed that at the detention center. They were receiving help of every kind, they were bringing them money, clothes, food, paid their lawyers, provided guarantees for them, found them accommodation and jobs. And it didn't occur to them to look at the host's wife or daughters when they come out. Now, what their motives, the motives of Igor K.'s host were, it can only be speculated. Maybe they were returning a favor from the past days, similar to this one. It is not excluded that they took money, either. Although there could be a suspicion about the last one, because Dragoš's folks can be very persuasive even without a fee.

When he first arrived at their house, Igor K. felt uncomfortable. As everywhere, where a decent man is found on new grounds. The apartment was big, he got his own room, they were kind to him, but he was still uncomfortable. You were passing through the apartment as through a train, from room to room. Whoever wanted to go to the bathroom, they would have to go through his room, because he was the last in line, before the living room. So he would occasionally wake up and look with the corner of his eye at the body contours in nightgowns, standing beside his bed, sometimes smaller contours, sometimes bigger. He would pretend to be asleep, in both cases, when the mother was watching him, as well as, when the daughter was. The host was working all the time, the housewife occasionally, and the daughter went to school and came back home, sometimes when no one but him was in the apartment.

She looked like her mother, a Banat woman with a pure face and always tasty lips that smelled of vice and strudels. Sometime later, their husband and father, and his benefactor took him with, to work, on construction sites. He grew fond of Igor K., before all because he noticed that he wasn't looking at his wife, the attention whore who tried to get the men to look at her. No, Igor K. wasn't looking at his wife. She did look at him, however. She offered herself to him after only a couple of days. He somehow refused her offers. And waited to be alone with their daughter. Just to talk to her, to look at her notebooks, to be near her. He didn't even touch her, he didn't force her to touch him, he didn't even

give any hints related to such a thing. The little one did, however, after some time.

Most buildings in New York, especially those in the, not so wealthy, neighborhoods, as most are, are made from fragile and thin materials. The impression is made that something is going to come off at any moment: either the ceiling, or the wall. The large residential hollows are partitioned with some plaster boards which can be penetrated with a little stronger hit of the fist. Everything is heard as well, not in one apartment, but in the whole building. The hosts of Igor K. were people of average foreign worker kind, they came from our regions with a bag on their shoulders, to find a better life there. They've found better, like everyone, but that wasn't a life. The head of the family, a good repairman and construction worker, was quickly noticed and heard of, and he had a lot of work. His wife was a skinny but bony woman with juicy lips, who did some occasional work, some cleaning but not all the time. She justified herself with her watching and raising of the child in this filthy world.

The work week mostly passed by in the absence of the host and the presence of everyone else. On Saturdays beer was being consumed, it was stayed up until late hours and then the whole apartment would echo in the love play of the husband and wife. Igor K. would listen. Their daughter would listen too. The whole neighborhood would listen as well. Who was doing what, while listening, isn't important at the moment. Igor K. had a feeling after a while that his housewife was doing it on purpose, she would stare provocatively into his eyes in the morning while smiling and as if she was saying to him, he could almost hear it: *"You are filthy and pretending to be nice. You think I didn't get a read on you?! And look at me? You would never have a better and cleaner one"*. Maybe he imagined all of that but he made an impression that he could hear it from her unspoken words. From the look. It felt nice at the beginning, to Igor K. Why should we lie to each other, when it is like that. However, as time passed by, the absurdity of the situation complicated the normal life. He realized that it was time for him to leave while he still can: pure and unsullied.

*

The alarm rang. Queens and Glendale were still in the dark. It didn't dawn yet. He headed towards the bathroom to prepare for the two-hour trip to his work. What kind of thoughts haunted him at that moment, that can't be described. It could be painted perhaps, but a superior skill is needed for such a task. He namely, a long time ago, thought he had a girlfriend. Thought for some time, and then realized that he thought wrongly. Because it was as if she didn't know that she was his girlfriend, the whole time they were together. She was thinking, and saying, that she was his best friend and she even thought that it would be like that, as long as she wanted (she didn't tell him that but he realized it after some time). But, no! It was a long time ago. That is what he remembered

this morning induced by dreams and awakening. That is what he remembered while switching trains, while going from one gate into another, and while transferring to the Up side from the Down side.

It doesn't have anything to do with the current time and state. It doesn't have anything to do with him dreaming from night to night of some ex-girlfriends, all of them, one at a time, and mostly realizing what he couldn't do while being with them, and even the fact that they were his girlfriend. Because a lot of them that he dreams about as his former girlfriends, were never anything to him. They were only what he wanted. Then, just like now. He would wonder just like every man would, when he gets to his middle ages: how many girlfriends did he really have? A lot? Not that much? At the same time, in the dream scenario, he dreams about some of his former friends with a skillful dramatization. If they were his true friends, why are they former at the moment?! It is easier with girlfriends. This all has to do with the fact that he is getting old, all of a sudden and caused by nothing. He was at that life age where he is transferred from the range of words "young" to the factual state of the term "old" (there isn't a middle state). From field A to field B. There is nowhere to go from field B, except maybe to the Elysian fields.

There are men and women with whom being friends with is difficult, represent torture and no pleasure at all. It is usually a difficult person, who has many flaws, because of which you paid excessively and only did damage to you. Furthermore, you feel uncomfortable, and again, something is drawing you to continue and doesn't let you simply and unconditionally stop. Zoki wasn't like that, Stane to a certain extent, but she was like that. Pure masochism, to hang out with her. It was even sicker to love her.

He had a girlfriend, who thought they were friends and as soon as he would accept that fact, she would start to flirt with him, just enough as it was necessary to wake his hopes up again, and then she would continue what she did before that. Warm, then cold. When he thought they were friends, she would move around him acting as if she was his girlfriend, sometimes even let him kiss her and hold around her waist. When he was certain they were in a relationship, she would bring him down to earth with the friendship stories, how she wasn't expecting that from him and her interest in other boys. But she didn't let him go. He would get mad, and wouldn't return her calls, and then she would latch on to him like a leach. She neither accepted him, nor given him to others. And he could've had another one, perhaps. Not some prettier or wealthier one, but certainly worth the attention. No! She kept him chained up for months and wasted his time.

Sometimes he would want to end that, to cut the cord. To clear the matter once and for all. When she would see that he's being serious, she would back down and indulge him. She would invite him over, or to go out. He would bring her flowers and a box of chocolates. She would be kind and smiling. As always. And because of that he never knew what she thought or wanted, and if she is

taking his courting seriously or not?! Because that would last for a while, they would see, visit each other on a daily basis, go out together. It was apparent that he wanted a lover's relationship and not friendship, and it was even more obvious that that was pretty clear to her. And yet, she was still playing around.

That began to bother him, that undefined relationship which was being built and lasted for a while. And then he noticed that she also had other men whom she was treating the same. Some were even from his close surroundings, men with whom he socialized. With one of them, Stane, an officer's child, and his school mate, doctor, she wanted to have something more than that. And so, on one occasion, when he wanted to openly show his love and ask her to declare herself as well, and while she was putting away the flowers and candy box (which he bought from borrowed money), she carelessly told him, with a tone of a child who just remembered a new game:

- You know what?! Wouldn't it be genius if we went to the hospital and surprised Stane?! And all three of us eat this box of chocolates!

He was looking at her openmouthed and insulted. Could it be possible?! He came over there with gifts and the desire to propose to her (even!), and she wants them to go to another man. He already had enough of that, all the games of a little girl.

- Stane is married – he said with a bitterness in his voice.

She acted “surprised”.

- What difference does it make, I want to be friends with him.

- I'm not sure how ready his wife would be to accept your “friendship”?! – said Igor K. bitterly.

- You are cruel and jealous, you know that nothing is going on between me and him.

- But nothing is going on between the two of us neither, and that's a problem!

-?!

- I can't go on like this. You go to Stane now, or whoever else you want to, and I'm going home and don't call me or ask for me ever again.

- Well, I don't want to go there without you. There's nothing going on between me and him, beside friendship. I'm friends with you as well.

- You are no longer friends with me, nor him. And the playtime is over. You'll have to find some other clown to run around you like a puppy. I've expressed my liking to you, I may even love you, you know that and since you are acting like this: it is over, I mean, our “friendship” is.

- Let's get together tonight and talk about it – she was persistent and sure of what had worked so many times.

- No, thank you! I realize now, I don't need you like that. The fact that I was kind doesn't mean that I am a fool. Go play with someone else, I'm done with it.

He left at that moment.

