

7th YEAR

A SEA OF words

YOUNG PEOPLE
COMBATING HATE
SPEECH ONLINE

Short stories by 15 young writers

A Sea of Words

2014 edition - 7th year

**Young People Combating
Hate Speech Online**

Short stories by 15 young writers

IEMed.
European Institute of the Mediterranean

 **Anna Lindh
Foundation**
EUROMED

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Contents

Foreword. Senén Florensa	6
Seven Years in Dreamland. Martyna Chrześcijańska. Poland	9
Samoubice s leđa. Mladen Grgić. Crna Gora	12
Brokeback Suicides. Mladen Grgić. Montenegro	18
الحُب يأتي من الشَّمال أحياناً. سيد إسماعيل. فلسطين	23
Love Comes from the North. Sayed Ismail. Palestine	29
Dan planete Zemlje (22.4.2014.) Zemlja i zakon, kultura i pseća govna Amela Sarajlić. Bosna i Hercegovina	34
The Day of the Planet Earth (the 22nd of April 2014). Earth and Law, Culture and Dog's Poo Amela Sarajlić. Bosnia and Herzegovina	39
A Summer Morning. Slavena Zaharieva. Bulgaria	44
صراع بين حب وكراهي. محمود المه. مصر	47
Love and Hate Conflict. Mahmoud El Mohr. Egypt	51
To Γατόψαρο. Ηλίας Κολοκούρης, Ελλάδα	54
Catfish. Ilias Kolokouris. Greece	59
Ode alla frontiera. Giulio Pitroso. Italia	64
Ode to the Border. Giulio Pitroso. Italy	68
النافذة الزرقاء! وسام عماد العزام. الأردن	72
The Virtual Window. Wissam Emad Mo'hd Alazzam. Jordan	75
Mana interneta dzīve. Agnija Kazuša. Latvijas Republika	77
My Internet Life. Agnija Kazuša. Latvia	83
Kapliczka. Jarosław Macnar. Polska	89
Little Chapel. Jarosław Macnar. Poland	95
A Message from the Future. Petra Iuliana Pintelei. Romania	101

La ciutat fosca. Martí Vilagut. Espanya	103
The Dark City. Martí Vilagut. Spain	106
فسيفساء. عامري عواطف. تونس	109
Mosaic. Amri Awatef. Tunisia	113
حلمٌ على الحدود. سحر عمّار. تونس	117
A Dream on the Border. Sahar Ammar. Tunisia	121

Foreword

Senén Florensa Executive President,
European Institute of the Mediterranean

The project “A Sea of Words”, jointly promoted by the European Institute of the Mediterranean and the Anna Lindh Foundation, is being held this year for the seventh time. The objective of this contest is, once again, to contribute to the promotion of dialogue between countries in Europe and the Mediterranean through the exchange of experiences and knowledge between youths. The slogan chosen this year, in the framework of the European Council campaign “No Hate Speech Movement”, is “Young People Combating Hate Speech Online”. Thus, the content of the short stories not only seeks to reflect on the existence of speech that encourages racism and discrimination but also to put forward ways to counteract these trends from several perspectives.

Access to new technologies has brought about countless possibilities for sharing, creating and interacting with other people but can also lead to situations of abuse and discrimination that we must combat effectively. Youths, as users of the social networks and new communication tools, are vulnerable to these situations, as they are exposed to possible hate, intolerance, racist and human rights violation speech, as well as other forms, which are sometimes very subtle and influence their personalities. This year’s objective is to raise awareness among youths through the short stories so that they can debate and act together in defence of human rights and fight against any form of intolerance online. The inclusion of “A Sea of Words” in this campaign shows our concern to combat this very recent and sometimes unknown form of injustice and abuse. The participation of almost 200 youths from 29 countries renews the confidence in the idea that youths are aware of the possibilities of the internet and of the responsibility involved in using such a powerful tool. In total, since its creation, the contest “A Sea of Words” has had the participation of over 1,600 young writers from the Euro-Mediterranean countries, of whom around 60% were women.

The richness resulting from the existence of different cultures and traditions in the Euro-Mediterranean area must be preserved as one of the most valuable heritages surrounding us. Access to new technologies enables a range of interactions, learning and contacts which no one would have imagined 20 years ago. We must all take advantage of the opportunity the internet offers us to get to know the Other better, learn from him or her and grow together through mutual respect. In this context, the winning short stories of the contest seek to promote the teaching and dissemination of human rights, the participation of youths and online literacy.

The three young winners of this year’s “A Sea of Words” have clearly shown the combative spirit that we have sought to foster at the IEMed. The story “Seven Years in Dreamland”, by the young Pole Martyna Chrzęścijańska, takes us to a hypothetical future in which change of identity and evasion from reality seek to provide human beings with a happy life. The second winning story, “Brokeback Suicides”, by the Montenegrin Mladen Grgić, shows how the

internet can mercilessly distort something as serious as the joint suicide of two friends from childhood. The third award was for the story “Love Comes from the North” by the Palestinian Sayed Ismail, which describes the feelings to be confronted by a young Muslim from Gaza and two Israeli and Jewish sisters who enter Palestine incognito and discover daily life there for themselves, which is very different from how the media describes it.

The 15 short stories selected this year show the relevance of and need for respect of the Other as a basis of learning and coexistence, not only on the internet, but also in real life. To this end, the IEMed and the Anna Lindh Foundation will continue to work in this direction with all the instruments within our reach in order to try to offer youths in the Euro-Mediterranean region a future full of possibilities.



Award Ceremony of the 2014 Contest “A Sea of Words”

Seven Years in Dreamland

Martyna Chrześcijańska. Poland

I think it was in 2089 when we discovered we could leave the world. My grandmother used to say that her grandmother said it had become impossible to live in the previous one. When the war that nobody remembers anymore broke out, society split up into different segments that lost contact with each other. I don't know, maybe that was nothing more than a dark scenario created to justify our world. What is it they say? A group of people found a way to leave that world and move into cyberspace. When I think about this, I imagine it wasn't easy – they had to create everything from scratch. They wanted to avoid repeating old patterns and their new world was supposed to have nothing to do with the previous one, but I assume their imagination was limited by what they were used to. I would never say this to my grandmother, who's a loyal fan of our place and refuses to admit that its roots go back to the old realm. People never believe in roots here. To some extent, they're right – they don't have any because their lives are continuously changing.

A group of hackers known as WWW were the ones who started it all. No, actually, it was even before that. At first, more and more people were spending most of their time in Dreamland, living alternative lives. Back then the world was horrible, so this was their only way to escape. The way the story goes, some of them got lost and couldn't come back. Their families found the best hackers in the world and persuaded them to help their relatives. The hackers agreed to, but no one could have anticipated that they'd also find the special portals that let people move into cyberspace. WWW was created by an independent group of specialists who became saviors of the previous society. People moved to the new world and started living new lives there. But not all of them. Why only some of them managed to escape and what happened to the rest of the society remains a big mystery. We don't talk about it, because it's part of the past.*

New laws were created and our imagination was no longer limited by the material world. We were free, not bound to matter. Tragedy in the old realm had been caused mainly by wars between different nations and cultures. Because the horrific destruction was based on racial, religious and cultural differences, the first thing we decided to do in the new world was to give up having fixed identities. We enacted a law requiring every citizen of our world to trade in one life and identity for a different one every seven years. That's long enough to enjoy one lifestyle and identity, while short enough to remember you can't hold on to it. Ours was a perfect society.

I sat in the office waiting for my last client. The last rays of sun shed light across the desk, and I was thinking that although the summer had started late, it was much hotter than usual at this time of year. Either some programmers had made a mistake, or they were making changes in the laws governing the weather.

* This probably stands for World Walking Wizards, a reference to their informal, nomadic way of life.

The client came in. I straightened up a little bit and smiled at him. He was in his fifties and wore a lime-green suit that contrasted with his dark skin but perfectly complemented his bright, green eyes. It reminded me of my young nephew, who was full of the joy only children can have. He was at the very end of his seven-year period, which we call Identity Time. My job was to inform clients about new identities for the next Identity Time and provide them with any help they might need. New identities were assigned by the System on the basis of previous Identity Times. The main idea was to have everybody experience as many cultural, religious and gender identities as possible.

“Could I have your name, please?” I asked.

He gave a very long, completely incomprehensible name, which I took to be Arabic. I checked the database and found I was right. The shortened version of his name was Mudy.

“I will check the next Identity Time for you.”

This was what I usually said to my clients. He could expect anything – to start new life within the Jewish religion, for example, or as an American businessman. Most Identity Times were appropriate, so our clients were never very stressed over these changes. We got rid of all forms of poverty, misery and failure.

“Actually, I don’t want you to check it for me,” he said.

I looked at him, surprised.

“How can I help you then?”

“I do not want to know who I am going to be, that is not what interests me.” He had a very strange English accent, and I was wondering if it was not a holdover from previous Identity Times. Residues of certain traits remain sometimes. They support diversity.

“I would like to ask you if it is possible to extend my current Identity Time. Actually, I would like to live out my life like this. I do not want any changes.”

I was surprised. Usually people were quite excited about their new Identity Times. Change-overs were a big success in our world – people understood variety to be an inevitable part of human life. And even if they were not excited about what was coming, they accepted it. This was the main premise of our world and arguing with it was not an option.

“I’m afraid that’s not possible,” I said calmly. “Why don’t you want to change your identity? Seven years is a long time, long enough for you to get bored with it.”

“I am happy with my identity. I don’t remember all my Identity Times, but I know that I have been a successful jazz guitarist, an Orthodox patriarch, a Chinese doctor working with children, and a Jewish writer. I am not sure if I was happy in those times, but I know that I am now and I don’t want that to change.”

“Who are you now?” I asked.

“I am an Arab and my wife has Balkan roots. I am the happy father of five children.”

“Are you Muslim?”

“No, I’m an atheist. I know I didn’t choose to be. It was just the System’s assignment, but I don’t want to philosophise about it. I am just a shopkeeper who wants his life to continue as it is. Can you help me?”

I didn’t say anything. Obviously, it was not possible, but it was the first request of this kind that I had come across in my life.

“No, I’m sorry,” I said. “I can only check your next Identity Time, and that is all I can do for you.”

He was my last client, so I closed up the office and went home. It was only a pleasant, fifteen-minute walk home for a warm summer evening. I didn't enjoy it, though. I was completely confused. I started thinking about our Identity Times Law. The main principles of our world targeted the evil that had destroyed the previous one, and had as their aim to make us all conscious of the temporary character of identity. As a result, it didn't make sense to discriminate against or belittle anybody based on their religion, culture or skin colour, because we all had an equal chance of taking on an identity similar to our neighbor's. Sooner or later we'd be living somebody else's life, so no one dared criticize another person, someone they might be one day. People usually quite welcomed the changes, if they weren't frankly indifferent to them. But what would happen if somebody wanted to hold on to an identity until the end? It would be against the law, for sure.

When I got home I went to bed, but couldn't get to sleep until 5 am. I was thinking that constant changes in identity can hinder the emergence of values attached to any of these identities. At the same time, emotional attitudes towards identity can lead to conflicts, intolerance and discrimination – problems we will never solve.

But maybe there was an error in our way of thinking and our law. Was it possible, I wondered, to be attached to one identity while at the same time accepting other identities that will never be your own? On the other hand, aren't we discriminating against the man who wants to continue in his life by not letting him do so? What a vicious circle humankind endures, I thought.

I fell asleep as the first rays of the sun entered my room. When I woke up, I had to deal with a horrifying jolt of reality. I think it was the first time I had experienced reality in Dreamland. When I opened the morning newspaper over breakfast, I saw a big picture of yesterday's client and a long article about how he'd attempted suicide the night before.

In our world death never comes. There is only transportation to different Identity Times. The only way that you can give up this place is through suicide. But it had only been tried by one person at the very beginning, just after the first group of people moved to our world. Nobody even thinks about it now, because our lives are good and, what's more, we can't know what happens after death. Some say it would mean a return to the previous world, where the war continues. I don't believe this, though.

I called my office to tell them I wasn't going to work today. Instead I went to the hospital to see my client.

I knocked on the door and went in. His eyes were closed, his face emotionless. When I sat down on the chair by his bed, he opened his eyes and looked at me with an animated, almost child-like expression.

"I think I understand," was all I said. He smiled and said nothing.

It was just the beginning, though, not the end.

Why am I telling all this? Because this was how we started the movement Mudy and I organized. It turned out that what happened to him was just the beginning of bigger changes. Now I see there are no ideal, permanent solutions, only a constant fight for our rights and those of others. We are searching for new solutions, to try to answer the question of how to protect rights to identity in our society but still support the acceptance of a variety of identities. We're still looking for answers, but at least we're now aware of our mistakes.

Samoubice s leđa

Mladen Grgić. Crna Gora

Prošao je utabanom stazom petljajući se u rastinje. Jednom rukom se borio sa granama i njihovim okrutnim bodljama, dok je drugom stezao bocu rakije, kao da je najdragocjeniji lijek, ili eliksir mladosti. Sjetio se da u džepu ima ključeve od auta. Da li je trebao da ih ostavi? Da li je trebao da ga uništi, ili čak možda da se sa njim surva niz liticu. Uostalom, neka je uzeo ključeve sa sobom, pomislio je, auto je svakako na ime firme, banke će ih ionako uzeti. Uzeće sve! Zašto neko ko se ubija uopšte razmišlja o tim tehničkim stvarima. O čemu uopšte i razmišlja jedan normalan čovjek koji želi da se ubije. Da li se normalni ubijaju, pitao se.

Proklete misli. Blago životinjama.

Pred njim je bila litica, talasi su zapljuskivali stijene, crvene kao krv, mjesečina je bila gotovo savršena ali more je još uvijek bilo nemirno od sinoćne bure. Kao da tom čudesnom plavom niko nije rekao da se smiri, kao da odbija da se preda toj mjesečini, sjajnijoj od sunca.

To je mjesto na kojem je nekada dovodio djevojke, gdje se prvi put poljubio, prvi put vodio ljubav, zaplakao zbog ljubavi, i prvi put rekao – volim te. Kraj će doći tamo gdje je bio početak svega, ima li šta prirodnije u tome. Opet se sjetio nje, mislio je na one noći kada bi ostali da spavaju na istom tom mjestu a onda izmišljali laži kako bi se opravdali pred roditeljima. Prvo smijeh a onda suze. Osjećaj tuge kojoj se ne nazire kraj.

Kako tada nije mogao da zna da je to vrhunac njegovog života, trenutak kada je bio naj-srećniji. Zašto to ne možemo da znamo, zašto je čovjek toliko pohlepan da uvijek misli da može bolje, da može više. Zašto nas truju, od malena, od škole i od treninga, da sve može bolje. E pa ne može dragi moji, ne može. Sreća ima svoj vrhunac, mi ne znamo kada se on desi. Ali znamo kada je prošao, i to onda kada jednog dana pogledamo na svoj život i pronađemo u biblioteci sjećanja taj jedan trenutak, ili period života kada smo bili bezbrižni. Nekome je trajao duže, nekome kraće, ali je svima imao kraj. Nećeš uživati u penziji, ti čovječe. Ona samo služi kao mučenje pred sam kraj. Životarenje i privid sreće. Sreća je bezbrižnost, sreća je kada si sam, kada je sve tiho, i kada se osmjehneš, i da, kada imaš budućnost, kada ne znaš da će ukoro biti kraj. Sve drugo je trenutak zadovoljenja nekih fizioloških potreba, koji može ličiti na sreću, ali nije. Ti, mali čovječe, na nju nemaš pravo!

Da li je ona srećna sa onim prokletom savršenim čovjekom, pitao se. Kako nečija sreća može biti uzrok nečije tuge? Da li je i to proporcionalno na svijetu, da li za svakog ko postane nesrećan negdje, neko drugi, drugdje, postane srećan? Ko o tome odlučuje? Bog? On ne vjeruje, pa sada će ubivši samoga sebe dokazati njegovo nepostojanje – on ne odlučuje o njegovom životu, o smrti još manje. Ja sam bog svog života, ja odlučujem, i sada ću staviti tačku na ovu tragičnu, ali makar uzbudljivu priču, mislio je. Opet mu misli lutaju. Opet nije skoncentrisan na ono zbog čega je tu. Na smrt. Svoju. Osjeća da ga glava počinje boljeti. Možda je trebao uzeti neku tabletu, pomisli. Tabletu? Prekora sam sebe. Ubijaš se idiote, zar je bitna ta prokleta migrena, sada si joj našao najbolji lijek.

Taj njegov posljednji dan, pošto je završio sve moguće malverzacije, kako bi ostalo makar nešto imovine iza njega, njegovoj ćerci Asiji, šetao je gradom satima ne bi li sreo jedinu ženu koju je stvarno volio, sada to zna. Kasno.

Obilazio je sva mjesta, sve kafane, stajao ispred vrtića, šetao korzom, sjedio na klupama na kojima su nekada visili... Sve je bilo uzalud. Nije je sreo. Želio je da joj sve kaže, da proba zadnji put. U njoj je vidio spas. Spas koji čovjek može jedino sam naći. Hoće li patiti, hoće li ga žaliti kada joj jave, pomisli. Gdje će ona biti kada čuje tu vijest i od koga će je čuti, šta li će imati na sebi, hoće li biti sama. On bi volio da ona bude sama u tom trenutku, već je zamišljao kako grli jastuk i plače. Ali to više neće biti njegov problem. Sada je kraj.

Kako uopšte čovjek dodje do litice, da li je ona uvijek tu i samo je potrebno da se oklizneš i da odeš u nepovrat? U ovoj zemlji, vjerovao je, svi žive na litici. Tek ponekad grabe neko stanje nalik sreći, ali svi, makar velika većina, umire nesrećna i jadna. To je zla kob ovog prokletog naroda, na ovoj prokletu lijepoj zemlji.

Dok je ispijao rakiju sve teže kontrolišući kaos u glavi, Petar je čuo neko šuškanje, neko se probijao kroz rastinje. Je li ovo moguće, pomislio je, zar čovjek nikada ne može biti sam.

Iz žbunja se pojavila prilika koju nije očekivao. Je li to moguće, pomisli.

— Šta ti radiš ovdje?

— Ja... Ma ništa. A ti, nesrećo?

— Je li ti to pištolj u ruci?

— Je li tebi to rakija u ruci?

— Jeste.

— Daj 'vamo i ne seri.

Lice mu je bilo zaleđeno, gledao je svaki pokret svog davno izgubljenog prijatelja koji je potezao dugačak, predugačak gutljaj rakije. Nisu se vidjeli toliko godina. Slušali su toliko puta jedan o drugome, pozdravljali se preko raznih zajedničkih prijatelja, ali nikada, zadnjih deset godina se nisu vidjeli. Pa ni u prolazu. Sada su gledali jedan drugoga, izgubljeni. Bili su nerazdvojni na studijama, obojica uspješni a nikada ljubomorni jedan na drugoga. Bilo je to iskreno i jako prijateljstvo – makar su tako mislili. Onda su ih stipendije odvele na različite krajeve, poslovi povećali tu daljinu, a obaveze učinile ostalo. Čak i kasnije kada su se obojica vratila kući, prvi kao mladi beskrupulozni biznismen a drugi kao obećavajući mladi političar, nisu se srećali. Nikada do sada. Na litici. Na kraju.

Edin očisti usta rukavom, protrese se dok mu je rakija prodirala u sve kapilare na tijelu. Na trenutak zatvori oči, i ispusti neki neartikulisani krik.

Edin je obećavao puno, bio vidjen kao novo lice u sistemu ogreznom u korupciji. Po povratku iz Amerike dobio je neko nižerangirano mjesto u ministarstvu finansija, onda u ministarstvu za spoljnu politiku. Uspjeh je bio brz iako ga niko iz sistema nije volio. Voljeli su ga stranci, bio je zvijezda među stranim diplomatama, predmet divljenja. «Gospodin među divljacima», znao je da kaže u privatnim razgovorima ambasador Francuske. Pominjali su ga u svakom izvještaju, i neformalno uvijek tražili njegovo unaprijedjenje – jer to bi, kako je rekao jedan od njih, doprinjelo promjeni imidža vlasti i ubrzalo proces integracija, koje su prioritet ne samo države «već i društva u cjelini». Ali džaba, sistem još niko nije nadmudrio, sistem je pojeo i veće ljude od njega. Sistem je ovdje napravljen tako da se kao piton uvija oko žrtve, dok je ne zadavi. Tražio je jednu uslugu, onda je vratio, a usluga, u tom prokletom svijetu, radja uslugu i

tako do nedogled. Postao je jedan od njih. Uspijeh je bio još brži, ali gorak i jadan. Kada je sve ideale spakovao u gepeku službenog auta, znao je da je kraj – nema više povratka. Sada je tu, na mjestu gdje je popužio prvi džoint, poljubio prvu djevojku, otvorio kovertu u kojoj je pisalo da je dobio stipendiju, plakao kada mu je otac umro, čitao romane, divio se moru, tukao, mirio i raspravljao sa njegovim najboljim drugom, Petrom. Onim istim Petrom koji je sada tu da se ubije. Isto kao i on. Sudbina. Gorka. Tužna.

— Šta ćeš ovdje, reci mi – izustio je Edin vraćajući rakiju svom neočekivanom drugu.

— Da se, kako da ti to kažem, ubijem!

Edinovo lice pokri blagi osmijeh, kao kada neki klinac upozna nekog drugog pa čuje da ovaj navija za isti klub, za klub samoubica ovoga puta. Jedva se uzdrža da ne vrisne – I ja! Slegnu ramenima, pogleda ka moru.

— A ti Edo?

— Šta ja?

— Pa što si ti ovdje sa levorom?

— Da se ubijem!

— Jebi ga!

Obojica počinju histerično da se smiju, da se prevrću po zemlji.

— Ma ozbiljno te pitam, jebalo te samoubistvo.

— A šta mi drugo preostaje, šta mi je ostalo od života?

Edin je prepričao svojih posljednjih desetak godina. Njegov uspon. Njegove grijehove.

Njegove greške i uspjehe. Zabludu jednog nepopravljivog optimiste koji je upravo trenuo o tlo. Udes sa stvarnošću koji je bio koban za mladog populistu.

— Spasiću svoje ime, ali ne mogu i svoju porodicu. Tužilaštvu sam dao dokaze, sve razgovore, sva dokumenta. Kopije sam dostavio svakoj ambasadi i nevladinoj organizaciji. Iskupio sam se, valjda. Ali ne mogu sačuvati porodicu. Samo moja smrt može da ih spasi. Oni će ih pobiti, mene bi čak i ostavili u životu. Mislim da su toliko okrutni, toliko su krvoločni da bi ubijali sve jednog po jednog od članova moje porodice. Ovako, ubiću sebe, i tako spasiti njih. Jer onda oni nemaju kome da se svete, nemaju ništa. Moja smrt je njihov kraj i život za moju porodicu. To je to, kraj nekoga za život drugoga.

Edin je govorio sa onom istom energijom kojom je oduševljavao sve ljude na fakultetu. Sa istim onim žarom sa kojim je osvajao sve oko sebe. Petar mu je uvijek govorio da će doživjeti šok onoga dana kada shvati da ne može baš svako da ga voli ili da mu se divi.

— Glad nema očiju, ne, ne, ne, kako sam glup! Odjednom histerično počeo da viče Petar.

— Šta buncaš, kakva glad nema očiju?

— Crtež, poslednji, Medijala, to je zadnja. Ne, ne ne.

— Šta Medijala, šta crtež, šta pričaš čovječe?

— Posljednja slika, Tošković – glad nema očiju i imam sliku svakog slikara Medijale, svakog!

— Ti imaš makar deset Toškovih slika. Imao si ih još na studijama, išao si po beogradskom smeću tražeći slike koje je njegova žena navodno pobacala poslije svađe.

— Imam. Ali ta, ta predstavlja čitav pokret, ona je najveći represent čitave te ideje. Ona je suština. Ona je poslednja. Čitav život ih tražim, čitav život ih sakupljam. One su ključ da Asia

shvati sve. Da makar malo promijeni mišljenje o meni. Možda ne sada, ali nekada, jednom, kada poraste. Ne, ne, ne. Onaj prokleti galerista će da je prećuti. Čim čuje za moju smrt. Možda neće. Mislim da hoće. Ne, ne, ne!

— Ti si lud. Sakupljao si ih svo ovo vrijeme. Ja sam mislio da je to samo bila studentska želja i da si sa parama počeo da sakupljaš neka raspeća u zlatnim okvirima. Ti si kralj.

— Glavurtić, pa Djurić i to ono njegovo prase, sjećaš se onoga koje je bilo izloženo u Milanu. Sjećaš se? Kupio sam je! Koštala me crtež Pikasa! Zamisli crtež Pikasa za Djurića! Kakav dil. Svi su mi se smijali. Ali me nije interesovalo, meni je bilo bitno to prase. Prase, djavolsko, ono nadrealno, ogavno, odvratno prase. Ono koje je prkosilo životu!

— Zašto Medijala, zašto taj neodređeni pokret, koji je okupljao ne znam ni ja ti kakve umjetnike.

— Ne znam. Zamišljao sam da je to nešto veliko. Neka pobuna protiv svega. Zamišljao sam da je to revolucija. Iako je revolucija bila samo u mojoj glavi. Možda je taj pokret, čitav bio neka laž, neka fikcija. Ali za mene, to je bila jedina istina, jedina strast jedina težnja. Sakupiti slike koje u mojoj glavi najbolje predstavljaju pokret!

— Ti si znači vratio pismo koje je Švejk pisao Kišu i koje je ukradeno iz muzeja. Anonimni pronalazač? Jesi li to bio ti? Tada sam na mali djelić sekunde pomislio da si mogao biti ti. Onaj stari ti, onaj bez centa. Ali onda sam pomislio da si ti samo biznismen, koji gazi ljude, i koji bi zadržao taj crtež.

— Da. Ja sam. Platilo sam ga debelo. Nisu znali šta su ukrali. Znali su da je vrijedno ali nisu znali šta je.

— Znači zadržao si makar malo ljudskosti.

— Ti mi reci. Ti političar bogataš. Ti koji si sve prodao... NATO, EU, ovo, ono... Htio sam da povratim kada sam te slušao. «Mi moramo da donesemo nepopularne odluke, kako bismo...» Ma kakvo je to sranje, kakvo je to prodavanje sranja širokim masama. Pa si tražio da mi, tobože tajkuni, dajemo pare za tvoje programe za radnike.

— Nikada nisi volio radnike.

— Ja? Ne volim te male ljude koji su mi izabrali vlast i koji misle da su našli sreću sa jebe-nim raspalim poslom i autom na kredit. Prezirem malog čovjeka, prezirem seljaka, prezirem sve što ne može da cijeni umjetnost, prezirem njihovu muziku i prezirem njihovu kulturu. Prezirem ih jer su oni stvorili tebe i slične.

— Mene je stvorila knjiga. Bio si tu. Valjda bi trebao da znaš. Valjda bi tebi trebalo biti jasno. Valjda si ti svjestan prljavosti svijeta u koji sam upao.

— Znaš šta, tebi ne preostaje ništa, bez da se ubiješ!

Obojica se smiju. Jako. iskreno.

— Polako, umrijećeš od smjeha, reče Petar.

Smiju se još jače. Poslije par trenutaka obojica se umiriše.

— Zašto si tu? Na litici. Zašto čovjek sa tvojim parama nije otišao na neko ostrvo? Neku daleku zemlju?

— Sa kim? Kako bi Asija živjela? Kako bi ona mogla da pređe preko još jedne u nizu sebičnosti njenog oca. Znaš li da je jednom rekla mojoj majci, misleći da ne slušam, da joj je jedina želja da joj ja nisam otac. Znaš li ti da je to bio jedan jedini put u životu kada sam plakao, jedini jebeni put. Jedini. Plakao sam kao dijete. Plakao sam kao neko ko nema više kud. Neko

ko je izdao sebe i osobu koju je volio više od sebe. Izdao sam nju. Jedinu zvijezdu na mom tmurnom jebenom nebu. Izdao sam sebe. Jedino što mi preostaje jeste da se ubijem.

— Baš smo sjebali stvari. Ko bi rekao.

Obojica su zurili u more, slušajući talase kako se razbijaju od crvene stijene. Sa desne strane je bila stijena sa koje Edin nije smio da skoči do svoje četrnaeste godine. Petar ga je branio pred društvom. Izmišljao je da ga je on gledao kako skače, ali da se pravi pred svima, jer mu je svejedno što ga zezaju. Lijevo je bila nudistička plaža. Upravo sa tog mjesta su išli da gledaju poneku mladu njemicu koja bi bezbrižno sunčala svoje nago tijelo. Zatim, Edin prekinu čutanje.

— Zašto nikada nisi probao da uspostaviš kontakt? Zašto nisi nazvao?

— Ne znam.

— Znaš li šta ja mislim. Mislim da me nikada nisi potražio, da me nisi nikada zvao, ni na tu jebenu kafu iz jednog jedinog razloga. Iz razloga što si negdje u sebi mislio, vjerovao, ili se bojao da sam nekako u svom ovom svijetu, suludom i prljavom, ostao onaj isti. Onaj koji bi te podsjetio da si skrenuo s puta. Onaj za kojeg si vjerovao da je bolja osoba od tebe. Onaj koji bi te podsjetio koliko si u stvari zaglibio.

Jer, priznajem ti, ja tebe nisam nikada potražio upravo zbog toga.

Mislio sam da si nekako uspio da se sačuvaš. Da su priče o tebi laž. Želio sam da mislim da si i dalje onaj buntovni zaljubljenik u pravdu i umjetnost. Onaj koji nikada ne bi uradio ništa što nije u skladu sa njegovim visokim moralnim kriterijumima.

Onda, kada sam pročitao da je pismo vraćeno muzeju, pomislio sam da si to ti. Rekao sam sebi da to moraš biti ti. Ne postoji niko drugi koji bi to uradio a da se ne izreklamira. Niko drugi ne zna vrijednost prošlosti, umjetnosti, prijateljstva. Jer to jebeno pismo, ta hartija iškrabana mastilom je bila upravo to. Jedno svjedočanstvo dva velika čovjeka. Želio sam da vjerujem da si mi time poslao neku poruku, neki znak. Da si spasao naše prijateljstvo.

— Pa zašto nisi nazvao? Zašto nisi okrenuo taj broj, poslao mejl?

— Zato što sam se bojao tog susreta. Tačnije, bilo me sramota. Bilo bi to kao da gledam ogledalo. Kao da gledam sebe na površini vode. U tebi bi našao sebe, mislio sam. Možda bi se još više mrzio. Nisam mogao.

Vlatko je i dalje zamišljeno gledao pučinu. Zaboga, imali izlaza. Edin izvadi cigare iz dzepa, zapali.

— Imam plan! Reče Edin, uzimajući rakiju.

Neko je događaj pripisao jugu. Kad jugo duva, kažu na primorju, ljudi se ponašaju čudno, te im se u glavi sve pomuti. Novine su to predstavile kao ubistvo, pa onda samoubistvo zbog nekog propalog posla. Na online izdanju se članak mogao naći pod crnom hronikom i to sa riječima – korupcija, biznis, ubistvo. Televizija je dodala još malo ljutine, pomenuvši i prevaru i drogu.

Ostalo je na pjaci da izabere svoju verziju. A pjaca ko pjaca, slikovitija od ijedne novine i maštovitija od ijedne televizije je dala svoju verziju: ubila se dva ljubavnika. Tijela nikada nisu nadjena, iako neki čak kažu da su ih našli zagrljene na plaži. Ubili se pederi. Vrijeme će oprati sve ostale verzije, te će samo ona čaršijska ostati da se prepričava. Možda će jednog dana ona biti simbol borbe za prava homoseksualaca, možda će postati predmet divljenja, ko zna. Danas su samo «pederi koji su se ubili s ledja», kako je bila omiljena šala po kafanama. Istinu niko neće saznati, niko je ni ne želi saznati, od nje u maloj čaršiji se bježi kao od djavola.

Na kraju su dva stara prijatelja našla rješenje. Nema više ubijanja. Dva prijatelja se zagrljše. Ali oni su odluke već bili donijeli a sudbina teško mijenja tok. Pijane noge klecnuše, Petar krenu da pada, Edin ga pokuša zadržati. Bezuspješno. Poginuše obojica.

Brokeback Suicides

Mladen Grgić. Montenegro

Petar passed by the beaten footpath and got tangled in the undergrowth. He fought branches and their cruel barbs with one hand, while clutching a bottle of rakia with the other, as if it were some precious medicine or elixir of youth. He remembered the car keys in his pocket. Should he have left them? Should he have destroyed the car, or maybe driven it off a cliff? It made no difference whether he took the keys with him or not, he thought. The car is in the company's name in any case, and the banks will take it all the same. They'll take it all! Why does someone who's killing himself even think about these trivialities? What does a normal person who wants to kill himself even think about? Do normal people kill themselves, he wondered.