He found out everything later. The owner of the tavern where he occasionally worked and where she would come to see him was screwing her. Her, who he considered as his girlfriend and a saint, and she considered that they were best friends. He had no idea. Everyone else knew. He had a girlfriend, and then he didn't have one. Her, with whom he had fun with in his dreams and almost married one drunk night when they persuaded him to go home, the mentioned owner most of them, who had her minutes before that in the tavern bathroom. She joined in on the joke and he was most serious. He had found out later, painful as always when finding out truths, that she was whoring around with the greatest scumbags of the city while playing an innocent lamb with him.

She later tried to see him a couple more times, and then gave up. The owner and his friends had their way with her, she got pregnant, the word was spreading around town, then she had an abortion, and something got complicated there. Miserable, skinny and ragged she came to his door one day.

- I want to be your girlfriend, you are a bigger stud than Stane and all the others – she stuttered.

He slammed the door on her and she stood for a long time in front of them, looking at nothing. He didn't go to her funeral when she overdosed.

That is what he is dreaming and thinking about in the dark, while walking on the greasy concrete of the subway station. That is what he dreams and thinks of – when he isn't thinking about a pubic hair of a fourteen year old, which he guards and cuddles when he desires to. Sometimes that hair is more worth than all the women in the world. Sometimes.

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Coming back from work, he would be a little bit more alive. He would push around the trains for two hours and then walk for another ten minutes. He didn't wait for the bus which rarely comes. Igor K. was more cheerful that day. That rarely happened to him, except instinctively, sometimes, on Fridays, when he knew he wouldn't look at the people from work, when he wouldn't have to climb or descend on the greasy subway steps, to ride the trains, to look at miserable people around him. You never see a happy man in the New York subway, unless he is drunk or high. Or: crazy. They are all anemic and kind of pale unhappy. In other places, the miserable ones can get a high blood pressure, get blush in their faces, in New York the lack of happiness is of a pale non-color and the happiness is even paler, unless it is corrected in photo-shop.

He was more cheerful completely unplanned because he came that day at work. He let some semen in his pants. It was nice for him. He didn't have sex but it was as if he did. They had sent him to the eighteenth floor to do some moving, from office to office. Which meant that one prospered and another one cracked. And they are now switching offices, someone is getting a bigger and better one, and someone a smaller and poorer one. Someone is, most likely,

heading home. Deborah is working on that floor, the secretary known for her big ass. Everyone looks at her when she is walking through the hallways or sneak around behind her in the elevator. A typical American woman. As all secretaries with these big shot asses, she is first and foremost loyal and faithful to her boss. Everything for him and for the others what is left.

Deborah explained what was expected from him: he was to move the archives from one office to the other, her boss got a promotion (thus she did as well) but he has to arrange the files exactly how they are arranged now. He can't mix them up or let the pages fall out. Igor K. went to the other office, which was truly bigger and nicer, with a view to the Central Park, and he had established that the metal cabinets for the arranged files are completely the same, standard, one would say. He took out the first drawer, carried it with him and took out a full drawer from the other cabinet from the same place. He didn't even touch the files, he just switched the drawers.

Deborah was thrilled with the solution. She told him:

- Go back, so I can see – so she stood in the corner and bent over her ass towards him.

Igor K. didn't see anything else in the whole world besides Deborah's ass. She called him over to explain to him how to proceed, and when he approached she leaned his ass on his limb and started rubbing it. He stood completely still, felt the sweetness down there and it didn't take him long to empty his scrotum. Who knows how long a woman's body hasn't touched him. Deborah had a dress made from some adjustable material so he felt her as if she wasn't wearing anything.

When she felt that he was finished, she didn't even look at him. She left and he didn't see her again that day. Later, when she would walk her ass down the hallway, she didn't even want to say hi to him, not even a nod passing by, nothing, as if he was that cabinet in the office. She had treated him and put him back to his place, where he belongs, on the bottom. Igor K. though about what had happened to him, that afternoon?! Then he lied down in his bed, placed his laptop on his chest and mingled with VC. He watched porn every day. And didn't consider that it was something bad. He had an attitude about it.

Porn isn't anything wrong. It isn't harmful either. Of course, as with other matters in life, it isn't harmful if it is consummated in normal quantities, he thought. Porn is therapy. Because of porn, a lot of criminal acts weren't done but a lot more sexual offenses were avoided. Who couldn't afford porn: did the crimes. Men like porn more than women, because a man usually has more unfulfilled sexual fantasies and desires, i.e. it is easier for a woman to fulfill hers, if she has them, all she has to do is say: yes! A man has to beg or pay for them. Men are somehow more perverted in the desire and women are in the act. Men are prone to the physical and women to the spiritual, when it comes to sex. It is completely opposite in love. A woman uses her brain more than a man while having sex, while a man most often can't use anything other than

imagination which has nothing to do with the brain. We got entangled. Igor K. got entangled, actually.

He thought about porn. Not about sex. Most things related to sex, those unusual, prohibited, experimental ones: we are not in the condition of experiencing or affording ourselves. For various reasons. That is why porn exists, so we can see how it all looks like, so that our desire passes. Anything is possible in the porn surroundings. Porn philosophy allows everything. The porn way of life is the most beautiful one because no one is unhappy. In the porn world, while you are robbing a house, next to the money and jewelry, the sex initiated by the housewife also awaits you. When you fix something or have to unclog a drain, sex with the housewife and her busty daughter awaits you. Any occupation, any job, any situation: there is always sex for you. In the hospital, prison, gas station, the church... You can be a bellboy or a gardener but that won't get in the way of having the most beautiful rich ladies and noblewomen. Beautiful house keepers and even more handsome chauffeurs are always available to the house women and land lords, and vice versa. Not to mention the babysitters and piano teachers. In the porn world, your mother-in-law is always incredibly good-looking and ready to take advantage of you. In real life: you get hurt on the cemetery the way you never wanted to. In real life: raped, then murdered.

Porn, that is communism. You take what you want and how much you need and give whatever you can, have and are asked for – but everything in a kind and nice manner. Everyone is equal and everyone has a chance in the porn world: old, young, big, small, beautiful, ugly. The porn world isn't a racist one – on the contrary. It isn't sexist – whatever is considered by that. It's not nationalistic – it is even recommended that a variety of nations and colors is available. It isn't violent nor life threatening – even when someone gets “slain by a dick”, she or he is having a great time. Even when you're beaten, in the porn environment, they do it exclusively because you love and ask them for that.

Porn is the correction of injustice and inequality. For everything you were humiliated in real life, porn gives it back to you in its righteousness. The escape from real life to porn is the escape from injustice to justice, from inequality to the possibility of equality. The porn world is the only way out for losers of each kind. The only therapy for the downfall which happened to a non-resourceful one. The only valve for an ill man to not do evil.

Igor K. was looking for salvation from loneliness and nonsense exactly there: in porn!

The only person that he honestly admired and that meant something to him in America was the porn actress VC, with whom he “socialized” a lot. He had spent a lot of his time in her company, watching her in various situations. She understood him better over the screen of his computer than all of the people he encountered on a daily basis. It wasn't just about the mere voyeurism and self-satisfaction, although there was that. The face of VC presented him with a

lot of compassion concerning his troubles, the body interested him less, however fake this sounds. Finally, if anyone knew that she was his best friend in America, even though he never met her in person, then that someone would definitely not believe that he was capable of sexually assaulting an underage little girl, flat as a board, which didn't resemble a woman at all. In other words, he couldn't take the virginity of the little tramp about whom there will be some say here and who would be the cause of many troubles of Igor K. As if he wasn't already in deep trouble by then?! Who loves VC can't love the young and flat skinny girls. He did, in that moment, feel a weakness for her, delight even, maybe some: passion! Delight and passion, VC, an underage little girl, and there's: trouble.

There's a catch. This is only apparently true, the fact that the one who likes a milf like VC could never desire a fourteen year old girl. Namely, the thing with the porn actress didn't exactly have any sexual connotation, as it appears at first. She meant more to him. He sympathized with her as well, he felt sorry when he would see the pain on her face while she was being harassed by black people with enormous phalluses who put them everywhere. That crying face that was giving away pain and pleasure, that's what was bonding him to her. But that wasn't all. How come it was VC, looking what she looked like, if we already made a statement earlier that that wasn't the type of women which Igor K. likes. He didn't like busty and thick women because of his mother. The answer is simple: far away and abroad, by himself, for the first time in his life he was missing his mother and the mother's love. He felt denied for everything he didn't get as a son, from his mother. And by everything he means: everything. Since he was an only child, he didn't have someone to turn to, to complain, to wail, to a brother or sister, to tell them what is hurting and worrying him. Abroad.

For the first time in his life he missed his mother and replaced her with an actress of liberal urges. He didn't say goodbye to his mother nor ever see her again. He didn't contact her at all, he just heard that she passed away. He didn't have a picture of his mother. He didn't bring it when he quickly ran away, as he wouldn't bring even if he wasn't in a hurry. That is why he replaced the picture of his mother with the image of VC. That is why he sought a mother's love in her virtual hug. For the first time in his life he didn't hate busty women. But, he didn't go back to tits but to breasts, he didn't want sex, but to be warmly held to a chest, tucked in and breastfed. And, yes! – he wanted the little tramp more than anything. But! – only wanted. Nothing more than that.

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Igor K. reminded of Jack London's Martin Eden. He even had the strength in his arms, but was smarter, and not as brave as him. He wasn't brave in his intention and persistence, to face the challenges that require courage. He

actually wanted something from secrecy, from the shadows, invisible, unnoticeable. However, he loved that book, Igor K. He had read it many times. He only didn't like the ending. That is why he would often skip the ending, lay down in his bed, close his eyes and pictured his ending for Martin Eden. The ending in which everything is nice, a happy ending. And since it is the ending of a book, then the happiness is eternal because it cannot be changed by anyone anymore, there is nothing more to add after the words: the end. And then he would open his eyes and realize that the ending was already written, that his hero disappeared in the water vortex and that nothing can be changed anymore, not even in his dreams. That's when he realized he had chosen a wrong hero, but it is what it is: he has to share the destiny of the one he loves.

He also loved his aunt, he would remember in the morning while waiting for the train. He loved in the lustful manner, he loved to watch and not to listen, in the times when she would often visit them to complain about her mother's brother who was drinking himself to death and gambling away everything he ever owned. The mother would listen disinterested and would justify her brother, advising her that she should try harder as a wife and not to get pretty only when she goes out. Then his aunt would cry even more and curse the day she had met her husband. Igor K. would watch her, didn't hear or listen that much, and would then go to his room, saying that he had homework to do. Then he would lay in his bed and imagine happy endings with his aunt where he would, here and there, do better than with Martin Eden.

Martin Eden was his only spiritual certificate which proved him that not everything was lost. However it looked like, that you don't stand a chance, that you have went under, that you have failed, there is always a way out, it can always happen that everything changes over night and that people would recognize what is valuable inside of you. Even though Igor K. didn't do anything, unlike Martin who wrote immensely even when he was hungry, he would still tell himself that someday he would start doing something which would be enough to succeed. However, in the music which he loved, he remained below average, enough to "give" rhythm to the folk musicians at the tavern. He never started writing. He only succeeded where he thought there wouldn't be a happy ending, other than in his head: with his aunt. She once found him alone in the house, complained about his uncle and grabbed his cock while she was crying. While she was squeezing him all cried up she told him:

- Do you see what he is missing out on, he doesn't even touch me. Go ahead, grab my tit. See. And your mother is saying that I should make an effort. He should do so. I am a hundred times more good looking than your mother.

Igor K. would always choke when his aunt would scold his mother, although he didn't understand why exactly at that moment. They did that again several times until his aunt became a slut and found serious men who were successfully replacing his uncle. Soon, his uncle passed away, she quickly got re-married and since they didn't have any children, she and the uncle, they never

saw her again. She went to Germany with her foreign worker husband who didn't know what and with whom she was doing all sorts of things, and apparently it didn't even matter to him. It looked like her big breasts were the most important thing to him as well. The first year after she had left, however, she did send him some *Adidas* sneakers and a deodorant, and that was: it.

While reminiscing this, and writing some of it down, some lines, in the shadow of his yard tree, or in front of the store, Igor K. knows it is too late for Martin Eden. He is now writing all of this down for his sake, even though he doesn't understand the purpose. It's not even important to him. It is not desired as well. The toothed ones had forbidden him. In the meantime he had seen bigger and nicer tits than his aunts. He did see, but did not touch as much. He would often feel the desire inside, especially when he was in America, mostly towards their flat women. He didn't feel love much, rarely, almost never since the times he was brutally rejected and humiliated. And he wasn't prepared to do everything all over again. But his lust was sometimes bigger and was getting bigger, as the object of lust was more and more unreachable.

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I've tried at first to fit in among the people, to be like them, to socialize on the weekends, to go to church. It didn't go as planned. I wasn't a part of their world and wasn't interested in their stories. They were empty, simple, common, and I couldn't afford all of that taking into consideration my emptiness, complexity and cynicism towards life. I've hated the world and it was logical that I don't like it's people as well.....

Mile passed by on the road, amazingly didn't stop by to the store, and only shouted:

- Hello my brother, your dick is made of rubber! – and disappeared down the road.

That was enough for him to put away his notebook. He is remembering, he mostly missed his home town, over there in the great unknown world, his town, neither small nor big. He missed the town, not the people, in the great, biggest place called New York. His home town grew with him, it grew from a big borough into a city, as he was growing from a boy to a young man. It could've been any town in Serbia: Valjevo, Kraljevo, Čačak... And he could've been anyone, there, then, let's say on a Sunday morning, in Queens, in a collapsing apartment, when he would get out of his bed beaten up like a cat from working and travelling, from the Saturday night whiskey. Like Martin Eden in some laundry place sometimes, he would too, in the breaks between cleaning the Manhattan toilets which smell exactly the same as any Serbian ones, try to write a letter or poem to someone. They later envied him on his success. He was already Martin Eden to them. Not because of the writing, but because of the

paycheck he got, based on his efforts and work of trying to whiten the shitty ceramics.

He ran away from Serbia trying to save something which he didn't have over there afterwards, except in the physiological sense: life! They wanted to kill him neither guilty nor obliged, they've made a monster out of him, he had seen what didn't concern him and the result of it all is the American pretending of living a life, which happened to him. Just when the wars were over, when he had tried to change his life – he had sunk to the bottom. He thought he would write something about all of that, maybe next week, or some that comes after the next one, under the condition that his head gets clear from the whisky, with which he tried, over the weekend, to kill every nerve that reminded him of the existence, to kill every brain cell that reminded him: who he was and where he was. He wasn't afraid for his life anymore. Therefore, what the Satanists, mobsters, vampires and Serbian toilet seats couldn't do – shitty American toilets managed to. And, what kind of toilets can the toilets be, besides shitty ones?!

Joca the German sometimes drops by the store, a retired foreign worker who built a three-floor house and filled it up completely and is now living with his wife in the summer kitchen next to it. Those three hundred feet to the store, he sometimes crosses in his *Mercedes*, just to get it out of his garage, to show it to the world. He goes into his new house only when he wants to show his guests everything he earned, when he was out there, in the world. Joca is a scrooge but a certain kind. He wants to buy everyone drinks but only when everyone pays a round before him. He sometimes gets drunk, but he doesn't pay a round even then, outside of his habit.

Mile says to all of that:

- That is all bullshit!

Joca the German doesn't understand him, neither does anyone else to be honest, but tells his own story. Joca the German is always telling stories with which he wants to fascinate his interlocutors. He isn't successful in that intent, because not a lot of people listen to him in front of the store, unless it is some juicy gossiping or the story about another's women.

- When I was getting married – Joca is mumbling drunkenly – the celebration had begun on samstag morgen and ended on montag abend. There were three bands, switched as they've got tired, but the music stecht nicht. I got married late, of my age, but such a wedding was worth it.

- Do you think that Denzel Washington is really from Washington?? – one of the listeners asked him, completely sober and clearly very interested to solve that dilemma.

He looked at him blurry, not realizing what that has to do with the story, and told him angrily:

- No! That's his last name, for fuck's sake. What kind of a haus he has, all from acting, that lucky fuck. And I took food from my mouth for years to put money aside, over there in Deutschland, to earn some money and create

something here. I've arbeited a lot of things, all that was left was to ficken for money. I would've done that do, but no one offered it.

Igor K. drifted away from the story once again and returned to the big city in his thoughts.

He felt nothing from that big city: the spirit, diversity, culture, social life.... nothing except shopping malls. He was walking down the streets using nothing but asphalt for walking. He didn't breath in in the polluted air of the city, didn't feel it's energy. All he had to do was come to work, work constantly and prepare as much as he can for the next day's work when he got home. After all, and as well as the other 15 million other in his surroundings, not to say it too pretentiously: his compatriots.