Damn thoughts. Blessed are the animals.

He reached a cliff where waves were splashing against the red rocks, red as blood. The moonlight was almost perfect, but the sea was still rough from the storm the night before, as if nobody had told this marvelous blue to calm down, as if it refused to surrender to the moon, which shone brighter than the sun that night.

This was where he used to bring girls, where he had his first kiss, made love for the first time, cried for love, and said I love you for the first time. The end would come where everything began. Anything more natural than that? He thought of her again, remembering those nights they fell asleep here and then had to think up excuses for their parents. First laughter and then tears. A feeling of sadness that seemed to have no end.

Why hadn't he realized then that it was the high point of his life, the moment he'd

been happiest? Why don't we realize this? Why are we so greedy that we always think we can do better, we can do more? Why has our thinking been undermined since childhood, since school and sports teams, to believe everything can be improved? Well, it can't, my dears, it can't. Happiness has its own high point, although we aren't aware of it when it comes. But we do know when it's gone, and that's the day we take a look at our life, and in the archive of our memories we search out the one moment when we were carefree. For some that moment lasts longer, for others less, but for everyone it comes to an end. No enjoying retirement for you, man. That's only torture before the very end. A bogus life and illusory happiness. Happiness is light-hearted, it's when you're alone, when everything's quiet, and when you smile, and yes, when you have a future, when you don't know it will end soon. Everything else is a moment of satisfying some physiological need, which can resemble happiness, but is not the thing itself.

He wondered if she was happy with that damnably perfect man. How can one person's luck be the cause of someone else's sorrow? Is this the way it works? When someone becomes unhappy somewhere, someone else becomes happy somewhere else? Who gets to decide this? God? He doesn't believe that, so now, by killing himself, he's going to prove His nonexistence. No God gets to decide on his life, much less his death. He thought: I am the god of my life, I get to decide, and now I'm going to put an end to this exciting but tragic story. His thoughts wandered again. He again lost sight of what he

was here for. Death. His own. His head started to hurt. Maybe you should've taken a pill, he thought. A pill? He reproached himself. You're killing yourself, you idiot, does this damn migraine matter now that you've found the definitive cure for it?

Earlier, having put his affairs in order but wanting to leave his possessions to his daughter Asia, he'd walked the city for hours to find the only woman he had ever really loved.

He visited all their old places, all the bars, stood in front of the kindergarten, walked the promenade, sat on benches where they used to hang out. It was all in vain. He didn't see her. He wanted to tell her everything, try one last time. In her he'd seen salvation, but that's something you can only find on your own. Will she suffer, is she going to mourn him, he wondered. Where will she be when she hears the news, and who will she hear it from? What will she be wearing, will she be alone? Is this more news she'll find out about on the damn Internet? Will the comments be like those that led him to his doom? Will this barrage of hate from people who know nothing about him continue even after his death? He can see it already, the news and the barrage of damning comments from idle people who can express their pathetic opinions publicly thanks to Internet. He likes to think she'll be alone at that moment, and already he can picture her hugging a pillow and crying. But it will no longer be his problem. The end is now.

How does a person end up standing before an abyss? Is it always there and just one slip takes you to the point of no return? In this country, he believed, everyone lived on the edge of one. Only now and then did they seize anything resembling happiness, but everyone, or a vast majority at least, died an unhappy and pathetic death. It's the doom of these damned people, in this damnably beautiful country.

Drinking the rakia, and finding it harder and harder to control the chaos in his head, Petar heard rustling, somebody thrashing through the undergrowth. Is this possible, he thought, can a person never be left alone?

The last person he expected to see emerged from the bushes. How is it possible, he wondered.

"What are you doing here?"

"I'm ... It's nothing. And you, you bastard?"

"Is that a gun there in your hand?"

"Is that rakia there in your hand?"

"Yes."

"Pass it and cut the crap."

His face was frozen, but he watched his long-lost friend's every move as he took too long a swallow of rakia. They hadn't seen each other for years. They'd heard about each other every so often, sent greetings through various mutual friends, but for ten years they'd never laid eyes on each other, not even in passing. Now they looked at each other, at a loss. They'd been inseparable at school, both having been successful and never jealous of each other. A true and strong friendship, at least they thought so. Then different scholarships took them to different regions, jobs increased the distance, and responsibilities did the rest. Even later, when they both returned home – one a young, unscrupulous businessman, and the other a promising young politician – they still hadn't crossed paths. Not until now. On a cliff. At the end.

Edin wiped his mouth on his sleeve, shuddered as the rakia reached all the capillaries of his body. For a moment he closed his eyes, and let out a wordless cry.

Edin had had great promise, had been perceived as a fresh face in a system imbued with corruption. After returning from the US, he took a low-ranking position in the Ministry of Finance, then in the Ministry of

Foreign Affairs. Success came quickly. Even though nobody in the system liked him, foreigners loved him. He was a star among foreign diplomats, an object of admiration. “A gentleman among the savages,” the French ambassador used to say in private conversation. They mentioned him in every report and always requested his promotion informally, “because,” as one of them said, “it would contribute to changing the government’s image as well as accelerating the process of integration, which is a priority, not only of the state but of society as a whole.” To no avail however, as no one had yet outwitted the system, the system having devoured far greater people than he. The system here was designed to wrap like a python around its prey until it was strangled. First Edin had asked for a favor, then he’d returned it, and in that damn world, one favor led to another, and so on indefinitely. He became one of them. Success came even faster, but it was bitter and pathetic. When he tucked all his ideals away in the back of his government car, he knew it was the end – there was no turning back. A barrage of online posts ordered up by people he’d only been good to brought on an investigation. This arose out of comments on social networks, or some article on a news website, not with the police or the public prosecutor’s office. Then there were the hits with likes and shares, all peppered with hateful comments.

Now here Edin was too, in the place where he’d smoked his first joint, kissed his first girl, opened the letter saying he’d received a scholarship, cried when his father died, read novels, gazed at the sea, talked, fought, and made up with his best friend, Petar. The very same Petar who’d also come to kill himself. Fate. Bitter. Sad.

“What are you doing here, tell me,” uttered Edin, returning the rakia to the friend he hadn’t expected to find.

“I’m here to, how should I put it, kill myself!”

Edin’s face took on a soft smile, like when one kid meets another and hears that they are fans of the same club, this time a club of suicides. He barely kept himself from shouting, me too. He shrugged, and looked toward the sea.

“And you, Edo?”

“What about me?”

“So why are you here, and with a pistol?”

“To kill myself!”

“Fuck it!”

They both start laughing hysterically, rolling on the ground.

“No, I’m serious, fuck suicide.”

“What else can I do? What’s left of my life?”

Edin recounted the past ten years. His rise. His sins. His mistakes and successes. The disillusionment of an incurable optimist who’d just fallen to the earth. Such a clash with reality was fatal for a young populist.

“I can save my name. I handed over evidence to the prosecutor’s office, all the conversations, all the documents. I submitted copies to each embassy and NGO. I made amends, I guess. But I can’t save my family. Only my death can save them. They’d kill them all, and leave me alive. They’re vicious, so bloodthirsty that they’d kill my whole family, one at a time. By killing myself, I save them. There will be no one else to retaliate against, so they’ll have nothing. My death means an end to it, and life for my family. That’s it, one person’s death for someone else’s life.”

Edin spoke with the same energy that had thrilled everyone at university, with the same zeal that enchanted everyone around him. Petar always said he’d get such a shock the day he realized that not everyone would love or admire him.

“Hunger’s Got No Eyes, no, no, no, how stupid of me!” Suddenly Petar started shouting hysterically.

“What are you ranting about, hunger having no eyes?”

“The drawing, the last Medijala, it’s the latest one. No, no, no.”

“What Medijala? What drawing? What are you talking about, man?”

“The last Tošković painting – Hunger’s Got No Eyes – then I’ll have a painting by every single painter in the Medijala movement!”

“You’ve got at least ten Tošković paintings. You had them back at university, when you used to go through Belgrade’s trash looking for paintings his wife reportedly threw out after a fight.”

“I do. But this one, this one epitomizes the entire avant-garde movement. It’s the essence, the best example of the whole idea. It’s also the last one. I’ve been looking for them all my life, collecting them all my life. They’re the key to making Asia understand everything, so she’ll change her opinion of me, even if it’s just a little. Maybe not now, but some time, some day, when she grows up. No, no, no. That damn art dealer will keep it to himself. As soon as he hears I’m dead. Maybe he won’t. I think he will. No, no, no!”

“You’re mad. You’ve been collecting them all this time? I thought it was just a student fad, and that when the money came pouring in, you’d started collecting crucifixes in gold frames or something. You’re king of the hill.”

“First Glavurčić then Đurić – it was that pig of his, remember the one on exhibit in Milan? Remember? I bought it! It cost me a Picasso drawing! Imagine, a Picasso drawing for a Đurić! What a deal. Everyone laughed at me. But it didn’t bother me. The pig was important. The diabolical pig, that surreal, hideous, disgusting pig. The one that defied life!”

“Why Medijala? Why that obscure movement, artists no one knows?”

“I don’t know. I thought it was something big. A rebellion against everything. I imagined it as a revolution, even if it was just in my head. Maybe the whole movement was a lie, a tall tale, but for me, it was my only truth. My only passion, my only aspiration was to collect the paintings that best represented the Medijala movement for me!”

“You mean you gave back the letter Švejk wrote to Kiš? The one that’d been stolen from the museum? Anonymous donor? Was that you? I thought then, for a fraction of a second, it could’ve been you. The old you, the one without a penny. But then I thought you were a businessman, the kind who walks over people, the kind who would’ve kept that drawing.”

“Yes, I was. I paid a lot for it. They didn’t know what they’d stolen. They knew it was valuable, but didn’t know what it was.”

“So you’ve stayed at least a little bit human.”

“You tell me, you rich politician. You who sold us out to everything – NATO, EU, whatever. I wanted to throw up when I heard you. ‘We have to make unpopular decisions, in order to...’ What was that shit? What kind of crap were you hocking to the masses? Then you asked us so-called tycoons to give money to your programs for workers.”

“You never cared about workers.”

“Me? I don’t care about the little people who elect officials for me and think they’ve found happiness with their shitty fucking jobs and their leased cars. I despise the little man, I despise the peasant, I despise everyone who can’t appreciate art. I despise their music and I despise their culture even more – their social networks. I despise them because they created you, and the likes of you.”

“My education created me. You were there, I guess you should know. I guess you

should be clear about that anyway. I guess you know all about the kind of dirt I fell into.”

“You know what? There’s nothing left for you to do but kill yourself!”

They both laughed. Hard. Truly.

“Easy, you’ll die laughing,” Petar said.

They laughed even harder. After a few minutes, they both grew quiet. They gazed at the sea, listened to the waves splashing against the red rocks.

Some blamed what happened next on the sirocco. When the south wind blows, as the local saying has it, people act oddly, their minds grow dim. The newspapers reported it as a murder-suicide caused by a deal gone sour. On-line editions placed the articles under local community news sections, and used words like corruption, business, murder. The comments added under the articles were merciless.

Social networks chose their own versions. Being more imaginative than the daily press, and more liberal than any television station, they offered the version of two lovers and a suicide pact. The bodies never turned up, although there were rumors that they were found in an embrace on the beach. Queers who killed themselves. Time will wash away all the other versions, with only the social network story left. Maybe one day it will become a symbol of the fight for gay rights. Maybe they’ll become objects of admiration, who knows? Today, they’re only “the Brokeback suicides,” which was the joke making the rounds of the cafés. No one will ever know the truth. No one even wants to know. It’s something to run away from. Like from demons.

الحُب يأتي من الشَّمال أحياناً

سيد إسماعيل. فلسطين

" لا تعشقي فلسطينياً.

فإنه قد يموت بأي لحظة

رصاصُ بلاده كثير وطائشٌ جداً

والسجن لديه مثل زيارة قريب. عاديةً جداً ومكررة

لا تعشقي فلسطينياً.

فإن لم يُصبه الرصاص أو عتم السجن

أصابته الذكريات. نحنُ شعبٌ لا ينسى.

لا تعشقيه أبداً

فقد يُصبح يوماً منفيّاً للأبد. "

يامن نوباني

في بداية علاقته معها، كتب لها "فارس" ذات يوم، خلال محادثاته معها عبر برنامج "المانسجر":
 "أنتِ لا تعرفين شيئاً عن عالمي". لكن ردها له كان صامداً بحق: "بل أعلم الكثير عن عالمك! إنه مليء بالحروب والعنف والخوف والموت. إنكم تضطهدون النساء ولا يتمتعن هناك بالمساواة مع الرجال. أنتج مجتمعكم الكثير من الإرهابيين العالميين، الذين قتلوا ولا زالوا يقتلون الكثير من الناس في مختلف أنحاء العالم! لا مانع لديكم من قتل الغربيين واليهود والمدنيين الإسرائيليين الأبرياء بزعم أنهم "أعداؤكم"، وأنهم لا يستحقون الحياة!".

صدمه ردها! لم يكن هذا عالمه بالأساس! قال لها: "حسناً. قلتِ بأنكِ قادمة إلى مصر قريباً: ما رأيك بالقدوم إلى قطاع غزة كي تري عالمي عن كثب؟". لم ترد. لعنَ في سره صديقه الصحفي الروماني، جورج، الذي جاء إلى غزة مرتين، حيث عمل "فارس" معه كمترجم ومنتج أخبار، وهي المهنة التي يزاولها كصحفي حر. تمننت العلاقة بينهما لاحقاً على مدى شهورٍ متصلة، قبل أن يستأنذه في أن يُعرفه عليها، قائلاً بأن "اسمها أنستازيا: وهي صحفية رومانية حديثة التخرج، وتريد التعرف على صحفي فلسطيني". قال له: " لا بأس! أرسل لها بريدي الإلكتروني كي نتراسل عبر "المانسجر".." لم يدر أين سيقوده القدر في علاقته معها!

عرفت عن نفسها بأنها تسكن في مدينة بوخارست، لكن أصلها يعود إلى مدينة تيميشوارا: تلك المدينة التي انطلقت منها شرارة الثورة ضد نظام الرئيس نيكولاي شوشيسكو. أمها مطلقة، وتعمل كمديرة لإحدى الشركات الهامة عابرة القارات في رومانيا، ولديها أختٌ توأم.

" شيء ما" لا يعرف كنهه دفعه لأن يواصل حواراته معها، رغم شجاراتهما المتكررة. كثيراً ما التهمت تلك الحوارات ليالٍ طويلة، أمضيها في نقاشات ساخنة عبر "المانجر". قال لها خلال إحداها: " إنني أرى أن نقاشاتنا دون جدوى حتى لو هذه استمرت إلى الأبد! ما رأيك أن تأتي إلى بيتي في مدينة غزة، وأن تري كل شيء عن كذب؟؟ ". لزمّت الصمت، ثم حاولت تغيير الموضوع. كرر دعوته بعدها مراراً، وخلال نقاشاتٍ مختلفةٍ تلتها، دون أن يجدَ منها موافقة صريحة.

بعد مرور فترة من الزمن بدأ يلمسُ تغييراً في موقفها: فرغم "أفكارها المسبقة"، إلا أنها أرادت أن تفهم منه الحقيقة. بدأ يحدثها عن الواقع المر الذي يحياه شعبه: ثمانون بالمائة من الناس بغزة يعتمدون على المساعدات الإنسانية الخارجية. يعاني جلُّ الأطفال والنساء فيها من سوء التغذية. خمسة وتسعون بالمائة من المياه الموجودة بغزة غير صالحة للاستخدام الآدمي، وغيرها من الأرقام الصادمة.

في البداية، كانت النقاشات تشتعل بينهما، حيثُ أنها كانت تصرُّ على أن "الفلستينيين" هم مخطئون، وهم من يتحمل مسؤولية ما يحصل لهم. أما الآن، فإنها تحاول أن تستوعب ما يجري في المنطقة. تناقش كي تفهم، رغم إصرارها في بعض الأحيان أن "الفلستينيين يتحملون المسؤولية".

ذات مرة طلب منها أن تريه صورتها. لم تُمانع: أرسلتُ له صورة تجمعها مع أختها التوأم. لم يستطع استرجاع فكي السفلي إلا بعد زمن: لقد التقطت الصورة لهما وقد ألصقتا رأسيهما ببعضهما البعض وهما تبتسمان في عذوبة. عيناها الزرقاوان تبدوان كشرفات تطل على سماء فيروزية صافية، بينما لمعت الابتسامتان كاشفتين عن صفين رائعين من الأسنان ناصعة البياض، فيما انحدر شعرهما الأشقر الغزير على الكتفين كشلالين من الحرير!