Manhattan, because it is the most important part of New York, as how most people know it, can only be seen on the pictures and movies. When someone lives, or works in it (as was the case with Igor K.) then he can see it only in fragments, from below. Manhattan should be observed from a bird's perspective in order to see it for what it is. However, what it truly is like, can be seen only from a frog's perspective, but as such, it is not for taking pictures and showing from that view. That slaveholder bastion, where a handful of the wealthy ones is exploiting millions of other people, just in New York and billions of others all around the world, is for those watching it from the sidelines, as foreigners or tourists, and is in fact one big fat and colorful lie. Therefore, in New York, you are either: a hawk, or: a frog, and by that clarification and based on it, depends from which perspective you are going to look at it.

The people who serve the handful of shameless, are looking at Manhattan from the below, occasionally and in fragments, when they dive up from the ground, when they reach the spot where they are going to be exploited and when they start to descend back into the ground to go back to their nests where they will rest, in order to not die too soon and leave an unpaid mortgag. Perhaps, when the sky is clear and the air has less humidity, the contours of the Manhattan skyscrapers can be seen in the distance, from a high station in Queens or Brooklyn. When that happens, it looks surreal. At that point a human can feel something, especially when the wind brings the salty scent of the Atlantic. Some feel the city only in that way, even if they've lived there for years.

Igor K. felt Dragoš's bloodsuckers more around him, than some New York spirit about which everyone is talking about, but no one can describe it, or feel it, unless he has millions with which he can afford it. And then he saw that movie with Pitt, Cruise and tit (because everything there is one large tit). About vampires. A Hollywood soap opera which managed to string some internal cord within him. Nothing spectacular, far from the truth, the least scary. What can be scary about it after all the Dragoš's stories?

However, the megalopolis scenes in which the vampires are moving around at night, gave him goose bumps. In the middle of the night, while waiting for the train at the above-ground station Wyckoff, or at some other underground station, he would remember those scenes and fearfully notice the immovable and silent silhouettes standing lifelessly. He wouldn't see the eyes of those shadows but would feel them watching him. What he would most certainly see were big and fat rats, which were looking at him with their bloody eyes from the tracks or the corners. He wasn't imagining that, although he had his doubts for the rest as well: little did he imagine lately. Everything was true.

And like that from one night to another: a couple of sleepy pigeons hopping around the platform of the above ground station, the same amount of rats under the ground and a couple of bloody eyes from the darkness, pupils and corneas which cannot be seen but can be felt on the neck. An occasional hooker coming back from work, a tired woman without any will left and without a shred of sexuality left in her, giving the environment sleepy glances of an old lady that is only twenty years old. Even though they give him goose bumps, Igor K. knows, that the eyes from the darkness are not threatening him. He is being guarded by Dragoš's tribe-man: looking after him from themselves and the others. He isn't sure about the hookers, although it is rare. Then a day would come, which is seen only when he gets above the ground, and he would forget about everything while changing the toilet paper and cleaning toilets in the skyscraper he worked at, while listening to the farting of the clerks, who were taking their shits and reading the *Wall Street Journal* or the *New York Times* placed on the floor of the toilet, which he later picked up behind them. He was thinking about how some of the people from his hometown would envy him on this position. He was thinking about the young people whose lifelong dream is to leave their country and that the majority of them end up like him: in other people's shits which he has to clean up.

On his way home, he would encounter some people on the streets and on the train. He would look at beautiful women. Nurtured whores who are selling their body through the institution of marriage to those who can afford them a nice life. In New York, marriage is a type of legalized prostitution: the prettier specimens get more money for the mating and moaning, with the help of their lawyers through divorce litigations. Those lawyers are the only bigger sluts than them. Igor K. would occasionally feel a wild lust towards those beauties who were walking their asses around in tight little dresses and high heels. He would get a desire to fuck them, their servants, their husbands and their puddles. Then he would get a desire to drink all of their blood, and would then wonder if Dragoš, maybe infected him with some bloodsucking virus, there in the Devil's village, or whatever the name of that far away shithole where there weren't even any shits to properly clean.

On those occasions he would sometimes call a phone number and a black hooker with the face and the body of a child would always visit him. They

would drive her there in a big car and would wait in front of the building. Pay to play. He wouldn't sometimes have the will to even do anything. He would just lay there and let her do the job. What is sometimes considered pleasure, is actually an urgent need. It would often happen that he couldn't do anything: and when the time goes up, he would pay and let her go. She would look at him, as if she somehow understood, and would even kiss him even though that is not in her job description and is forbidden.

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- You are one of us – an Arab told him, while they were pissing and he was looking at his “circumcised” limb.

They were pissing in the worker's toilet. They weren't allowed to use the one's they were cleaning and if they ever caught them using any of them, they would've been fired. No matter how much they had to go. To be honest, they cleaned those as well, but not that much. The employers weren't interested in that, and they rarely came down, two floors below the ground among the slaves.

While shaking his quite large tool he continued:

- You are not a Jew, because if you were, you wouldn't be cleaning shit with me.

Igor K. nodded his head and mysteriously smiled. Why explain when he wouldn't understand anything.

- Don't worry, I understand you – and put his index finger on his nose in a conspiracy manner.

The Arab then asked him:

- How much of you did Slobodan Milošević kill?

- Not enough – answered Igor K.

He didn't quite understand what Igor K. answered but probably refused it because of their poor mutual knowledge of the English language. It is rare to hear someone talk English in New York: correctly or incorrectly. It all comes down to: what's up; and the answer to that is: not much! Everything is said with that, even more than that. You can find everything and all sorts of things that exist in the whole wide world in New York, except for correct and pure English language.

Yet again, with the few true Americans the conversations would mostly come down to the next:

- From Serbia?! Are you a war criminal?

- Unfortunately, no – Igor K. would answer ironically.

Even when you speak perfect English language, they do not feel nor recognize irony or sarcasm.

- Are you a Muslim?

- I'm sorry to disappoint you – he would tell them.

Or:

- From Siberia, it's cold over there, isn't it?

- Yes it is, you get chills from the coldness – he would say without the will to discuss them and prove the unproven: Serbia or Siberia, it is all the same to them, not because of a tendency, but because that kind of knowledge is completely unnecessary to them. The only knowledge they need is the ability to make money and deposit the check from which the banks would, each month, take the majority of, with which they would charge the illusion of those people that they have their own houses, cars and expensive clothing.

There are strange people, which can, at a place like that, only be a positive thing. When you are swimming in the sea of superficial relationships then the eccentrics can come in handy. A Korean fellow, a postman, asked him in the elevator:

- Do you love angels?

Igor K. looked at him strangely, he had never thought about that subject, it is strange to even declare upon such topic: do you love angels? – although it would be logical to love them. But, he doesn't know, except maybe the fact that he most certainly doesn't hate them. And yet, he nodded his head in a “yes, *I love them*” manner. The fellow gave him a pendant at that moment, a metal, pretty one, with a figure of a little angel with wings.

At first, Igor K. thought: maybe he is a sectary? Then he snapped out of that Serbian bigotry bullshit, the pointless fear of everything unknown and thinking that everything that is not our own, immediately becomes sick and dangerous. He was ashamed because of the ugly thought, a man is giving him an angel and he immediately sees evil in that deed. He takes the gift, and thanks him. He may as well be a sectarian when it's an angel. Another trouble fucked him up, the fallen one and not this metal one. And he took off his rosary and gave it to the Korean who bowed to the ground and thanked him.

He did well with the African-Americans at work. You are, in a large percentage, in the clear with them, you immediately understand who and what they are, and mostly, if you stay out of their business, they won't mess with you. It was the worst with the Puerto Ricans. He hadn't met one who wouldn't fuck with him, often without any reason and benefit. He was tender with socializing with the traditionally good Irishmen and rigid with the Italians. From the Balkan folks, Shiptars were best for him, they were somehow most open and their homesickness was immense, exactly as with Igor K. He didn't do too well with the Serbs. Neither did they with him. He didn't go to the church, to the “Serbian properties”, he didn't socialize at the *Serbian club*, and didn't go to concerts of the frivolous folk youth.

However, to be completely honest, he didn't socialize that much with the colleagues from his work. The question of that socializing only came down to who you are going to sit with, during the one hour lunch break. He would prefer the most to sit by himself, but that wasn't always possible because the locker room was narrow and small, and someone was always around, either resting or

grabbing something from his metal locker. Igor K. would nap in those breaks and listen to what they were saying in his half-sleep. And he would wonder: how do they have the strength to mumble meaningless words each day? And he would wonder: how did he have the strength to listen to them each day? He knew, he would pack up one day and leave that nonsense, even if it meant going directly to his death. It is better off being killed then ending up like these morons. He could've been a somewhat moron, but a complete one: no! What is the purpose of life then?!