في تلك الليلة لم ينام. شعرَ بأن ضلوعه أصبحت قفصاً يسجن بين جنباته طائراً بقي بضرب جناحيه قصبان القفص بقوة محاولاً الخروج. كان ذلك الطائر هو قلبه! قرر كتم ما يشعر به عنها، وأن يبقى لها "صديقاً" فقط.

طلبت هي أن تراه عبر الكاميرا. لم يمانع. كانت أول عبارة سمعها منها ساعة أن رأته: " آها! أهذا أنت؟ غير معقول! لقد تخيلتُك قمحي البشرة، مع شعر وعينين داكني السواد. لكنني أرى أنك عسلي العينين مع بشرة بيضاء وشعر مائل للشقرة. أنتُ وسيءٌ بالفعل! ". ابتسم. رد عليها قائلاً: " شكراً أنستازيا. وأنتِ بارعة الجمال أيضاً". منذ ذلك اليوم أصبحت جل حواراتهما تتم عبر الكاميرا، كما أنها أصبحت أقل حدة. كثيراً ما لاحظ في نظراتها له، خلال محاوراتهما، أنها تحمل الكثير من الإعجاب. هل هو مخطئ؟ ربما! قال لها ذات مرة: " قولي لي: لماذا لا تريدين القدوم إلى قطاع غزة؟".

صمتتُ مجدداً. بدا وكأنها تفكر بعمق، قبل أن تقول له هدوء: " ممممممممممممممم! سأكون صادقة معك يا فارس: لا زلتُ أفكر في الموضوع. المسألة ليست سهلة، خاصة وأنا نتحدث عن غزة. أنتم الآن تحت حصارٍ خانق منذ العام الماضي، عام 2007 والقدوم لكم ليس سهلاً أبداً. دعني أفكر بالمسألة أولاً ".

كانت تلك المحاورة في شهر أغسطس. بعدها بشهرين زفت له الخبر السعيد: "سأكون في مصر أواخر ديسمبر، وسأحاول القدوم من هناك إلى غزة. سأقضي هناك إجازة رأس السنة، بالإضافة إلى أسبوعين بعدها. لعل هذا الأمر يسرك!".

يسرني؟ إنني أكاد أطير من الفرحه! أنا بانتظارك.

لكن شقيقتي التوأم ستأتي معي.

أين المشكلة؟ لا بأس. أهلاً وسهلاً بكما. هذا إن استطعنا الدخول إلى غزة أصلاً! فمعبر رفح مغلق منذ فترة طويلة، ولا أوقع أن القائمين سيفتحونه خصيصاً من أجل جمالكما الكاسح!

ردت وهي تبتسم: "سوف نرى".

وحل اليوم المنتظر. فكّر هو: "كيف ستمكنان من الدخول إلى قطاع غزة؟ هذا مستحيل فعلياً!". كان معبر رفح يفتح أبوابه، في الاتجاهين، مرة واحدة لثلاثة أيام، كل أربعين يوماً على أفضل تقدير للمرضى والطلبة والحالات الإنسانية الأخرى من المسافرين. كان دخول صحفي أجنبي من الإبرة أسهل بكثير من دخوله إلى غزة! فعلاً لاحقاً الصحفي بقناة الجزيرة، غسان بن جدو ودخل غزة عبر الأنفاق سراً، بالإضافة إلى ميكو بيليد، أحد أشهر المتضامنين الإسرائيليين مع الفلسطينيين.

لكن إجابة سؤاله كانت مفاجأة بالفعل! لقد تمكنت كلتاهما من الدخول إلى غزة وعبر معبر رفح وبشكل رسمي، يوم الثالث والعشرين من ديسمبر عام 2008، ليشهد هو هذه المعجزة بعينه!

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وصلنا أخيراً إلى معبر رفح. بمجرد أن رأهما، هتف ساخطاً: "يا للمصيبة!". كانتا قد جاءتا مرتديتين "بلوزتين ضيقتين" مع سروالين سوداوين من "الفيزون" الشفاف! فكر في سخط: "ألا يشعرون هناك" بالبرد مثلنا؟! إننا في نهاية شهر ديسمبر!!". لم تنته المسألة عند هذا الحد: بمجرد أن قابلتاه، صافحته "أنستازيا" بحرارة، لكن شقيقتها التوأم "ريناتا" المجنونة قامت بعناقه، لتندفق دماء الخجل حارة إلى رأسه! فكّر مجدداً: "لعنة الله عليك يا ريناتا! هل تظنين أننا في نيويورك؟! نحن في غزة، وأنتِ تفعلين ذلك أمام مرأى رجال الأمن التابعين لحكومة حماس!!" أفهمها لاحقاً بأن ما قامت به "كارثة" بالنسبة له، وأن سيكون ضمن "القائمة السوداء" من "المغضوب عليهم" من الصحفيين بسبب تصرفها ذلك! ردت هي ببراعة: "لكنني وجدتُ أن الجو دافئ عندكم، ولا بأس بارتداء هذه الملابس! إنها تتلجج الآن في بلادي!".

وأخيراً، وصلت السيارة التي تقلهم إلى منزله في حي "تل الهوا" بمدينة غزة: كان قد رتب لإقامتهما هناك، بموافقة عائلته. هو أعزب في الثامنة والعشرين، يقيم في منزل مكون من طابقين، كان الجزء السفلي منهما يستخدم كقاعة لاستقبال الضيوف، خاصة في الأعياد والمناسبات التي يزدحم بها المنزل، وهو المكان الذي سيكون خاصاً بإقامتهما. جاء جميع أفراد عائلته للترحيب بهم: والدته وأخته لين وأخوه أحمد للترحيب بهم، بالإضافة إلى والده. كان الوحيد بينهم الذي يتحدث الإنجليزية بطلاقة.

قالت أمه مرحبة باللغة العربية: "أهلاً وسهلاً بكما! اعتبرنا نفسيكما في بيتكما. أنتما مثل ابنتي لين". ثم التفتت إلى فارس لتسأله: "ما هي أسماؤهما؟".

أنستازيا وريئاتا

طيلة إقامة الفتاتين بالمنزل، لم تتمكن أمه من حفظ هذين الاسمين أبداً، فكانت تناديهما باسمين عربيين استحدثتهما هي: "أنيسة" بدلاً "أنستازيا"، و"ريما" بدلاً من "ريئاتا"! أحبتهما بصدق، كما أحباها هما أيضاً، وقد بدا وكأن الأمور على ما يرام بين الجميع. بعد الانتهاء من ترتيب أغراضهما بعد نقلها من الحقائب، سأل أنستازيا السؤال الذي كان ينهش مخه: "كيف استطعنا إلى الدخول بالله عليكم، فيما أن ذبابة لا تستطيع الدخول إليها؟!"

نظرت كلتاهما إلى بعضهما البعض وهما تبتسمان، ثم غمزت "أنستازيا" لتفرك سبابتها بإبهامها، وهي تقول: "المال يا صديقي يصنع كل شيء! لقد كان والدتي علاقاتها بحكم أن هنالك فرعاً من الشركة التي تعمل بها موجود في مصر ويقم عليه شخصيات متنفذة، تدبرت هي أمر دخولنا بشكل رسمي، بعد دفعنا رشوة بسيطة خمسة آلاف دولار!!".

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كانت الأيام التالية مزدحمة بالجدول الذي رتبته لهما: زيارة مخيمات اللاجئين، والمستشفيات والمدارس والمؤسسات الإغاثية والمختصة بحقوق الإنسان. كانت الأوضاع كارثية بحق. تأملت الفتاتان الأوضاع بذهول، قبل أن تقول ريئاتا: "لم أكن أتخيل. أن الأوضاع رهيبة بهذا الشكل!". رد باقتضاب: "بل هي أسوأ مما تتصوران!". يوماً تلو الآخر، كانت مشاعر أنستازيا تبدو واضحة تماماً: إنها تحبه! كثيراً ما احتفظت بيده بين يديها اللدنتين. كثيراً ما كشف لمعان عينيها الواضحة بالحب سرها، كما لاحظ أيضاً نظرات الغيرة في عيون "ريئاتا". كان كل شيء يسير على ما يرام إلى أن حل السابع والعشرين من ديسمبر: كان يوم سبت لا ينسى، حيث كان عائداً بهما من ميناء غزة، بعد أن تحدثت الفتاتان مع الصيادين عن واقعهم المر. كان يسير بالقرب من مستشفى الشفاء بغزة، عندما بدأت الأرض ترتجف من تحتهم بقوة. صرخت الفتاتان، وقد احتمتا به. صاح بهما: "دعونا ندخل المستشفى!". بدأ عويل سيارات الإسعاف يتعالى، فيما راحت أعمدة الدخان والنار ترتفع في سماء غزة كذئير بالموت والخراب.

سرعان ما بدأت الجثث تصل إلى المستشفى. امتلأت ثلاجعات الموتى، فراح المسعفون يرصونها بجوار بعضها البعض. كانت جلها لرجال الشرطة، فيما كان بعضها لتلاميذ المدارس الذين تصادف مرورهم بجوار المقرات الأمنية التي تم قصفها. كان المنطقة أشبه بمعرض لعشرات الجثث أمام الجميع. راحت "أنستازيا" تكي في هستيريا: "دعنا نعود إلى المنزل. لم أعد أحتمل!". في كانت علامات الذهول واضحة على وجه "ريئاتا"، التي راحت تكي بصمت. بصعوبة، تدبر أمر سيارة أخذتهما إلى المنزل، فيما كان القصف لا يزال متواصلاً. كانت جل نوافذ المنزل محطة بفعل القصف، لكن عائلته كانت بخير على كل حال. شاهد أخته لين محمرة العينين من البكاء، وقد عادت من مدرستها الثانوية، وبادرت به بمجرد دخوله المنزل: "صديقتاي مريم وهناء قتلنا في القصف يا فارس! ماتتا أثناء مرورهما من أمام مقر وزارة الداخلية، غير بعيد عن منزلنا. كان من الممكن أن أكون معهما، لولا أنني تأخرت خمس دقائق فقط. تخيل هذا!". حاول تهدئتها، قبل أن يتوجه إلى الطابق السفلي، حيث كانت كل من "ريئاتا" و"أنستازيا" تتجادلان بصوت مرتفع ليقطع حديثهما، بدخوله. صممتا تماماً ساعتها. سألهما عما بهما، لتقول له الأخرى بعد صمت استمر لدقائق: "فارس! لدي ثلاث اعترافات أريد أن أخبرك بها: الأول أنني أحبك!". ابتسم. قال لها: "حسنًا. وماذا أيضاً؟". نظرت حذرة إلى أختها وهي تقول: "ريئاتا" تحبك أيضاً. وبنجون!". تلاشت ابتسامته. تابعت هي: "هنالك أمر أخير يا فارس!.. صرخت ساعتها أختها وقد أدركت ما تود قوله: "أنستازيا!"

اصمتي! ". صاحت بدورها هي الأخرى: " دعيه يعرف! يجب أن يعرف! ". ثم التفتت إليه، وهي تنظر إلى وجهه بعينين لا تطرفان، قائلة: " حبيبي "فارس". أنا وأختي إسرائيلتان! وقد قدمنا هنا كي نكتب عن مغامرتنا في الدخول إلى غزة!! لم تنظر إلى هكذا يا حبيبي؟! لا تبقى صامتاً. تكلم أرجوك!".

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كانت صدمة كارثية بالنسبة له! جلس على أقرب مقعد له، وألقى رأسه بين كفيه. لا يدري كم مكث هكذا ليرفع بعدها رأسه، ويرى عيني "أنستازيا" المحترمتين الدامعتين، وقد بقيت متمسرة مكانها، فيما جلست شقيقتها على أحد المقاعد تتأمله وهي تدخن بشراسة. سألت "أنستازيا" بصوت خافت: " هل لك أن تخبريني بالحقيقة كاملة؟ لا تخفي عني شيئاً! ".

هكذا فعلت: أخبرتني أنها يهودية إسرائيلية من حي "رامات أيف" الراقي بمدينة تل أبيب، تحمل جنسية رومانيا وتجيد لغتها بحكم أن أمها من هناك وأنها عاشت بها رداً من الزمن. وقد أحببتُ هي وأختها مجال الصحافة منذ الصغر، وقررتا دراسته والعمل به عندما تحصلان على شهادة "البغروت" (ما يوازي شهادة الثانوية العامة لدى الفلسطينيين). أرادت التعرف على صحفي فلسطيني، فتحدثت إلى جورج، الذي تعرفت إليه خلال عمله بتل أبيب، وطلبتُ منه أن يعرفها على صحفي "متقن ومتفتح الذهن"، فعرفها عليه! عند هذه النقطة، سألتها محتداً: " لماذا أتيت إلى غزة؟! أريد أن أفهم! ".

لا تنسَ أنك من اقترح علي ذلك مراراً! وقد وافقتُ على الفكرة لأنني أردتُ أن أكتشف الحقيقة وأكتب عنها للإسرائيليين، تماماً مثلما فعل يورام أبينور!

من يورام هذا؟!

صحفي إسرائيلي، كان يجيد العربية، وتظاهر في أواخر الثمانينيات بأنه فلسطيني، وكشف عن العنصرية التي يتم ممارستها ضدهم من قبلنا نحن الإسرائيليين. كان يجب أن أرى بنفسي كي أكتب وأوثق ذلك كله. طوال هذا الوقت، كان يعذبني شعورٌ واحد: حبك يا فارس! أنا يهودية إسرائيلية وأنت فلسطيني مسلم. ما زاد المسألة سوءاً أن أختي واقعة حبك هي الأخرى! الأسوأ أن جدران الكراهية عالية بين شعبينا إلى درجة لا يمكن تخيلها يا "فارس" لا يمكننا أن نكون لبعضنا البعض. هذا مستحيل".

بعد أن انتهت من كلامها، قال لها: " ما أوجه الآن أن تغادرا غزة، وبأسر وقت ممكن. بفاؤكما هنا خطر عليكما. ماذا لو اكتشف الناس بالمصادفة حقيقتكما؟ سيكون الوضع خطيراً جداً. وأود الاعتراف لك أنا الآخر: أنا أحبك، ولكن بعد اعترافك الأخير، ينبغي القول بضرورة خروجكما من هنا. ما أخشاه أيضاً يا "أنستازيا" أن أراكما أنتِ وشقيقتكِ في حربٍ ما تحملان السلاح ضدنا. هل أجدك عند حاجز عسكري ما، وأنا في رحلة علاج لي أو لأحد أفراد عائلتي؟ لا أستطيع أن طوال الوقت التي أتمنى الاقتران بها بكل ذرة من كياني هي "منهم"!

تنهد بعمق، فيما كان صوته مليئاً بالشجن وهو يكمل: " لقد عاصرتُ الانتفاضة الأولى، ورأيتُ بشاعتها أمام عيني: هل تعلمين ما هو مصيري لو أمسكوا بعلم فلسطيني معي وقتها؟ ستة شهور من الحبس! ولم! لمجرد حمل علم بلادي! رأيتُ كيف كانوا يكسرون أيدي الأطفال، ويسجنونهم ويعذبونهم. رأيتُ في الانتفاضة الثانية أيضاً كيف ازدادت درجة العنف فيما بيننا إلى حدٍ بعيد. إننا نتقاتل بشكل دموي يا حبيبتي ولا أمل لحبنا في أن يتوج بالاتحاد بين روحينا! ".

رغم إرادته، أصرت كلتا الأختين على البقاء ومتابعة ما سيجري على الأرض، رغم كافة محاولاتهن لإقناعها بمغادرة غزة. استطاعت القوات الإسرائيلية احتلال أجزاء هامة من قطاع غزة، وتقسيمه إلى ثلاثة أجزاء، فيما كانت الدبابات الإسرائيلية تقترب بخطى متسارعة من غزة. فرغ حَيُّهُ من السكان: كان عليه نقل أسرته لبيت خالته في حي "الرمال"، مع "الشقيقتين". جارهم الثماني رفض الخروج من بيته، رغم إلحاح أولاده: " لقد أخرجوني من بيتي في مدينة "المجدل" قبل واحد وستين عاماً. جاءوا بعدها مرتين لاحتلالنا هنا، ولا زالوا يتحكمون في حياتنا حتى اليوم. لقد تعبتُ من الفرار! لن أذهب إلى أي مكان. إن شاءوا فليقتلوني هنا ويرحوني! سيكون مكان انتقالنا القادم للقبر فحسب! لن أترحل ولو لشبرٍ واحدٍ خارج هذا البيت!".

انتهى العدوان أخيراً، بعد ثلاثة وعشرين يوماً. كان عليهما بعدها مغادرة القطاع. عانقتهما أمه وشقيته لين بقوة عند الوداع، فيما كان التأثر بادياً على والده وشقيقه أحمد. تساءل: " ترى لو علموا أن كلتا هما يهوديتان إسرائيليتان، ماذا يمكن أن يفعلوا؟! هل ستبقى هذه الملامح الودودة بهذا الشكل؟؟ ".

خرجتا من غزة عبر معبر رفح، بجوازيهما الروماني، ولبيق التواصل معهما مستمراً كقصة حب بلا أمل. جاء عام 2012 بعدوان إسرائيلي جديد على غزة: كانت كمية الصواريخ التي تنهال عليها بمقدار الضعفين والنصف زيادة عما كان الحال عليه عام 2008. في اليوم التالي من العدوان، قابل أحد جيرانه وبادره بالقول باسمًا: " ألم تسمع بالخبر؟ لقد وصلت صواريخ "حماس" و"الجهاد الإسلامي" إلى تل أبيب! ".

أمسك بكتفي محدثه بقوة. شعورٌ ما زلزل كيانه وهو يسأله: " هل من إصابات؟"، قال له جاره وقد تفاجأ من ردة فعله وألمته مسكته: " لا يوجد جرحى حتى اللحظة. إن قوتها التدميرية فعلياً ضعيفة. ولكن لِمَ تسأل؟ ".

هل وصلت إلى حي "رامات أفيب"؟

"رامات" ماذا؟!

ترك محدثه بعد أن ردد اسم الحي ذاهلاً، ليمضي هو في طريقه: كان يسترجع مشهد خروجهما من غزة، عبر معبر رفح من جديد. كان آخر ما همست به "أنستازيا" في أذنه بلغتها الإنجليزية ذات اللكنة المميزة: " حبيبي "فارس" لا تنسنا. هنالك قلبان يخفقان بحبك في "تل أبيب"! ". ثم اختفت من أمام ناظره، وهي تلوح له مع شقيقتها. كان ذلك في نهاية شهر يناير عام 2009، بعد انتهاء ذلك العدوان. لم يشعر وقتها بالمطر الذي بلله تماماً، بفعل فيض المشاعر التي تجتاح كيانه. في ذلك العام، كانت المرة الأولى التي تمطر فيها السماء منذ بداية ذلك الشتاء الساخن!

والآن: إنها تمطر مجدداً قنابل وصواريخ. لعلها تمطر غداً حباً وأملًا!

Love Comes from the North

Sayed Ismail. Palestine

*Don't fall in love with a Palestinian.
He may die at any moment.
He faces many bullets and
jail is a familiar place –
he's often known to stop there.
Don't fall in love with a Palestinian.
If he's neither shot nor jailed,
memories imprison him.
We never forget.
Don't ever fall in love with him.
You may find he's forever exiled.*

Yamen Nubana

“You know nothing about my world,” Fares messaged her one day.

“I know a lot,” she shot back. “It’s a world full of war, violence, fear and death. You abuse women. They’re not equal to men. Your community still sends terrorists all over the world. You don’t care if you kill innocent Western or Israeli civilians because you claim they’re all your enemies and don’t deserve to live.”

Her reply shocked him. This was never his world. “You said you’re coming to Egypt soon. How about coming to Gaza to see everything up close?” he suggested.

There was no reply. He secretly blamed his friend George, the Romanian journalist, who’d been to Gaza twice. Fares was a freelance journalist and had worked with George as a translator and news editor. They’d worked together for several months before George asked him if he could put the two of them in contact. “Her name is Anastasia,” George said. “She’s a recent journalism graduate from Romania and she wants to get in touch with a Palestinian journalist.”

“No problem, send her my e-mail. She can get me on Messenger,” Fares replied, unaware of where it would lead.

Anastasia said she lived in Budapest but had roots in Timișoara, where the revolt against Nicolae Ceaușescu’s regime started. Her mother and father were divorced and her mother was a manager for a multinational company in Roman. She had a twin sister.

Something he couldn’t put his finger on moved him to keep up the correspondence despite their repeated differences. Often their serious online conversations continued long into the night. Once again he suggested she come to Gaza to see for herself, but she ignored him on that topic and attempted to switch to another one. He repeated the invitation time after time but she never agreed to the trip.

With time he began to notice changes, though, despite her prejudices. She seemed keen to learn the truth from him. He began talking about the bitter reality of his life in Gaza and mentioned that 80% of the residents were dependent on outside humanitarian aid. Malnutrition is widespread among women and children and 95% of the water is unsafe to drink, he told her, amidst many other shocking statistics.

Early in their correspondence, she’d insisted that Palestinians were the guilty party, that they bore all the responsibility for what was happening. Now that she realized what was going on, she was trying to understand, despite her insistence that Palestinians admit the part they played in it all.

He asked her once for a picture and she sent him an astonishing photo of her and her

twin. They seemed close. Anastasia's eyes were as blue as a clear sky, her smile revealed white teeth, and golden hair fell to her shoulders.

He couldn't sleep that night. His heart beat as if it would break out of his chest, but he decided to keep his feelings to himself and leave their relationship on the level of friendship.

She asked to talk with their webcams on and her first reaction was, "Ah! So this is you? I imagined you with dark skin, dark eyes, dark hair. But I see brown eyes and white skin. Your hair is almost blond. And you're truly handsome." He smiled, replying, "Thank you, Anastasia. You are also beautiful." After that, they kept the webcams on when they talked, and their discussions were less tense. He sometimes thought he saw a look of admiration in her eyes. He wondered if what he saw was real.

"Tell me why you don't want to come to Gaza," he asked one night.

She was silent again, but this time she seemed thoughtful. She finally answered.

"Fares, I'll be frank with you. I'm still thinking about it. It's not an easy decision. It's Gaza we're talking about. You've been under siege since last year and it's not an easy trip to make. Let me think about it."

That was in August. Two months later she gave him the news he'd been longing for. "I'm going to Egypt at the end of December. I'll try to enter Gaza from there and spend New Year's Eve and two more weeks with you. Does that make you happy?"

"Very happy. I'm very pleased and looking forward to it."

"My twin sister will come too."

"No problem – you're both welcome. I just hope you can get in. The Rafah crossing was closed long ago and I don't expect they'll open it just for the sake of your beauty!"

She smiled and replied, "We shall see!"

The day he'd long been waiting for finally came, and he wondered how the twins would manage to enter the Gaza Strip. Impossible right now, he told himself. The Rafah crossing used to be opened on both sides for three days once every forty days at most for humanitarian reasons – so patients or students could move in or out. But it wasn't likely that a foreign journalist would manage to enter. Though the Al Jazeera journalist Ghasan bin Jiddo once managed to get in secretly through the tunnels, and Miko Peled, the Israeli famous for sympathizing with Palestinians, managed to cross too.

Surprisingly, both sisters entered Gaza officially on the 23rd of December 2008 – and at Rafah. He witnessed the miracle himself.

The twins' appearance, in tight blouses and skin-tight black pants, caught him by surprise. He wondered if they felt the late December cold, but their style of dress wasn't the only surprise. As soon as she saw him, Anastasia gave him a warm greeting and her sister Renata even hugged him. It made him feel extremely shy and he said, "Damn it, Renata, do you think we're in New York? This is Gaza, and you're in front of Hamas security men!" He later explained why the greeting was disastrous, and that he'd be blacklisted as one of those who'd "incurred anger" as a result of her hug and their clothes. She protested innocence: "I just found it warm here, so I assumed it's OK to wear this. It's snowing in my country."

Their car finally reached Gaza's Tel al-Hawa neighborhood, where his family had agreed they could stay. Fares, a 28-year-old single man, lived in a two-story house, where the first floor provided a place to receive guests, especially on feast days and special occasions. This was where the twins would sleep and where the whole family turned out to welcome them. There were his mother, his sister

Leen and his brother Ahmed, and his father, the only one who could speak English fluently with them. His mother greeted them formally in Arabic: “Welcome. Please make yourselves at home. You are both my daughters, just like Leen.” She asked her son for their names.

“Anastasia and Renata,” Fares introduced them.

For their stay in the family’s house, she gave them Arabic names and Anastasia became Anisa and Renata became Rema. She loved them, they loved her, and all was going well. After they’d unpacked, Fares asked them how they’d managed to pass into Gaza. They smiled and Anastasia said, “Money, my friend. The company where my mother works has a branch in Egypt, and she has many contacts among powerful people. She arranged for us to enter officially with a small bribe of five thousand dollars.”

The schedule Fares had arranged for them was a busy one. They visited refugee camps, hospitals, aid organizations and human rights groups. Conditions were truly catastrophic and what the sisters saw astonished them. “I never imagined things would be so bad,” Renata said.

“They’re worse than anyone would imagine,” he replied.

After a few days, it seemed clear to him that Anastasia had feelings for him. The way she often kept his hand between her soft ones. The way she lowered her eyes to hide her feelings. And Renata seemed jealous – he also noticed that. But everything went well until the 27th of December, an unforgettable Saturday when they were making their way back from Gaza’s port, where the sisters had been talking to fishermen about their difficulties. As they were walking by Al-Shifa Hospital, the earth shook: the sisters cried out and moved closer to him for protection.

“Let’s go into the hospital,” he shouted. Ambulance sirens were screaming and smoke from fires all over Gaza filled the sky, telling of death and destruction.

Soon the bodies began to arrive, and the morgue filled with the dead arranged side by side. Most of those killed were policemen, but some were schoolchildren who’d happened to be passing security checkpoints. It was a gallery of death and Anastasia was crying inconsolably. “Let’s go home,” she urged. “I can’t take any more of this.” Renata was in shock, crying silently.

Fares drove them home while the air strikes continued. They found most of the windows broken, but his family unhurt. Leen was crying and as soon as Fares entered she told him her friends Mariam and Hanaa had been killed.

“They were passing by the Ministry of the Interior, Fares, not far from our house. I might have been with them if I’d left only five minutes earlier. I can’t imagine that.” He tried to calm her down before he went downstairs to the guest rooms, where he found Renata and Anastasia arguing loudly. They both stopped as he walked in and he asked them what was wrong. Anastasia broke the silence.

“I have three things to tell you, Fares. The first is that I love you.”

His smile was meant to ask what else there was to tell.

She pointed to her sister and said, “Renata does too.” Though he’d smiled with Anastasia’s first revelation, the smile began to fade.

“And something else, Fares.”

But Renata, realizing what her sister was about to say, shouted, “Anastasia, shut up.”

“Let him know. He has to know,” Anastasia replied and she turned back to him and said, “Fares, my love, we are Israelis. We came here to write about our experience

entering and staying in Gaza.” She paused and continued, “Fares. Why are you looking at me this way? Please say something. Anything.”

The shock had been great and he moved to the nearest chair and sat with his head in his hands. He didn’t know how much time passed before he raised his head again to see Anastasia standing still, eyes filled with tears, while her sister sat looking at him, pulling hard on her cigarette. “Tell me the whole truth now. Don’t keep anything back,” he said in a low voice.

And so she did. She said they were Jewish Israelis from the Ramat Aviv neighborhood in Tel Aviv. They held Romanian passports and were fluent in the language, as their mother spent long periods of time back in Romania. They’d both loved journalism since childhood and decided to become journalists, both taking the Baghrouh high school degree. Anastasia had wanted to make contact with a Palestinian journalist and so she approached George, who she knew through her work in Tel Aviv, and asked him to introduce her to an open-minded, intelligent journalist. That was how they were introduced.

“And why did you come to Gaza? I need to know,” he asked.

“Remember it was you who first suggested it, and who brought it up again and again. I agreed because I wanted to know the truth and write about it for Israel, just like Yoram Binur did.

“Binur?”

“An Israeli journalist. He was fluent in Arabic and in the late 80s he pretended to be a Palestinian and later wrote about the racism Israelis subjected him to. I had to see all this for myself and document it. Only one thing bothered me. It was my love for you, Fares. I’m a Jewish Israeli and you’re a Muslim Palestinian. And now what’s made things even

worse is that my sister loves you too! And the worst of all is that there is much more hatred between our people than you can imagine, Fares. We cannot stay with each other. It’s impossible.”

“You have to leave Gaza as soon as you can,” he agreed. “If you stay here it means you’re both at risk. What if anyone discovered the truth by chance? It would be a serious problem.

“But there’s something else,” he continued. “I love you too. But after what you’ve said, you have to leave, Anastasia. I fear that one day I’ll see the two of you holding guns against us. I can’t hope to be with a woman if she’s one of them. I’ll wonder if I might see her at a military checkpoint at a border or somewhere along my way to seek treatment for me or someone in my family.”

He let out a long, slow breath and said in a voice full of sorrow, “I witnessed the first intifada, saw terrible things. Do you have any idea what I would have faced if they’d caught me holding the flag of Palestine? I could be imprisoned for six months, and why? Just for holding the flag of my country. I watched them break the bones of children’s hands, and I knew they imprisoned and tortured them. I also saw how violence increased on both sides during the second intifada. We’re now heading for more blood and violence, and oh my dear, there’s no hope our love would last through it.”

Despite his words, both sisters insisted on staying to observe what happened. Israeli troops were able to occupy significant areas of Gaza and divide the strip into three sectors, while Israeli tanks followed them in. His neighborhood was evacuated. He saw his family off to his uncle’s house in the Rimal neighborhood and both sisters went with them. A neighbor in his eighties refused to leave home, despite his sons’ entreaties. “They

got me to leave Ashkelon sixty-one years ago. They invaded the land here twice, and they're still controlling our lives even now. I've had enough of escaping. I'm not going anywhere – better to let them kill me. I'll go nowhere that's not my own grave. Not even an inch outside the house.”

The attack finally ended twenty-three days later, and the sisters had to leave then. His mother and sister embraced them, and his father and brother were moved. He wondered how his family would behave if they knew the sisters were Israelis. Would they still feel as friendly?

They left Gaza through the Rafah crossing with their Romanian passports. They stayed in touch with Fares, but the love story held out no hope. The Israelis attacked Gaza again in 2012, when more than twice as many missiles rained down as in 2008. After one attack, Fares met a neighbor who reported happily that Hamas and Islamic Jihad missiles had reached Tel Aviv.

He grasped his neighbor by the shoulders and asked excitedly about casualties.

“None so far. The missiles don't have much destructive power, but why do you care?” the neighbor asked, surprised by his reaction.

“Did the missiles reach Ramat Aviv?” Fares insisted.

“Ramat what?”

He left his neighbor and wandered the streets, remembering when Anastasia and Renata went through the iron gate at the Rafah crossing. “My love, Fares, do not forget us. Remember there are two hearts there in Tel Aviv that love you.” So whispered Anastasia to him in her special English accent. Then a wave, and she and her sister were gone. That was at the end of January 2009, when the attacks ceased.

Now, a heavy rain was falling, the first rain of an unusually warm winter, but he took no notice of it. If it rains shells and missiles one day, maybe it will rain love and hope another.

Dan planete Zemlje (22.4.2014.)

Zemlja i zakon, kultura i pseća govna

Amela Sarajlić. Bosna i Hercegovina

22.4.1970. godine, Gaylord Nelson, senator USA (United States of America) i ekolog, pokreće nacionalnu obuku o životnoj sredini i njenom očuvanju pod nazivom Dan Zemlje (Earth Day). Tako se poslije više od jednog stoljeća Amerika osvrnula i ozbiljno suočila sa porukom i slutnjom njenih predaka koja je možda najbolje sadržana u pismu indijanskog poglavice Seattlea, navodno napisano i upućeno 1854. godine američkom Predsjedniku: „I ako vam prodamo našu zemlju morate je čuvati kao svetinju, kao mjesto gdje će i bijeli čovjek moći da okusi vjetar što je zaslađen mirisom poljskog cvijeća. [...] To mi znamo: zemlja ne pripada čovjeku – čovjek pripada zemlji. [...] Jednu stvar znamo, koju će i bijeli čovjek jednog dana spoznati – naš Bog je isti Bog. [...] Pravom životu dolazi kraj – počinje borba za opstanak?“

Nakon zaživljavanja u USA, Konferencija UN (United Nations) o okolišu, 1992. godine službeno prihvaća ovu ideju afirmacije zaštite okoline za cijelu planetu, a Generalna skupština UN-a 2009. godine proglašava 22. april kao međunarodni Dan planete Zemlje. Tog dana, širom planete Zemlje u skoro 200 država svijeta, na raznim nivoima, govori se o zemlji i svijetu kao globalnom, ali i lokalnom prostoru u kome živimo. Pitanje očuvanja i ravnoteže prirode i životne sredine sve više postaje i danas je vjerovatno najveći problem čovječanstva i civilizacije općenito.