As those with whom he lives and works, he is also getting dull in America. He wasn't that much bright before that, but he is now feeling the difference that can occur and realizes that it wasn't easy being locally dull. Even the things he knew, he is more and more starting to not know in America. That is why he is afraid of how he would go on, how he would tell his story one day, and leave it behind. But, on the other hand, the emotions are wavy in Igor K. The emotions are on a razor blade. You can't please a man, even in the novels. While he was in America, he missed what he didn't have in Serbia, but thought he did. He would tomorrow miss in Serbia something he can afford for himself over here. What you miss the most is when you get to know multiple things that you can miss. When you know less and see less – not a lot of that can you miss: because you don't know what it is. When you don't know, you can't know.

He is more dumb in New York but sometimes feels better because of that. Dumbness can be blessed and relaxing. The dullness and dumbness are pointed out here so that humans would have the feeling that they are happy. Only a dumb human can be happy and satisfied without any reason. Only to a dumb person can a full plate, between two slaveries, represent fulfillment of some dream. He is remembering the verses from some book they read as high school students with longing, exchanged it and got it greased up, with its matches from the famous *Eroticon* collection which was popular at the moment when they had no other problems besides sex, and weren't having sex neither. He was thinking: "*That would be it*", and would move his lips and spell out: "*Oh how happy all the dogs are, cheerfully they grab the sticks, suck each other's dicks, humping one another, oh without a bother*"¹⁹. Here, the people are happy dogs. But here, as everywhere in the world, it is known: if you are a dog, you either need an owner or you're a stray. There is no third option.

And, it should be repeated with a valid reason, he wasn't particularly or above the average smart even before, in his home region, but he wasn't dumb either, because there were plenty of those. And now, those dumb ones from his youth, are important people over there: politicians, rich men, state officials, owners of private businesses. Just like here, they were unburdened with the mass of unimportant information and knowledge but they focused instead on what they were interested in. With only one focus their brains could work perfectly.

¹⁹ Théophile Gautier.

They were the worst students. And Igor K. was a good student in high school, he played a little guitar, he never finished college however, read comics and occasional books. The last one in a continuity but with no intensity. He knew how to spell out and write a couple of verses as a high school student, he wrote his last one while in the military, in some engineering unit in Varaždin, where they taught him to drive heavy machinery and make local roads for the villagers. Then he stopped as soon as he got out of the army barracks, both to write and to think about excavators and working machines. He loved to sing and he didn't sing for years, because he couldn't get himself to do so.

*

The store is empty, some kind of summer sultriness right before rain and hail is around us, and the idle ones are sitting in front, in the shade, Igor K. and Mile. The landlady Dobrila also went out, and even treated them with a cold beer, sat next to them, on a crate which was threatening to imprint in her big ass, and is telling them:

- When I've married that man of mine, who has a peanut between his legs, I was quite older than him. Not to say, he could've been my son. It was ok, because I've also gotten married early the first time, I was young, some jinx tricked me. But even then, when I was left a divorcee, and as you can see even now, I am quite good looking. The years have been kind to me. His father Jova, and mother Milica were both mad at him. They heard I was infertile, and it later turned out that their own son was sterile, there was nothing wrong with me. They still hadn't made this big new house where we all live now, but we've all lived in the planned one, next to the old one. They wanted Petar to marry a woman of his own age, to make grandchildren, that everything was according to their plan. If he couldn't have made one with me, he is not going to be able to do it with any other.

She wiped her face and neck all the way to her tits with a tissue, and continued:

- But, I didn't give up either. I don't give up that easily, I've struggled my whole life, I didn't want to miss such an opportunity. Whatever kind of man he is, he is from a true householder family, I wanted to settle and live like a human being. Everything his father and mother told him against me throughout the day, he would immediately forget when I give him some pussy in the evening. He acted like a little child when climbing a cherry tree. He wouldn't let me sleep all night long. He loved my hairy downstairs more than anything. That is how my cunt beat his mother, God rest her soul. It beat all the family and tradition talks. My cunt was, how should I put it, even more important than Vuk Karadžić, God forgive my soul, who collected those poems, more important than the celebrated Saint Patron Day, mother's milk, mother's and father's love, care, it was stronger than them. The cunt always wins, let me tell you that.

They were keeping silent and confused, for about ten seconds, they didn't expect such a confession, although Dobrila would sometimes tell them all kinds of things. Mile broke the silence first with the words:

- Like with the empress, like with the ass.

They were silent again, until Igor K. said:

- Dobrila, bring us another two cold ones and take whatever you want.

In the beginning, Igor K., in the far away world, in someone else's house, suppressed his more and more present sexual lust which he felt. He was trying to avoid provocative situations which were happening more and more, both from the mother and the daughter. He scolded himself in his thoughts. Or he would masturbate immensely, until he got sick, until he shed blood. It was no use. The lust was in his head and the head was sending blood downstairs. As always, after all: everything is in the head and in the longing towards something forbidden. A mother without the daughter wouldn't be worth anything in that value system, a woman as every other. The daughter could've existed all by herself, because of her age. The devil didn't leave it alone. The perverted atmosphere could be felt in the air, more and more, you could cut it with a knife considering how much perversion was present between them. And it lasted quite a while.

However, he left them after a while, found himself an apartment, started to work regularly. But, they kept hanging out, visiting each other, he would mostly go to them, on the weekends, to lunches, barbecues, drinking. They would always invite him. He knew who was asking for him to be invited. The girl was becoming a bud, still far from a bloomed rose, but was being offered for harvesting, and it was obvious that she wouldn't wait for the blossoming. She wanted to be a beautiful bud and not a bloomed rose with petals falling off. That's what she wanted. Igor K. wanted the same thing but did nothing about it, except look. He never reached for that girl and he wanted to more than anything in the world. That has to be admitted. Only, can a desire without the act be a bad deed, a criminal deed. No, no, we're not going to moralize here, but discuss whether a man who wanted something forbidden but never reached to get it, should be sent to prison. We all pop our eyes out when the bank official is stacking loads of money in front of herself and we would love to take that money, but because of that, because of that desire, we don't go to prison for robbing a bank.

Yes, he did use every opportunity to get near her, to be next to her, so he could watch her. She would move around, hug him, kiss him on the cheek when he comes, sit in his lap, but he always kept his hands down. When he couldn't hold it anymore, he would run into the bathroom. Her mother would often follow him and sneak around the door. Not a lot of thinking was necessary in order for Igor K. to realize that he was being obsessed with a dangerous demon of the sick mind and that it would get more and more difficult for him to restrain himself and resist.

And her, the devil (she was that devil), as if she had felt something with her female instinct and woman's nature given by God, and she was persistent to dare and provoke him with her behavior and acting. She was too intimate towards her dad's best friend and her mother's potential lover. When they would say goodbye she would be close to him for too long, she would squeeze his hand when handshaking, kissed him wetly on the cheek, closer to the mouth each time. While he was staying with them, and later whenever she got the opportunity, and there was plenty of opportunity because her father would often get hammered from whiskey and beer in half of the parties, and he wasn't even around for the other half, because he had to do some urgent jobs, on the call, because there isn't a "*I'll do it tomorrow*" in New York, if you want to stay in the game. When the father left for work or his mother carried him to the bed, where she would then stick around for a while (because he would always want sex when drunk) and they would have to listen to them, Igor K. and her, she would then show up scarcely dressed, in a way only today's girls know, and would get close to him until she would hear the door open and her mother coming back. She was trying to bend over so the unfortunate Igor K. would see her wealth yet intact, to spread her legs and hint what kind of paradise awaits him there. She would literally use every chance she got. And then, she would back down and left Igor K. to the mercy of her mother, which was even more upfront, and quite direct.

The little girl already felt his first urges and their indications, which could be hardly felt by an experienced woman in other situations. Those signals can be received only by talented women. And, it was just a hint, a secret, hidden, almost invisible, available only to those with a rare talent for different nuances. She was a little tease, that little slutty creature. No matter how old she is, a woman can have that no matter what. And like that, instead of a hunter he became the hunted, instead of a predator – a victim. She was the one hunting, she was using him, played with his emotions and passions. To be honest, less with his emotions, it was a lust which could make someone drool. She did it masterfully, subtle, as if she did it a number of times, unlike her mother, who was simple and offered herself unimaginatively in her simplicity, so directly that a man would lose a desire for it. When she would call him "*uncle!*", with her cuddly, innocent little voice, a membrane of passion would already fall upon his eyes, he would see nothing except feel a desire from which he couldn't defend himself and was on the borderline of control.

It is often that the "victims" of pedophilia often know more about sex and predation than the "molester". And have much more experience. Some little girls aged 15-16 look like they are a lot older, dress and behave like experienced women. And they are not attractive to the real pedophiles because they don't have anything child-like on them. Nothing innocent is seen on them. They most often become "victims" when the "molester" pisses them off by rejecting or unfulfilling their desires, when they don't learn a school subject or don't write

their homework and get a bad grade in school, when they are jealous or want to make life worse for their parents, out of revenge. The modern technology and lame laws made it possible for them to easily dishonor and judge people. And in this case, although she knew a lot more than Igor K., who was quite inexperienced, she knew much more about “where the catch was”.

This wasn't like some damn Lolita or any other literary and psychological nonsense and bullshit?! That little girl felt a true sexual urge inside, characteristic to adult women. And, Igor K. already felt the truth that the majority of cases are actually such a situation, except for the small percentage of them when old perverts take advantage of an innocent child of her age. Little girls, aged 14-15 are already prepared for such bullshit. And they are often an equal part of the entire process which usually ends, in today's time, with the unfortunate old man being sent to prison. Rightly so: he knew it was illegal so why did he meddle where he doesn't belong. It is nice to be speeding at two hundred km/h on the highway with a speed limit only half of that, but when you get caught then you know what's coming for you.

Yes, of course, it is against human and state laws, unfortunately it is not against nature's laws, which is what Igor K. felt, already mentally devastated by then. What fucked him up completely, which he didn't know at the time, is the fact that she wasn't a virgin already at her age of 14-15. She wasn't a little girl, she was already a woman whom the Puerto Ricans from the block already used up in every way possible. There was no sign of her hymen in the time when Igor K. was longing precisely for that hymen. Without it, she would've been as disgusting to him as her mother.

However, Igor K. never sexually harassed her, he never even touched her, or talked her into it. She did touch him, a couple of times, innocently, accidentally, just a little bit, while using a crowd, so not with his permission, and always over the clothes, when he couldn't say anything in front of the people and reveal her. That “innocent one”, was at that moment already penetrated into every hole she had. How naive was Igor K., how dumb, how unprepared for life, how much of a loser – it is no wonder that Dragoš took pity on him, that he started to like him, so to say. Because, such a fool, is rarely seen in such form and shape.

*

He was afraid lately from the inevitable transience of time. Namely, he was aware of that inevitability even before, but the fact that life was passing by quickly didn't matter to him until he hit his forties. How everything was simple, quick and simple. A day is being born, and then a night is. Life is being born and from it, death is. There wouldn't be any death without life. The purpose of life is death. But, why does life not last longer and is more certain in the matter of lasting? And why aren't we aware of that, so we can respect and use it more

often, until it is late for subsequent cleverness. I see a neighbor on my fence gate, he is waving some papers. He must've collected the bills from the drunk postman, down at the store. I am stopping my writing. I know he is expecting at least two glasses of brandy for this favor...

When he came into his underwear the first time, (he was a victim of frotteurism by a fourteen year old child, the first time, and Deborah's victim that one time), he ejaculated while they were sitting and watching a movie, in front of her parents, in a semi-dark room, and she was devilishly sitting between her father and Igor K., followed by enraged glances of her mother, and she put her head on Igor K.'s lap, as if it was an accident and fell asleep by accident, aware of what she was doing the whole time, just like the unfortunate owner of the knee knew that, he shivered from the delight so much that the host asked him what was happening to him, whether he was sick, or having a fever or something like that. The housewife didn't ask him anything. She knew where the catch was. But she also had a bush and some for herself. When she ceased the opportunity, later, she just told him:

- You can do me. Not her, you know that! And, don't get any ideas, you'll regret them!

Igor K. was silent. He was standing in front of her with his hands lowered. She grabbed him down there, squeezed so hard it started to hurt him, and said *"guard it, you can easily lose it"* and left *"What did the poor fellow do to get hurt like that"* thought Igor K. about his limb, *"isn't it enough what happened so far?"*. *"What sort of a sluttish crater did they throw me in"*, thought Igor K. once again while preparing to sleep. Normal life situations weren't happening to him for a while now, so he could catch a breath, live peacefully and normally.

It's his own fault, he wanted to smash the everyday life of a transition loser in Serbia. He had to reconcile with his fate, and to live it out as it was given to him. No changes! If there were any, he wouldn't have been what he is. The world is divided to winners and losers. He belonged to the latter group and had to put up with that. If he had, he would've still been in his hometown today, he would take money from his fat mother for beer and cigarettes, he would get drunk and chase the tavern waitresses and local whores. Like this, from day to day, it is getting worse and worse: sectarians, raping, war criminals, vampires, prison, pedophilia, infidelity, whoredom – what else could happen to him!?

A hint. Scarcity. Forbidden. Sneaky. Low. All of that was circling around Igor K., around and inside him. He wasn't aroused by a woman, even though she was a woman and not a child. He was aroused, it is assumed, by the sickness of the situation. And, not to lie to each other, as soon as he started acting like a woman, not being a child anymore, he started to lose that sense of arousal which brought him to madness and led him into various temptations – therefore, he was sick to some degree. The losing of his desire had brought a certain level of anger with the little one. He was facing a number of blackmails, various unpleasant situations, she would call him in the middle of day and night, stopped by his

apartment. And then, one day someone rang the doorbell. When he opened the door, he saw her mother.

- There was enough of playing around – she told him – you are going to prison.

The girl was more mature than her mother, apparently.

Tingles trembled all over his body, and not from excitement but from fear. “*What in God’s name is this now?!*”, he was thinking. What does this old and boney hag want, he wanted the child not the grandmother after all. He wanted but did nothing in his wanting and is completely innocent in front of the law. He isn’t in front of God.

- What prison? Are you insane?

- Prison because you’ve knocked up my underage daughter, you sick bastard!

- Who’s the sick one here? – asked Igor K. and got slapped in his face. It looks like it was meant for him to get hurt by women. Then she jumped on him, grabbed him with her meaty arms around his waist, they wrestled, she was taking her underwear off and trying to get his off. She was heavy and was pressing him with her weight. He was defending and trying to free himself. Eventually he hit her too. And as if the hit regained her senses. She shoved her underwear in her bag, headed towards the door and shouted:

- You are going to rot in prison, black people are going to fuck you, yes they will. You didn’t want such a woman, dumbass! And you could’ve been smart! Now you are going to prison, you motherfucker!

He didn’t believe in that possibility until he saw two police officers at his door in the evening. It was a Sunday afternoon. He assumed he won’t go to work the next day. Maybe the scandal wouldn’t have even happened if the mother didn’t get rejected. However, the stomach would’ve shown the rest but it maybe wouldn’t have pointed to Igor K. immediately.

There was nothing innocent and pure-minded there. Nothing was being used there but was using herself. But laws do not know about finesses, especially about such matters. When the stomach started growing, it looked like Igor K. could not be saved. He survived and experienced a lot of things – it looked like he wouldn’t this one. He thought. Wrongly.

In her eyes, in her look, he didn’t see a little girl, a child, but he saw a woman, and a special whore kind of woman. Maybe a woman in a child’s body was provoking him but it was all because of his perversion and crime deed. Maybe he was aroused by the whole situation, where the mother of that child was offering herself to him, even hinted that she was aware of the glances he was giving her daughter. And maybe he imagined it all in his hurt head, because it wasn’t entirely his, referring to the head, since “those” times. He wasn’t imagining the arrest, however, it was happening. He thought that he was somehow supposed to tip off Dragoš about how he wasn’t guilty for what they were charging him. But he thought afterwards: why would a killer care about

morals? He knew he was wrong. As much as he knew about killing, that much did Dragoš keep some morals. Isn't he, Igor K., the best example for such a statement?! He would've never even met these people if it weren't for Dragoš and his men. However, he concluded finally that it would be good that he clarifies everything to Dragoš somehow.

The problem of today's youth is that they start their sexual life early and the laws do not recognize that. And then a problem appears, when someone is of legal age and someone isn't. And then it is counted as rape. And then the hardened killers pursue justice over pedophiles and rapists – by raping them. Luckily, neither then nor now, did he get to a real prison because it all ended relatively quickly. The second lockup didn't look anything like the first, tourist, one, because he was locked up for a total of two days and was alone in his cell. He didn't even get in front of the judge and the girl confessed everything. She was quite frightened, and was saying more than she should have. Igor K. knew. He knew who settled the matter, who pressured the little slut and reminded the parents of some old debts. It was his toothed guardians. Instead of doing prison time for selling drugs every day, the crooked Puerto Rican got into jail because of a fuck.