Šta o tome reći kao običan čovjek iz jednog malog mjesta jedne male države. Konjic i Bosna i Hercegovina su upravo to, a ipak se ne mogu oteti utisku da je BiH u mnogo čemu paradigma svijeta. Dok o ovome razmišljam, pokušavam sažeti svoje iskustvo i ono što zapažam i hoću da se barem simboličnim zapisom uključim u obilježavanje Dana planete Zemlje.

U Konjicu, Bosni i Hercegovini i njenom okruženju ima se šta vidjeti i naučiti; i lijepog i ružnog. Možda je najdublje osjećanje i utiske o lokalnom zavičajnom krajoliku, koje razbuđuje misao do genijalne globalne spoznaje o prirodi i planeti Zemlji, sobom nosio čovjek sa ovih prostora Balkana: Nikola Tesla. Njegova izvanredna otkrića od prije više od 100 godina su tada osvijetlila i danas osvjetljavaju cijelu planetu. Osim što je stvarao savršene izume Tesla je također imao i jasne poruke poput ovih: „Svi smo mi jedno. Ljudi su međusobno povezani nevidljivim silama.“ ... „Ako ne znate kako, promatrajte pojave prirode, ona će vam dati jasne odgovore i inspiraciju.“

A šta se to vidi i osjeti u ovom krajoliku doline Neretve koji je poput Teslinog zavičaja?

Treba imati dar pjesnika i moći svu tu ljepotu prirode i ljudskog duha opisati (visoke planine, rijeke, jezera i plodne doline, po brdima zasijane nekropole stećaka, kapelice, turbeta i planinarske kućice, i još puno toga što čovjeka nadahnjuje, oplemenjuje i kultivira), i osjetiti simbiozu i harmoniju života. Ali, treba uistinu biti i pedantan službenik pa sve i ono ružno i loše evidentirati (isječene šume, sprženi proplanci i pašnjaci, njive zarasle u korov, napuštena sela i razbacane plastične pivske boce, cola boce i kese, krš i smeće svake vrste), i uočiti tu dekadenciju čovjeka.

Bez sumnje, imperativ za čovjeka, bilo u ime Boga ili u ime Prirode, svakako je da ljepotu treba čuvati i unapređivati, a ružno treba odstraniti i ispravljati. Ako poslušamo Teslu i promatramo prirodu i pojave, zasigurno ćemo nešto zapaziti i naučiti.

Veliki ljudi idu ispred vremena i vide ono što obični mali ljudi tek kasnije dožive. Potvrđuje to i naredna pjesma velikog pjesnika Vladimira Nazora koji je ponikao sa otoka Brača oko kojeg se Neretva razliva u Jadransko more. Ona, pjesma, kao da je sad izrečena. A bilo je to davne i teške 1943. godine, u jeku ljudske destrukcije velikoga svjetskog rata, kad sudbinom donijet u dolinu Neretve i zagledan u visove Prenja pjesnik i partizan Nazor zapisuje:

*Prenj planina nije,
Visok grad je vila,
Sijelo je bogova
Drevnih bogumila:
Još vrijeme brazde
Po čelu mu ore;
U njem se žestoko
Dobro i zlo bore.
[...]
Prenj planina nije
Žrtvovani je kamen
Što čeka da sveti
Očisti ga plamen.
I Bijeli Svećenik
K njemu jednom stigne,
Put zvijezdama i Suncu
Sebe i nas digne.*

A kako to izgleda danas? Evo, na Dan planete Zemlje sa prijateljem pohodim brda oko Konjica. Ispeli smo se na brdo Koznik (nažalost, nema koza; već poodavno su istrebljene). Barem je vidik fenomenalan. Ispod nas je dolina Neretve poput barke što se na proljetnom povjetarcu lagano njiše i kao da neprimjetno plovi sa istoka ka zapadu. U daljini, na jugu, još pod snijegom, bljeskaju na suncu vrhovi Prenja što razdvajaju Mediteran (more-središte zemlje) od Kontinenta (kopno-suha zemlja) prema sjeveru. Prekrasna slika u očima i nadnaravan osjećaj u duši daje utisak prostranstva, beskrajia i optimizma. Sretan sam i ispunjen nadom, pogotovo što pouzdano znam da se Neretva u gornjem toku, hvala Bogu, i danas može slobodno piti, a da se na obalama njenim i ljudska ruka i duhovnost može osjetiti. Za cjelokupnu dolinu Neretve (koja je danas locirana u prostoru Hercegovačko-neretvanskog kantona i Dubrovačko-neretvanske županije) može se komotno reći da je jedna svojevrsna kolijevka raznolikog prirodnog blaga i kulturne baštine na Starom kontinentu (Evropa).

Za ilustraciju ću uzeti stećke kojima je ovaj kraj bogat. Stećci su karakteristični kameni nadgrobni spomenici, uglavnom iz vremena srednjovjekovne bosanske države, koji su svojim postojanjem, izgledom i porukama jedna od misterija bosanskohercegovačke historije. Upravo, u ovoj 2014. godini očekuje se da budu uvršteni u Listu svjetske baštine UNESCO (United Na-

tion, Educational Scientific Cultural Organization). Još prije pola stoljeća, a povodom svjetske izložbe „Umjetnost na tlu Jugoslavije od prahistorije do danas“ (Pariz, 1960.), znameniti pisac ovog podneblja, Miroslav Krleža, ističe bosanski stećak kao glavni eksponat i pri tome kazuje: „[...] *Neka oprostí gospođa Evropa samo Bosna ima spomenike. Stećke. Šta je stećak? Oličenje gorštaka Bosanca! šta radi Bosanac na stećku? Stoji uspravno! Digao glavu, digao ruku! Ali nigdje nikad, niko nije pronašao stećak na kome Bosanac kleči ili moli. Na kome je prikazan kao sužanj.*“

Ako je samo i umjetnička fikcija u stvarnom opusu mnogobrojnih zapisa sa stećaka, ova poruka koju prepisujem, na stećku iz 1094. godine (stećak kneza Nenca, Velikog Kneza Bosanskog) nadilazi vrijeme i prostor u kojem je nastala: „*Clovjek mojze vidjeti ono tsto nije vidio, tcuti ono sto nije tcuo, okusiti ono sto nije otkusio, bit tami gdji nije bio, al' uvijek i svagdi samo sebe moze najti, il ne najti...*“ Autentičan zapis narodne mudrosti na više stećaka i mjesta kroz duži vremenski period (od antike do Šekspira) je i ovaj zapis-epitaf na grobu Radojice Bilića u Starom Selu kod Jajca: „*I molju vas ne nastupajte na me. Ja sam bil kako vi jeste, vi ćete biti kako ja...*“ (M. Dizdar: Stari bosanski epitafi, Sarajevo, 1961.) Za ovu poruku neki pišu da je „prevod iste sentencije koju veliki Mazačo 1427.g. ispisuje u firentinskoj crkvi Santa Maria Novela: *Io fu gia quel che voi sete, e quel chi son, voi anche sarete...*“ (R. Petrović: Bogumili, Visoko – Novi Sad, 2010.) Ako je i tačno mišljenje da su stećci i zapisi kopija sa Zapada, to samo potvrđuje da Zemlja nije „globalno selo“ od jučer već je to ona od pamtivijeka. Kako god, stećci su specifikum Bosne, a u Bosni se susreću Istok i Zapad koji sobom donose i lijepo i ružno, i dobro i zlo, istovremeno. Ti uticaji se upravo mogu sagledati kroz život stećaka, njihovu figuraciju i transformaciju.

U gornjem slivu Neretve (Čuhovići iznad Rakitnice) na jednom mjestu i istoj nekropoli je neumitna ruka povijesti poredala jedne uz druge bogumilske stećke/kamenove, hrišćanske križeve/krstove i islamske bašluke/nišane. Dan danas su ti biljezi zajedno, na istom mjestu, a ispod njih je ista zemlja, bosanska – stoje, kazuju i poručuju kao osvjedočeni svjedoci. I tako na najočitiiji način pokazuju kako s vremenom, pod teretom Istoka i Zapada, nekad milom a nekad silom, bogumili postadoše katolici, pravoslavci i muslimani. Konačno, u ovom vremenu, na toj istoj zemlji bosanskoj Bosanci prihvatiše da su Hrvati, Srbi i Bošnjaci, ali bi svi da je zemlja samo njihova. Otkud to?

„Proradila je politika rastakanja Bosne. No, da je samo to. Perpetuirano jednonacionalno drilovanje (njem-eng. Drill: trožičan, sijanje, brazda) toliko je rastočilo onu zajedničku bosansku žicu da je bosanstvo dovedeno do apsurdna i posijalo se pervertiranje do paradoksa [...]. I onda odjednom, narodi Bosne ne mogu da žive zajedno?!“ (vidi, H. Sarajlić: Zapis o Bosni i Hercegovini, Konjic, 2013.) Šta reći na sve to? Bilo bi svima pametno poslušati šta kaže genijalni sin nekada zajedničke zemlje Nikola Tesla „*Promatrajte pojave prirode, ona će vam dati jasne odgovore i inspiraciju*“ i prihvatiti poruku mudrog američkog poglavice Seattlea „*Zemlja ne pripada čovjeku – čovjek pripada zemlji.*“

Bosna i bosanska žica (duh bosanski) su neraskidivi po zakonu prirodnom i redu Božijem: Kao hljeb, kao kruh, kao somun od žita njena, na njoj požnjivena, u zemljanoj peći ispečena, koji se slatko jede i, miriše svima. Samo, treba svako počistiti svoju avliju i sokake, neka cvijeće slobodno niče i voće behara, neka svi u Bosni jedu plodove svoga rada, spokojno i, bez smrada.

Na Kozniku, dok promišljam, osluškujem Prirodu i ćutim Boga, oči mi bodu dva brda, tu blizu, dominiraju iznad Konjica. Pohodio sam vlastitim nogama sve planine i vrhove oko Konjica, ali ova dva brda nisam otkako bijaše rat u Bosni i Hercegovini (1992-1995). Zašto? A baš su lijepa i lijepa imena imaju: Grad i Gostić. Na prilazu njima danas su table sa mrtvačkom glavom i ukrštenim kostima na kojima piše „MINE“! Mina je srce olovke koje daje život slovu i riječi, no ovo su neke druge mine koje razaraju srce i ubijaju život u čovjeku. Otkud tu i na tim mjestima? Baš čudno?!

Grad, općenito znači polis-država (srce civilizacije). Ovaj Grad iznad Konjica je vjerovatno imao nešto od toga u svojoj povijesti, a ono što je sigurno jeste da je bio kula-utvrda u vojvodstvu herceg Stjepana (Stjepan Vukčić Kosača /1404-1466/, Veliki vojvoda rusaga bosanskog, kasnije Herceg /vojvoda/ od Svetog Save) koji je osnovao Hercegovinu (sastavni dio Bosne). Prema tadašnjim prilikama, vojvoda Stjepan se povijao između zapadne i istočne crkve i na kraju se priklonio Rimu (katoličanstvu) usvojivši titulu hercega. Paradoksalno je da mine oko Grada „ugradiše“ oni što danas htjedoše Hercegovinu samo za sebe predstavljajući se kao baštiniči herceg Stjepana i „hrvatski domoljubi“, i tako „uprljaše“ hercegovu zemlju i ovaj lijepi vidikovac krijući se upravo iza imena hercegova.

Gostić, u svome nazivu priziva na gosta i gostoprimitstvo. I zaista ovo brdo ispod surih vrhova Prenja djeluje gostoprimitljivo kao da se nudi da se tu čovjek odmori i okrijepi na pitomim livadama i krasnim pogledom na dolinu Neretve. Gost je onaj koji pohodi, koji ima dobre namjere i koji je dobrodošao. Gost je onaj koji služi Bogu, pa je kod bosanskih bogumila u crkvi bosanskoj to onaj koji je imao misiju sveštenika. Pripadnici bosanske crkve se prema raznim izvorima nazivaju bogumili, patareni, krstjani, a za „pravovjerne“ su bili heretici. Smatrali su se čuvarima izvornog Hristova učenja na temeljima Evanđelja zasnovano na skromnosti i jednostavnosti. Prezirali su materijalna bogatstva i feudalni poredak klasične crkve što ih je koštalo progona. Kako bosanska crkva nije bila feudalni gospodar imala je ugled u narodu, a to je odgovaralo i bosanskom plemstvu i vlasteli da je kao takvu podržava i čuva. U tom vremenu zasigurno je vladalo načelo „cuius regio, eius religio“ (čija zemlja, njegova i religija). Naravno, važilo je i obrnuto. Zato je pored progona, istočna crkva, pravoslavna srpska crkva kao ortodokсна (izvorna) imala čak i toleranciju spram bosanske crkve „prevodeći“ krstjane u pravoslavce, a time u Srbe (svojatajući bosansku zemlju kao srpsku). Tako se dogodi paradoks da baštiniči Svetog Save kao „srpski rodoljubi“ s ciljem zaštite zemlje samo za sebe „pogostiše“ Gostić minama i „uprljaše“ zemlju koja je i svetosavska.

Dolina Neretve ispod Gostića je oduvijek bila najviše naseljena onima koji nisu zasigurno bili ni katolici ni pravoslavci. Mnogobrojne nekropole stećaka (Konjic ima najviše stećaka u BiH) kazuju da su to bili bogumili. Oni su bili dio Bosanaca koji do tada nisu bili podlegli uticaju zapadne i istočne crkve, ali pod naletom moćne osmanlijske (turske) imperije utopiše se u islam i postadoše muslimani. Dugo bijahu turski vazali i prividno vladari u Bosni, zatumljujući u sebi vlastitu nacionalnost i identitet, i kao muslimani tek 1993. godine se iskazuju i potvrđuju kao Bošnjaci. Htjeli ne htjeli moradoše braniti sebe i svoju bosansku zemlju od nasrtaja sa istoka i zapada. Tako se došlo i do trećeg paradoksa da najtvrdi baštiniči Bosne kao „bošnjačke patriote“ braneći zemlju od agresije „zasijaše“ mine oko Gostića i „uprljaše“ zemlju koja je upravo bosanska. Naravno, u svojim pretenzijama nisu to zaboravili učiniti ni hrvatski bojovnici.

Na kraju drugog milenija nove ere Gostić uistinu postade „Ničija zemlja“.

Danas je zaista anahrono isticati srednjovjekovno načelo „cuius regio, eius religio“ ali zbog nekih koji i danas osporavaju suverenitet i integritet Bosne dobro je podsjetiti na činjenicu da je čak i u tom vremenu bosanski ban Stjepan Tvrtko I Kotromanić (1338-1391) koji je kasnije postao prvi bosanski kralj, na vhuncu svoje vladavine imao efektivnu titulu „Kralj Srbije, Bosne, Dalmacije, Hrvatske i Primorja“ i pod svojim suverenstvom je imao i pravoslavne i katolike i bogumile, pri čemu je u svemu tome i sam participirao. Toliko o zemlji Bosni.

Dan je planete Zemlje. Vraćam se sa izleta. Dok prolazim gradom duž ulica na trotoarima je puno psećih govana. Susrećem ljude što su izveli svoje kućne ljubimce, ali i ponekog psa lualicu. U BiH postoji zakon o zaštiti pasa lualica, no nema azila da ih sklone. Ne znam za zakon o kućnim ljubimcima, ali njihovi gospodari zasigurno nemaju kulturu (kao na Zapadu) da za vlastitim ljubimcima počiste.

U Bosni i Hercegovini, dok se ne bude držalo do zakona i kulture, živjet će se u predivnoj zemlji i psećim govnama.

U tom slučaju, priča o Srbima, Hrvatima i Bošnjacima je izlišna. A možda i nije jer je danas, uistinu, cijeli svijet „globalno selo“?!

Esej posvećujem svim žrtvama od zagađenja Zemlje „minama“!

Zapisano s proljeća 2014. godine, na Dan planete Zemlje (22.4.2014.) kad Bosna bijaše ničija zemlja.

Objavljeno na portalu www.blogger.ba, na Dan mladosti (25.5.2014.) (dan kojeg više nema), nakon velikog potopa u Bosni (koji se upravo desio) i sa golemom nostalgijom (koja je sveprisutna).

(Blog: Bosna spava – spot: Dan mladosti-potop-nostalgija*)

* nostalgija (grč. *nostos* povratak u zavičaj, *algos* bol) tuga za zavičajem, fig. čežnja za nečim što je bilo lijepo.

The Day of the Planet Earth (the 22nd of April 2014). Earth and Law, Culture and Dog's Poo

Amela Sarajlić. Bosnia and Herzegovina

On the 22nd of April 1970, Gaylord Nelson, a USA (United States of America) Senator and ecologist, started national training on the environment and its protection, calling it Earth Day. In this way, America looked back after more than a century, and seriously faced the message and prediction of its ancestors, possibly best relayed through a letter by the Indian Chief from Seattle, apparently written and sent to the American President in 1854: "If we sell you our land, you must keep it apart and sacred, as a place where a white man can also go to taste the wind that is sweetened by the meadow flowers. [...] This we know: the Earth does not belong to man, man belongs to the Earth. [...] One thing we know, and the white man will realise it one day – our God is one and the same God. [...] The true life is ending – the fight for survival begins."

After it had started in the USA, the UN (United Nations) Conference on the Environment 1992 officially accepted this idea of environmental protection for the whole planet, and the General Assembly of the UN proclaimed the 22nd of April as International Day of the Planet Earth. On that day, all over the planet, almost 200 countries of the world are discussed as both global and local places. The issue of protection and balance between nature and the environment has been and still is probably the biggest problem of mankind and civilisation in general.

What is to be said about it, speaking from a position of a commoner coming from a small place in a small country? Konjic and Bosnia and Herzegovina are just that, and yet I cannot ignore the impression that Bosnia

and Herzegovina is a paradigm of the world in many things. While thinking about this, I try to summarise my experience and what I observe, and I wish to take part in marking the Day of the Planet Earth, at least through this symbolic note.

There are many things to see and to learn about, both attractive and unattractive, in Konjic, Bosnia and Herzegovina and its surroundings. Nikola Tesla, a man from the Balkans, has perhaps had the deepest feelings about and impressions of his native landscape; one of those that turn their thoughts to the ingenious global understanding of nature and Planet Earth. His remarkable discoveries, made more than 100 years ago, have illuminated the whole planet. Apart from creating perfect inventions, Tesla had clear messages, such as these: "We are all one. People are interconnected by invisible forces...If you don't know how, observe any natural phenomenon, for it will give you clear answers and inspiration." And, what is it to be seen and felt in this landscape of the Neretva River valley, which is just like Tesla's homeland?

It takes the gift of a poet to be able to describe the beauty of nature and human spirit (high mountains, rivers, lakes and fertile valleys, hills covered with a necropolis of standing tombstones, small chapels, turbehs and mountain homes, and many other inspiring and ennobling things). One needs to feel symbiosis and harmony of life. But it really needs to be a clerk to note and register all the ugly and bad things (cut trees in the woods, burnt hills and pastures, fields covered with weed, abandoned villages and plastic beer

and soda bottles all over the place, along with bags and any other garbage). One needs to spot the human destruction and decadence.

Undoubtedly, the human imperative, be it in the name of God or in the name of Nature, is to protect and improve the surrounding beauty, and to remove and correct the bad. If we would listen to Tesla and observe nature and its phenomena, we would surely learn something.

Great men are ahead of their time and they see things commoners would see only later in life. This is also said in a poem by a great poet, Vladimir Nazor, who came from the island of Brac, a place into which the Neretva spills entering the Adriatic Sea. The poem sounds as if just written, yet it was a long time ago, in 1943, a hard and painful year, amidst human destruction in a great world war. Brought to the valley of Neretva by fate, looking at the Prenj's peaks, a poet and partisan, Nazor, writes:¹

*It isn't the Prenj Mountain,
A high town is a fairy,
Come-together of the gods
Ancient Bogomiles:
The time still ploughs
Furrows on his forehead;
Evil and good within it,
Having a violent fight
[...]
It isn't the Prenj Mountain
It is a sacrificial stone
The one waiting to revenge
Cleaned by the flame.
And a White Priest
Will reach it one day,
Will raise both us and him
To the stars and the Sun.*

¹ Unofficial translation of the poem.

And, what does that look like today? Now, on the Day of the Planet Earth, I am visiting the hills around Konjic. We climbed a hill called Koznik² (no goats unfortunately; they were exterminated long ago). At least the view was phenomenal. Below us, the River Neretva valley, like a boat swaying in the spring breeze, and subtly flowing from the east to the west. Far away, in the south, still covered with snow, the peaks of Prenj glow under the sun, separating the Mediterranean (sea – the centre of the earth) from the Continent (land – dry earth) towards the north. A beautiful image for our eyes, and a supernatural feeling in our souls, shares the impression of wide spaces, infinity and optimism. I am happy and filled with hope, and in particular because I know for sure that today, thank God, you can still drink the water from the upper Neretva, and that you can feel its spirit and human touch on its shores. For the whole Neretva valley (located today in the area of Herzegovina-Neretva Canton, and Dubrovnik-Neretva County), you can freely say that it is a kind cradle of various natural treasures and cultural heritage in the Old Continent (Europe).

To illustrate that, I will speak of the standing tombstones, plentiful in this area. The standing tombstones are characteristic tombstones mostly dating from the period of the medieval Bosnian state. Their existence, appearance and messages present a mystery of the history of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is expected that this year, 2014, they will be included in UNESCO's List of World Heritage (United Nations, Educational Scientific Cultural Organization). Half a century ago, on the occasion of the world exhibition "Art in the Territory of Yugoslavia, from Prehisto-

² In Bosnian, the root of the name comes from the noun "koza", meaning "goat".

ry to Today”, (Paris, 1960), famous novelist from this area, Miroslav Krleža, emphasised that the Bosnian standing tombstone was the main exhibit and said: “[...] *Madam Europe should forgive me, but Bosnia is the only one with monuments. Standing tombstones. What is a standing tombstone? It is incarnation of highlanders, Bosnians! What does a Bosnian do on a standing tombstone? He stands straight up! He lifted his head, raised his hand! But no one has ever found a standing tombstone showing a Bosnian kneeling or begging. Not one showing him crying.*”

Even if it was only the fiction of an artist, the real opus of many records from the standing tombstones, the message I give here, dating from 1094, overcomes the time and space in which it was created (from the standing tombstone of Duke Nenco, a Great Bosnian Duke): *“A man can see what he has not seen, hear what he has not heard, taste what he has not tasted, be where he has not been, but his own self is the only thing that he can find or not find always and everywhere...”* Another authentic record of popular wisdom on many standing tombstones and places, found for a long time (from ancient times until Shakespeare) is the epitaph on the grave of Radojica Bilic, in the Staro Selo, near Jajce: *“I beg of you, do not attack me. I was what you are, and you will be what I am...”* (M. Dizdar: *Stari bosanski epitafi*,³ Sarajevo, 1961). Some write that this message was the “translation of the same sentence written in the Florentine church, Santa Maria Novella, in 1427: *‘Io fu già quel che voi sete, e quel chi son, voi anche sarete...’*.” (R. Petrović: *Bogumili, Visoko – Novi Sad*, 2010). Even if it is the truth that the standing tombstones and records of them are a copy from the West, this only confirms that the Earth did

not become a “global village” yesterday, but that it had forever been one. However, the standing tombstones are specific for Bosnia and Bosnia is the place where the East meets the West, joining, at the same time, attractive and unattractive, good and evil. These influences can indeed be viewed through the life of the standing tombstones, their figuration and transformation.

The upper Neretva (Cuhovici, above the Rakitnica) has a place where one next to another lay Bogomile standing tombstones, Christian crosses and Islamic headstones, in one place, in the same necropolis. To this day, those stand together, at the same spot, and below them is the same land, Bosnian land. They stand, speak and send the word as persuaded witnesses. In the most obvious way, they show that under the burden of the East and the West, sometimes through force and in other times through mercy, as the time was passing, Bogomiles became Catholics, Orthodox and Muslims. Finally, in this time, on this same Bosnian land, the Bosnians agreed to be Croats, Serbs and Bosniaks, but all wanting the land to be theirs alone. How did it come to this?

It would be beneficial to all to hear what the ingenious son of the former joint country, Nikola Tesla, said: *“Observe natural phenomena, for it will give you clear answers and inspiration”* and accept the message of the wise American Seattle’s Chief *“The Earth does not belong to man – man belongs to the Earth.”*

Bosnia and the Bosnian Spirit are unbreakable by the laws of nature and God’s order: as bread made from its grain, harvested from its land, baked in an earthy stove, sweat to eat and of a delicious smell for all. All need to clean their own yards and streets, let the flowers freely grow and let the fruits blossom, let all in Bosnia eat the fruits of their work, peacefully and without any stench.

³ In English: *Old Bosnian Epitaphs*

While I am contemplating Koznik, I listen to Nature and sense God. Two hills are before my eyes. They are nearby, dominating Konjic. I have walked all over the mountains and hills around Konjic, but have not been to these two since the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992-1995). Why is that? They are nice, with nice names: Grad and Gostić.⁴ As you approach them, you are welcomed by boards showing crossbones saying “MINES”! In my language, mine is also a word for the lead you find in pencils; the centre which gives life to letters and words, but these are the other mines, the ones which destroy hearts and kill life in a man. How did they appear in these places? Strange?!

Grad generally means a polis-state (the heart of civilisation). The Grad above Konjic has probably had some of it in its history, and what is certain is that it was a fortress in the dukedom of Herceg⁵ Stjepan (Stjepan Vukcic Kosaca /1404-1466/, the Grand Duke of Bosnia, later the Herceg /duke/ of the St. Sava), who founded Herzegovina (an integral part of Bosnia). According to the circumstances of that time, the duke Stjepan swung between the eastern and western church, and has inclined towards Rome at the end (Catholicism), adopting the title of a duke. It is a paradox that mines around Grad have been “implanted” by those who nowadays want Herzegovina only for themselves, representing themselves as the heirs of Herceg Stjepan and “Croatian patriots”. Thus, they “dirtied” his country and this beautiful belvedere, hiding behind the name of the duke.

Gostić, in its name, calls for a guest and shows hospitality. Truly, this hill, under the lead-gray peaks of Prenj, appears hospitable as if offering itself to a man to rest and refresh

on the fame meadows, overlooking the Neretva valley. The guest is the one who visits, who comes with good intentions and the one who is welcomed. The guest is the one who serves the God, and with the Bosnian Bogomils, in the Bosnian Church, that was the one who held the mission of a priest. Members of the Bosnian Church, according to different sources, are called Bogomils, Paterens, Christians, and for the “true believers” they were heretics. They were considered to be the keepers of the original teaching of Christ, based on Gospels, founded on modesty and simplicity. They despised tangible wealth and feudal order of the classical church, which led to their pursuit. As the Bosnian Church was not a feudal lord, it was respected by the people and this suited the Bosnian nobility and squirearchy, so they supported and protected it. During that time, a valid principle must have been “cuius regio, eius religio” (the one who owns the land, owns the religion). Obviously, the opposite was valid, too. Thus, besides pursuit, the eastern church, Orthodox Serbian Church, as an orthodox (original) one, even had some tolerance towards the Bosnian Church “transferring” Christians into Orthodox, and thereby into Serbs (claiming Bosnian land as Serb land). This is how we came to the paradox where heirs of St. Sava, as “Serb patriots”, with the goal of protecting the land only for themselves, “visited” Gostić and offered mines to it, “dirtying” the land that is the land of St. Sava.

The Neretva valley, below Gostić, has always been the most populated by those who surely have not been either Catholics or Orthodox. Many necropolises with standing tombstones (Konjic has the highest number of standing tombstones in Bosnia and Herzegovina) show that those were Bogomils. They were the part of Bosnians who had not fallen under the influence of the western and eastern

⁴ Town and Small Guest

⁵ Duke

church, but under the rush of the powerful Ottoman (Turkish) Imperia; they have gone to Islam and became Muslims. Turkish vassals were something different and they seemingly ruled in Bosnia, suppressing their own nationality and identity within them and, as Muslims, were only distinguished and affirmed as Bosniaks in 1993. Willingly or not, they had to defend themselves and their Bosnian land from the attacks from both, east and west. This is how we came to the third paradox, and the hardest heirs of Bosnia, as “Bosniak patriots”, defending the county from the aggression, “planted” mines around Gostić and “dirtied” the land that is, in fact, truly Bosnian. Surely, in their pretensions, the Croatian combatants have not forgotten to do the same.

At the end of the second millennia of the new era, Gostić truly became the “No man’s land”. It is truly anachronistic to emphasise the medieval principle “*cuius regio, eius religio*“, but because of those who still dispute the sovereignty and integrity of Bosnia, it is worth remembering that the Bosnian Warden, Stjepan Tvrtko I Kotromanic (1338-1391), was the first Bosnian King, and during his rule his effective title was “the King of Serbia, Bosnia, Dalmatia, Croatia and Croatian Littoral.” He who had Orthodox, Catholics and Bogomils under his sovereign reign and had himself participated in the whole course of events. So much about the country of Bosnia.

It is the Day of the Planet Earth. I return from the outing. While passing through the town, walking its streets and pavements, I see a lot of dog’s poo. I meet the people who took their pets out, and I see some stray dogs. There is a Law on Protection of Stray Dogs in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but there are no asylums to accommodate them there. I don’t know about the Law on Pets, but their lords surely lack the culture (such as the one in the West), to clean up after their pets.

For as long as we fail to comply with the law and culture, we will live in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a beautiful country, with dog’s poo.

In such an event, the story of Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks is superfluous. On the other hand, maybe it isn’t, really, because today, the whole world is a “global village”?!⁶

The essay is dedicated to all victims of the Earth’s pollution with “mines”!

Written in the spring of 2014, on the Day of the Planet Earth (the 22nd of April 2014), when Bosnia was a no man’s land.

Published on the web portal, www.blogger.ba, on the Day of Youth (the 25th of May 2014, the day that is no more), after a great flood in Bosnia (which just happened), and with great nostalgia (which is all-prevailing).

(Blog: *Bosna spava – spot: Dan mladosti-potop-nostalgija*⁶)

⁶ *nostalgija*, engl. *nostalgia* (Greek *nostos* return to homeland, *algos* pain) sorrow for the homeland, fig. craving for something that used to be beautiful.

A Summer Morning

Slavena Zaharieva. Bulgaria

He opened his eyes, stopped the alarm and smiled. It was a few minutes before six, a perfect Monday morning. The summer heat had not yet started turning the air into a still furnace. The terrible early heat wave in the past few days had made him wish he could quit his job and spend his days lying in the shades of the trees in the nearby park. Or, better still, dipping into the sea.

These were all meaningless thoughts because he had a great job and no intention of leaving. It was just that in the early Monday morning he liked to imagine a different Tuesday morning for himself, even if it was just for the fun of it. This particular morning, however, he imagined something else.

He turned on the coffee machine, opened the window and let his eyes wander around. The neighbourhood was still asleep save for a few gulls flying hopelessly in the greyish morning and for a middle-aged woman who was meticulously scrubbing a spot on the windshield of her retro Mini Cooper.

He looked outside but he didn't pay any particular attention to either the gulls or the woman. He was thinking about what he should wear today. Not that he was vain. OK, maybe he was. Just a little. Especially when he was planning to talk to the pretty girl from the flower shop.

He had first seen her about two weeks ago. She was apparently new to the shop because he would have noticed her if she had been there long. The flower shop was just next to the coffee place where he always went on his way to work. He ordered his black coffee, sometimes also bought a newspaper and then started his short 20-minute walk to his office.

That morning two weeks ago, on leaving the coffee place, he noticed a big pile of small coniferous trees in boxes. They had apparently just been unloaded in front of the flower shop and amidst the green needles of the trees there was the most unusually charming face he had ever seen.

He couldn't see what she was doing. He could only see the deep brown eyes, so dark that for a second he was scared of them. Then, as he watched them, they started to look more magnetic and less scary, warmer and smiling. When he realized she was actually smiling at him, he panicked. It was a foolish thing to do, especially for a grown man, and yet he panicked so much that he hurried away, almost spilling his coffee on his perfectly ironed pale green shirt.

In the days that followed he saw her almost every morning, but didn't have the courage to go and speak to her. Sometimes she would see him, too, and smile with that smile that looked like a metaphor for the beginning of summer. Sometimes she was busy moving huge vases with flowers and she didn't even notice him. On those mornings, he went to work particularly grumpy.

The idea that he should go and talk to her formed in his mind slowly during those two dreamy weeks. That Monday morning, he was determined to overcome his childishness and finally meet her.

But it was still so early and the coffee machine made such comforting hissing sounds that he went back to bed, lay down and smiled again, looking at the ceiling. Then he got up, reached

for his laptop and turned it on. It was not a habit he was proud of. Yet, it was almost impossible for him to get up without turning his laptop on in the first ten minutes he was awake.