*

As soon as he got out of the detention house, a message was delivered to him: *“Go back to Serbia. Everyone already knows where you are. You were all over the newspapers, to your regret. Your picture appeared, fuck your name. You are safer in Serbia, it will be easier to guard you, considering the fact that the mobsters who wanted to avenge your relative aren't after you anymore”*. Almost every one of them is dead, and, even if any of them had survived, it is now known that his wife ratted him out, there was a continuation of the story. She couldn't deal with his young women anymore, and there was also money involved. A lot of money. And that crazy, sick one Jelena also got lost completely. Her bloody trails were followed for a while and then as if she perished into the ground. Not a clue, nor a sound from her. It could've been assumed, considering the life she was living and how much she had inflicted pain on others, that the hand of justice or revenge caught up with her. It is unlikely that she settled down herself. The madness was stronger than her consideration and inflicting pain to others was the only pleasure she could feel and that fulfilled her. Not even the heavy drugs helped her lately to catch a breather. It was assumed that she had enough of her worries and that she had long forgotten about Igor K., the small time pawn in her life, a caprice along the way, someone who looked like the dozens she had gotten her hands on.

He went to the bank, took out the money he saved up, and then went to the apartment to pack. He didn't pack anything. He opened up a bottle of *Jack Daniels* and turned up a song from his youth and repeated it again and again

until he had emptied out the bottle. The phone rang a few times, he didn't answer it. A message was left on the answering machine a couple of times: "Keep my little hair". He just kept on listening to the song, drinking and thinking:

*Behind the windows of a restless dream
I feel their shadows
I am watching as they are dancing through the wall
Sons of bitches*

He was kind of happy because he was returning home. He knew from the beginning that he doesn't belong here. He knew he didn't belong anywhere.

*Shut your mouth it is isn't worth the craft
Shake the bitterness all the way
There are their men on the strategic places
Sons of bitches*

He is now going home, and whatever happens, let it happen. He might as well die, but at least he'll die a man, without the shit and servitude, without humiliation and the life of a lower species. He was a loser in Serbia, here he isn't even that. You have to lose something in order to be a loser: he has nothing to lose here.

*Blood puppets without a shred of idea
Killers on the road
A bad night I am getting out of town
They are coming ...
Sons of bitches*

If only he had done a portion of what he'd paid for?!
*I went too far to the utmost limit
The sea was taking from the sky
Signs of storm on the other side
I saw them mocking in the darkness*

He realizes, he shouldn't have ran from the sons of bitches or daughters, he should've fought. But: how? He didn't even have a cell phone when everyone else did. A bad approach. A cell phone wasn't necessary, a pair of balls were. He and those like him should ask themselves: where did they lose their balls?!

*A cold night before great events
I don't want to remember anymore
They knew where they would find me
Sons of bitches²⁰*

He stated completely drunk, before falling into a bad dream, before departing to Serbia: "Thank you Johnny, thank you in this far away world. You ran away on time. But: it is never the time to run. It is sometimes time to stop and stay, to die in a fight against the sons of bitches. I am leaving now, to stay".

²⁰ A Serbian song from the band Azra called Kurvini sinovi (Sons of bitches), by Branimir Johnny Stulic.

Igor K. sat on a plane the next evening, with a bad stomach and vomit mouth. As soon as he crossed the border on the terminal, he had lost any chance of ever returning to America. He didn't care. He had a bag with documents, some money, the Journalist's notebook and the video tapes. He didn't bring anything else from America. Not even the sweet and little pubic hair. He left it all behind him. He realized that all he ever needed from there, was oblivion. Not just from there, but from his entire life so far.

Yes, a lot of things did Igor K. have on his oblivion list. Will he manage to settle down, to settle down his soul?! He didn't have to feel anything, it was only important that he forgets, as much as possible. He won't be able to forget everything after all. There are a lot of things that couldn't be forgotten, even he managed, there are a lot of ways of reminding him, for example, when his penis tip or asshole stings and hurt, when the weather changes. There, not everything is related to the soul, when talking about suffering. Sometimes the body suffers more. And the body is something on the soul. The body is bodily on the bodiless soul.

Both equally hurt him. However, he did feel a little bit lucky inside: he was returning home. Although he didn't have a home for a while now, there is an apartment building in which he has a commercial store and an apartment, on that spot. It doesn't matter, he is returning to his own air, among his waters, trees, snows and rains, winds and humidity. He is coming back to loserness: his own! He can even die afterwards. Only when he sees his city, once more.

He saw it during nighttime. While passing by. He picked up the papers from his lawyer who was running the business with the house and the property, took the property documents for the store and apartment, collected the rents that were paid so far and saw Zoki. Only when he greeted him, did he realize that he didn't bring him a gift back.

- The luggage was lost – he lied – I bought you a computer so you can write your speeches in it.

- Never mind – told him Zoki – I keep them in my head anyways.

Zoki knew that Igor K. wasn't one of those people who can give anything to anyone. He was wrong. This was a different Igor K. When he said goodbye to Zoki, not telling him where he would go or what he would do, he sent his driver, that picked him up at the airport, back to his lawyer, whom he had given money and asked to deliver the most expensive laptop he can find, to Zoki tomorrow, even if it meant that he went to Belgrade at that moment to look for it there. Except for Dragoš and Zoki, he, in his second and downward half of life, didn't count anyone else as his own.

Already that night, in the late hours, he arrived to his grandfather's house, in the Zlodošljaci village, about fifty miles from his hometown. Someone tidied and cleaned it up before his arrival, changed the light bulbs and put locks, brought some groceries and bed sheets. Igor K. had arrived in his new home, where he would start his life and from where he plans to leave with only his feet

forward, while being carried away. He doesn't have anywhere to go from here and even if he did, he wouldn't. If death comes one day, there is no prettier place than this one, for it to happen.

*

And only there did Igor K. begin to live as a human, for the first time since his school days, when he was careless for the last time. Since then a lot of time has passed and a lot of rain has fallen. He did live in the meantime but never how a human should. It seemed that he had finally found his peace. And, as if he did.

He lived a humble life, but didn't lack in anything. Money was coming in regularly and he would always have more than he needed. His savings, however humble they were, he never touched. He ate little, drank a little more and smoked. There, that is about it. He didn't have a television, computer, phone, car. He would light up his old wood burning stove in summer and winter, to make some coffee. A couple of corn cobs and there's the pleasure. The neighbors and relatives would bring him, even over his demands, some milk, cheese, vegetables, fruits and meat. They were only stingy with the brandy because they would drink as much as they would make. And, he also became a beer lover.

From time to time, he would get an urge to write something down, he would do it with whatever he finds nearby, any piece of scrap paper or a wooden artisan pencil. He would throw the written papers in the drawer of a sky-blue cabinet in which the utensils were located. He didn't do it regularly and with a plan but in fragments and spontaneously, for example:

With his bloody eyes, on the edge of his strength, Dragoš would be awake, sitting on the high wooden doorstep of the front door to the cabin. Behind him, I was lying in his bed. I would too stay awake until sunrise, when the sleep would trick me. His business in the yard would wake me up when it was already daylight.

Or:

She returned earlier from school that day. I was the only one in the apartment. Her father was working and her mother was wandering around the shops somewhere. She told me that they made a herbarium in school, that day. She went to her room and returned. She was holding a white paper in her hands, that was folded over in half. She opened it and on the folded edge there was a small back hair. She told me that it was her hair, from down there, and that she is giving it for my male herbarium. Yes, that is what she said: male herbarium. I can get one of mom's too, she said and went into the room. I got sick that day. I got a fever.

Or:

To lie unconscious overnight on a fresh grave, raped and beaten, what more can surprise me in life? And yet, some other things happened to me later.

Or:

After a while I've found out the truth about the death of my relative, under the mountain. His wife set him up with her lover, she tipped him off. She married the same idiot a year later and then they got blown up a few months later, on a beautiful spring morning while the fucker was starting his jeep after a whole night of drinking in some tavern on the highway. There, I suffered a lot for nothing. That is what it is in the land of Serbia. The innocent get hurt. What am I saying, it is like that in the entire world.

He had to run away twice, neither guilty nor charged. They were accusing him for snitching and pedophilia, but he neither snitched nor molested the child. He didn't fuck but got fucked. In any case. His life was being demolished for years. That is true. He was such a brand and harvest. And then, in less than a day: everything crashed. Before that he thought that he had nothing to lose, and after that he cried bitterly for losing everything. What he had lost was a lot. You have nothing and lose everything, and that hurts you a lot. There is no recovery from that.

Circumcised and fucked, he headed off to the wide world. He came back from it as a pedophile. He isn't a Muslim or a Jew, and he doesn't have his foreskin. He is not a homo but they fucked him. He didn't molest children but they accused him. He wondered if he would ever step into the normal, willingly and not by force? Does he have any right to some of his life? Maybe this exact little house and wooden gate at the bottom of the yard, are the answer to those questions?! Maybe this is, and it is, the peace about which he dreamed?! He is only missing a woman, she is still missing. The right one whom he never met or had. And there isn't even internet here. His love is somewhere far away, circling the web, unavailable to him. If only he had a picture of his other mother.

The best and worst in a human is buried somewhere deep. It takes time to get there. A sack of salt or half a lifetime. It cannot be any different. Otherwise you have to dig deep, long and persistently, and maybe some great fortune or misfortune would bring all of it to the surface. Sometimes we know someone their entire life and don't get to know the best in them. Sometimes we love them and don't know their dark side. We often spend our life near close strangers: we eat, sleep, mate and die together and never really get to know each other, we are strangers.

- Mara is sitting on the stone well, raised her legs, won't give her pussy for the German to have – said Mile provoked by nothing, and took a sip from his bottle.

Dobriila is teasing him:

- Mile, if she won't give it, why did she raise her leg? When I raise them I give it, if there is someone with the possibility, which is, let me say, rare here. You only hold those bottles, you drunk fucks.

Mile is silent. The others are silent as well. Everyone is silent. Some: are smoking. Everyone is drinking.

When Dobrila went inside to finish some work, then they started shouting around:

- You have no idea Mile, huh? Silent like a pussy. You got scared by the lady owner, she is offering herself to you and you can't do it.

And Mile is responding philosophically:

- I don't want to mess with her, I have more beer notches that I owe her than Marica has at the station toilet.

He kept quiet and then said to himself:

- The frog climbed on the pole, scratched her beaver on the three-phase cord.

And Dobrila yelled from the store:

- If you can explain how a frog can climb a pole and scratch without the electricity hitting her, you can drink free this whole day. I may even let you scratch me.

Everyone is laughing. Mile stood up and headed home. He isn't mad. He is a little confused. He said, instead of a "goodbye":

- What the grandma longed for, that came to her through the door.

- Your grandma fucked your mother! – Dobrila is shouting after him.

Tomorrow he said to Igor K.:

- These villagers don't understand me. I'm a world man, like you.

He loved to talk, beside the jokes, how he went to Germany one time in the seventies, he wanted to stay and work there but he didn't like it. He probably didn't like the work itself, and then everything else. And maybe he'd never even seen Germany. Maybe he never even went further than the neighborly village, except when he was in the army somewhere in Slovenia, but that doesn't count.

- I went to Germany before Joca the German – he said heavily.

While Igor K. is taking a beer from the refrigerator and paying Dobrila, she is telling him:

- Mile is a faggot, he is afraid of women. Did you notice that he can't even look at my tits.

He felt uncomfortable, Mile is sitting outside and waiting for a cold beer. He could hear.

- Some faggots, whom I had the opportunity of meeting, weren't frightened at all – Igor K. tried to joke with himself.

Dobrila didn't understand him.

- You don't understand what I'm, saying, Mile isn't a queer, he is just a sissy, like in his human qualities. He isn't a man, how should I put it. We don't have those real ones in the village, god forbid, those "geys".

Dobrila is right, Igor K. is thinking, those at the cemetery weren't gay either. Gays are good people who don't want to be neither men, nor women, like Mile (Dobrila considers this), and should be understood when you realize what

kind of men and women we meet every day. They should be understood, Igor K. is thinking, while looking at Dobrila.

Mile doesn't know what they were talking about and what they said about him, he just got lost in his thoughts and said philosophically:

- A woman is, my brother, only jewelry around the cunt. Nothing else!

*

Darkness. And then a dull and grey light. Igor K. was waking up from his sleep. He felt that he was in a strange position. He was tied up and lying on his bed. He recognized his room in his old mother's house, the cracked ceiling and the blue one-sided wooden window. Behind the window, he noticed a rusty tin can with the *Marvel-of-Peru*, which his aunt Smilja brought him, his mother's sister, when he moved in there. He closed his eyes, and then saw it. He didn't feel the pain from the hit in the head yet, he wasn't even aware that he got hit, in front of his house, when he was returning home from the store last night, a little tipsy from the beer. On a shaky and dried up wooden chair, across him, Jelena was sitting, with short hair, dressed in a t-shirt and camouflage pants. There isn't a sign of her former beauty, noticed Igor K. for himself. He had went through a lot already, to let anything surprise or frighten him anymore.

- I had been looking all over for you and barely found you – said Jelena – If you hadn't gone to see that dumb Zoki, I wouldn't even now. But, I mean, the man is a total idiot, and an idiot who talks a lot. There is no Drago[to guard you now. I sought you more because of him, than because of you. What are you, a common servant, a dog. But you are my dog and my servant and I will be the judge of you. But Drago[is something more. Unfortunately my blood enemy as well. I think he killed the Commandant, and that one was a great executioner and an even greater sadist, so I kind of loved him.

Once, just once, did he go outside this village, to meet Zoki at a nearby village, so that Zoki can give him a book, to have lunch and to meet briefly, and: there you go. They were just kidding around. They didn't even mention the ugly things. Zoki had brought a book for him which he got excited about. His poetry note is always felt, Igor K. thought.

- As Mile would say: life is like that, hairy and rough, when you shave it, it isn't worth shit – said Igor K.

Jelena looked at him strangely, "*maybe he had lost his mind, that faggot motherfucker*", she thought, and Igor K. was with Zoki in his thoughts, in some tavern a few days ago. They were sitting next to their table. Three of them. Nurtured madams in their mid-eighties. All dressed up, with too much jewelry and make up on, they were devouring large amounts of barbecue. It was noticed only then, with all the devouring, munching and juicy stuffing of kebabs in their mouth, that they are maybe not such madams as it would appear on the first and outside glance.

Zoki told him, while pointing to them:

- Well fuck it, what does it matter, it is a crisis, and we are no longer in our finest age, it is important to do something, even with the grandmas.

- If they fuck like the eat, it wouldn't be that bad – Igor K. answered.

Then they also started devouring the barbecue, although they didn't act like some gentlemen even before that. They started drinking some rose wine with seltzer water. In the meantime the grandmas finished eating and left, without them noticing it, while their place was taken by three even more nurtured and significantly younger madams (although not in their youth age but twenty or so years younger than the last ones, like his favorite milf, VC). At some point Zoki raised his head from the plate and said when he saw them:

- This rose wine is really good. That is the charm of quality wine: one glass and the world is already nicer and those ladies look even better and younger.

They ordered more wine in the hopes that after a couple of bottles the milfs would look like teenage girls. However, it eventually turned out that the wine wasn't as good. And for the better. Igor K. didn't do so well the last time he wanted something younger.

- Hit the bastard until he regains his sense! – ordered Jelena.

- Fuck you! – said Igor K. to her.

- Oh, I will – she answered indefinitely.

Igor K. felt that someone headed towards the tied up him, probably to beat and torture him, maybe even do the same as when he felt hot streams inside of him. But then he heard some noise in the hallway, some black creatures stormed into the room, and, again: darkness.

He was woken up, with a pain in his head at this point. He was lying on his bed, normally, wasn't tied up or God forbid something else. So, a dream?! "*Thank God*", he thought. Everything was still there: the attic, the window, the *Marvel-of-Peru*, the chair. He stood up slowly, delirious and tottering headed towards the window. He must've had a few more last night, he was thinking. He was trying to open the swollen window. On the chair, he spotted something red, blood-like, barely looking like a stain, a dot. He realized. The Journalist's notebook which was standing on the inner window frame, that couldn't be opened, was missing, and the papers from the drawer were missing too, the ones he threw in there. Instead of them he found a leather necklace with some pendant on which some strange Arab letters were written. He recognized the marks of sewing with a thick needle. He slowly closed the drawer, as if he was scared that he would wake up someone in the room.

He went outside and shouted:

- Thank you Dragoš's vampiireees!!! Thaaaank yoouuuu mister Iva and say hello to Osmaaaan!!!

And then headed down the road on a sunny morning, towards the store to get drunk and make a new life with Dobrila, in the storeroom. Given to him. Given to us.

THE END