He scrolled mindlessly through the headlines, checked his email and heard the coffee machine turn off. One of the headlines caught his attention. It read something like “Eternal invaders”. It was from a nationalist paper and it was an article about the country’s Ottoman past. It said that Bulgaria had the problems it had today because of the five centuries of Ottoman rule. It also accused present-day Turks living in Bulgaria of silently colonizing the country by having too many children, especially compared to ethnic Bulgarians.

He read the text, went to the coffee machine, poured some coffee for himself and went back to bed with the cup. The aroma tickled his nostrils as he read the article again. It was a subject that had always been interesting for him. He knew his views were a little extreme, yet he didn’t believe he had a reason to challenge them. For a moment he hesitated, then he logged onto the social network.

He shared the article mechanically, and wrote under it, “I don’t know why we continue to put up with Turkish people. We should just try and make them leave our country and leave us alone.” He hit “Post”, reached for his coffee and took a long hot gulp. He was about to get up again and make some breakfast when the laptop made a jingling sound. Someone had commented on his comment.

“People could be different and still exist together,” said the commenter who called himself – or herself – Samira.

He squinted, wondering if he should engage in this. He looked at the clock. He had some time.

“Says who? What is that name of yours, anyway? Are you Turkish?”

No reply came for a few minutes. Then, “no. I am Bulgarian, same as you.”

“Oh, really? Why do you have such a name, then, Samira?”

“My name is Arabic. I am a Muslim.”

“So, you are not Bulgarian.”

“I am. Not all Bulgarians are Christians. Not all Muslims are Turkish.”

“Yeah, right.”

“Religion and ethnicity aren’t the same thing.”

“Right. Says someone who perhaps wears a burka.”

He waited for a reply to his last remark but no one was there. He continued to wait. He couldn’t say if he was afraid he had gone too far or if he just had the aggression of someone who sees themselves as winners.

He waited almost until he was late. He refreshed the page, waited for his unknown opponent to say something, and finally closed his laptop and hurriedly dressed himself. His stomach started to hurt as he hadn’t found the time to eat breakfast. He didn’t compare the two shirts that he wanted to compare so that he could choose what to wear for his big talk to the flower girl. He even felt that his excitement had somewhat dwindled due to that annoying conversation with that person who had called themselves “Samira” but was perhaps a big hairy old man who didn’t have anything better to do than write stupidities online.

He looked at himself in the mirror. His cheeks were red and his hair was dishevelled. He ran his fingers through his hair and left with a sulky face.

The heat was almost in full swing even though it was still early. The sun had started scorching and he quickly started to look for a way to walk under the few trees in the street.

He wondered if he should get the girl a flower but decided that it was a bit pretentious to give flowers to a girl who works in a flower shop.

When he saw her, he lost his tongue again for a minute, but he managed to work up the courage to go up to her and say, “Hi. I’m Ivan. I... do you want to have coffee sometime?”

She smiled with the familiar yet new smile of someone you have seen a lot but not spoken to and she put down the huge cactus she was holding.

“Hello,” she said. “Yes, I’d love to.”

Her smile continued to melt all over her face like ice cream forgotten in the sun. He realized he was also smiling and feeling just a little like a fool because his smile seemed to reach his ears. In the hot summery haze that enveloped him he hardly heard her when she continued:

“My name is Samira.”

صراع بين حب وكراهي

محمود المله. مصر

عادت إلى منزلها بعد يوم طويل في الجامعة.. سلمت على أمها.. تناولت طعامها.. وفتحت حاسوبها الشخصي كي تبدأ سجلا جديدا على صفحات الفيس بوك على الانترنت.

وفاء.. فتاة في الثانية والعشرين من عمرها، تدرس بالفرقة الثالثة في كلية الإعلام، فتاة مفعمة بالحياة، ناشطة سياسية ناقمة على الأوضاع السياسية والاقتصادية التي تمر بها البلاد، انضمت إلى حزب سياسي رأت فيه تجسيدا لما تؤمن به من أفكار ومبادئ، كرست حياتها لذلك الحزب والدفاع عن آراءه ومواقفه ورأت فيه أملا لذلك الإصلاح المنشود.. لم تكن تشارك في المظاهرات التي يقودها الحزب ولم تكن تشارك في أي فعاليات يقوم بها الحزب على الأرض إلا أنها كانت ناشطة إلكترونية من الدرجة الأولى، كانت تكتب المقالات في الصفحة الرسمية للحزب على شبكة الانترنت وتنتشر مقالات زملاءها النشطاء على صفحات الفيس بوك المختلفة المهتمة بالسياسة وحتى الغير مهتمة، كانت ترى في تلك المقالات نشرا للوعي ضد ما تسميه بالفساد السياسي والرأسمالية الظالمة، حتى إن اسمها أصبح مشهورا في عالم الانترنت، فإذا وجدت منشورا على الفيس بوك كاتبته <وفاء السيد> فأنت على موعد مع النقد السياسي اللاذع للحكومة وحزبها، بل ومن يتعاطف معهم.

كانت مشهورة في ذلك العالم الافتراضي، أما في عالم الواقع فلا يميزها أحد ولا يفكر في أنها ذات الشخص الذي يكتب تلك المقالات الجريئة على صفحات الانترنت، في عالم الواقع كانت تلك الفتاة الرقيقة الهادئة الباسمة دائما، لم تكن تتحدث كثيرا.. أو لنقل لم تكن كذلك في الحياة الحقيقية بلا انترنت، كانت متفوقة في دراستها.. من أوائل فرقتها.. محبوبة بين زملاءها.. ولعلمهم لو كانوا يعلمون من هي في العالم الآخر لكان الوضع تغير كثيرا.

كانت حياتها ما بين دراستها الجامعية ونقاشاتها الحادة على صفحات الانترنت، لا شيء يكسر هذا الروتين.. إلى أن جاء ذلك اليوم.. يوم أن سمعت صوتا خلفها ينادي:

- يا آنسة !

نظرت إلى الورااء بكل هدوء:

- نعم !

- لقد.. لقد أو.. أوقعت قلمك، رد مرتبكا.

ردت بابتسامة هادئة:

- شكرا.

لم يكن قد رآها من قبل، أو أنه رآها ولكنه لم ينتبه إليها، ولكن من المؤكد أنه لم يرها بهذا القرب من قبل.. هو لا يدري لماذا كان مرتبكا هكذا.. لم يراوده شعور كهذا من قبل.. لم يستغرق في التفكير

طويلاً أراد التأكد مما رأيته عيناه فأسرع خلفها ولحق بها وما أن كان على بعد خطوات أمامها حتى أدار ظهره راجعاً ليحظى بنظرة أخرى تخيره عن حقيقة ما شعر به.. ويا ليت له لم يحظ بتلك النظرة.. لقد كانت أشد من سابقتها فقضت عليه بالكلية.. مضت تلك اللحظة منذ أن أدار ظهره راجعاً إليها حتى تخطفه كالدهر.. رأى فيها ملامحها وحفظها.. في تلك اللحظة القصيرة كان قد تأمل شعرها الأسود المنسدل على كتفيها و تقمص كامل وجهها ذي البشرة القمحية، ربما تكون هذه الصفات عادية ليست مميزة.. ولكن تناسقها مع عينيها الصافيتين وابتسامتها الهادئة تلك أضاف لها سحراً جذبها إليه.

كان هو في هذا الذهول أما هي فقد مضت غير عابئة بشيء.. فهي لم تلحظه أصلاً.. كانت شاردة الذهن تفكر في فرصة عمرها.. إحدى الجرائد المشهورة تعرض تدريباً لطلاب الفرقتين الثالثة والرابعة للعمل في الجريدة في فترة تدريبية ليست بالقصيرة.. وبالطبع فإن تلك الفرصة لا تعوض، فهي إن أحسنت وأعجب بها الصحفيون الكبار والمسؤولون عن الجريدة فإن ذلك سيسهل توظيفها في تلك الجريدة بعد التخرج وتضمن مكاناً لها بين العمالقة في جريدة مشهورة.. وإن لم يكن، فهي خبرة كبيرة في مجال عملها ستصقل مهاراتها وتتعلم فيها حرفة الصحافة.

فتحت باب البيت.. ودخلت مسرعة لتشغل حاسوبها لتتملاً استمارة التقديم لذلك التدريب التي كانت على الانترنت.. كان هذا أول شيء فعلته.. لم تسلم على من في البيت.. حتى أنها لم تخلع حذائهما ودخلت بهما غرفتها.. لقد كان هذا التدريب يمثل لها شيئاً عظيماً حتى أنه أنساها أن تدخل على حسابها على الفيس بوك لتكمل نقاشاتها السياسية الحادة كالعادة.. نست غريمها الإلكتروني ذلك المسمى <كامل> العضو في الحزب الحاكم والمدافع الدائم عن الحكومة.. ربما يكون قد كتب مقالا جديداً مدافعاً فيه عن الحكومة أو مهاجماً فيه لحزبها المعارض.. أنتزكه وهي التي لم تكن تجعله يهنأ يوماً على مقال يكتبه.. كانت تهاجم كل مقالاته وتنتقده هو وحكومة حزبه.. وهو بدوره لم يترك لها المجال وحدها في صفحات الانترنت فقد كان يعلق ساخراً على آرائها ويسفهاها ويجرح في حزبها المعارض ويصفه بالحزب الطفولي ويصف أفراده بأنهم أصحاب أفواه لا أكثر.. تناست كل ذلك ونامت في تلك الليلة تحلم بذلك التدريب وتمني النفس به.

وعلى الجانب الآخر من المدينة ذلك الشاب الذي ما زال مذهولاً.. ينظر من نافذة بيته المطلة على البحر يستنشق نسيم الهواء مستغرقاً في ذهوله الغريب.. كيف سمح لنفسه بحدوث هذا.. لم يكن يظن أن قلبه سيخفق يوماً.. لقد مرت عليه فتيات كثر وكان يرى في أعينهم إعجابهم به ولكنه لم يكن يكثر.. كان يصب كل اهتمامه على دراسته وعلى النشاط السياسي الذي هو من مكملات دراسته.. فقد كان يريد أن يكون كاتباً سياسياً في إحدى الجرائد الكبيرة.. لذلك درس الإعلام وشارك بالعمل السياسي حتى تكون لكتاباتاته السياسية مصداقية وقبولاً، أخذ يسأل نفسه ما المميز في هذه الفتاة إلى هذه الدرجة؟ ما الذي جذبها إليه؟ أي ابتسامتها أم طريقة كلامها أم طريقتها في المشي أم ماذا؟ ما الذي حول اهتمامه وتفكيره؟ وفي ظل ذلك الصمت لم يجد أجوبة مقنعة لتساؤلاته واستسلم لذلك الشعور الذي يخالجه وأدرك أن تلك الأشياء ليست بيد المرء.. إنما القلب والقلب وحده هو من يحدد من ومتى.

استيقظ ذلك اليوم باكراً.. ارتدى ملابسه ونزل مسرعاً ليذهب إلى الجامعة حتى أنه لم يأكل شيئاً قبل أن يرحل، لقد كان يريد أن يراها قبل أن يبدأ محاضراته فهو إن لم يرها في بداية اليوم فهو لن يستطيع إكمال يومه ولن يستطيع التركيز في محاضراته.. لقد أصبح هانماً إلى هذه الدرجة.. اعتاد أن ينتظر ليراها كل صباح عند باب المدرج الذي تأخذ فيه محاضراتها.. لكنه مل ذلك أحس بشيء يدفعه نحو المزيد.. أصبح الآن لا يكفيه النظر إليها.. لم تعد النظرات تشبع ولهه.. أراد أن يكلمها ذلك

اليوم.. أراد أن يخبرها بمكنون ذاته.. انتظر ذلك اليوم في كافتريا الكلية يشرب القهوة و عيناه منصبتان على باب المبنى الذي تدخله كل يوم لحضور محاضراتها كي يراها قبل أن تدخل.. انتظر حتى بداية المحاضرة الأولى.. يبدو أنها تأخرت.. انتظر حتى انتهت المحاضرة الأولى.. ربما استيقظت متأخرة وستحضر الثانية.. انتظر طويلا وفي كل مرة يمضي النفس بقدمها.. ربما تكون قد دخلت وهو لم يلحظ ذلك.. أراد التأكد فدخل إلى المدرج وأخذ يتصفح في وجوه الناس كالأبله.. ولكنه لا يهتم.. كل ما يهتم له هو رؤيتها.. كيف يمكن أن يمضي يومه دون أن ينظر إلى وجهها.. أراد أن يسأل عنها زملاءها.. لكنه لا يعرف شيئا عنها.. لا يعرف حتى اسمها.. كيف له بأن يسأل عن شخص مجهول بلا اسم.. كان خائفا يخشى أن يكون قد أصابها مكروه منعها من الحضور ذلك اليوم.. ولكنه كان لا يملك شيئا.. كان لا يمتلك إلا العودة إلى بيته خائبا.

في اليوم التالي لم ينتظر خارجا بل دخل إلى المدرج ليجلس بالقرب منها.. كي يتحدث إليها كما خطط سابقا.. لم يكن من الصعب عليه تمييزها حين دخل المدرج، فهو أصلا لم يكن يرى غيرها فكل من حولها كانت ملامحهم مشوشة بالنسبة إليه.. هي فقط من كانت تظهر ملامحها واضحة جلية أمام عينيه.. لكن تلك الملامح كان يبدو عليها علامات الحزن ممزوجة بالغيظ والغضب.. شعر أن هذه اللحظة ربما لا تكون اللحظة المناسبة لمحادتها ولكنه أراد أن يعرف سر حزنها، فجلس في مقعد خلفها عليها تتحدث عن شيء مما أحنزنها إلى إحدى زميلاتها.

- لمْ تأت البارحة ؟ سألتها صديقة لها.

كم كان يريد أن يسأل ذلك السؤال !
أشاحت بوجهها :

- لا أريد التحدث بالأمر.

- ولكني أرى أنك لست على ما يرام.. يجب أن تخبريني فأنا صديقتك.

- لم يتم قبولي في التدريب بالجريدة.

- أسفة لذلك.. ولكن عزيزتي ربما فضلوا من هم بالفرقة الرابعة وأنت بالفرقة الثالثة.. كما أن الدنيا لن تتوقف على ذلك.. فالجرائد كثيرة و يمكنك أن....

قاطعتها بحدة :

- ليست هذه هي المشكلة....

ثم اضطردت تكمل حديثها كما السيل الجارف الذي لا يستطيع أحد إيقافه :

- لو أنهم لم يقبلوني لعدم كفاءتي أو لصغر سني لما تضايقت.. لكن ما يضايقتني أنهم لم يقبلوني فقط لأنني في الحزب.. كنت قد اعتدت على إقصائي من أجل كوني فتاة.. اعتدت على تهيمش آرائي وسط ذلك المجتمع الذكوري المقيت.. اعتدت تهيمش آرائي حتى في أسرتي لأنني فتاة لا أفقه الكثير كما يزعمون.. لكنني لم أعود على التمييز ضدي من أجل أفكاري وآرائي السياسية.. أليس ما أنا فيه من تمييز وإقصاء كافيا؟ !

حاولت تهدئتها ولكن بلا جدوى:

- ألم أقل لك من قبل أن تهدئي من نبرة تلك المقالات التي تكتبينها على صفحات الانترنت.. لقد أصبحت مشهورة لذلك.. واصبح اسم <وفاء السيد> علما في نقد الحكومة على الانترنت.. كيف كنت تظنين أن يقبلونك في جريدة مشهورة كتلك؟

- ولكن أليس هذا حقي؟ ألسنا في بلد تدعي الديمقراطية ومن حقي قول ما أشاء دون أن أخاف على شيء، أو ليس....

كان يستمع إلى كل ذلك الحوار مهتما بكل كلمة فيه ولكنه لم يستطع الانتباه بعد أن ذكر اسمها.. لا لإلفته لمعرفته ولكن لأن لذلك الاسم موقع خاص منه.. لقد خفق قلبه بشدة حين سمع ذلك الاسم.. أراد أن يخطئه أذنيه ولكنه متأكد مما سمع إنها <وفاء السيد> انها تلك عدوته الدودة على صفحات الانترنت.. انها تلك عضوة الحزب المعارض ذلك.. لم يكن يتخيل ذلك.. ومن كان يتخيل أن <كامل علي> مناصر الحكومة والمدافع عنها على صفحات الانترنت سيعجب بغريمته دون أن يدري.

لم يستطع الجلوس في مكانه.. اضطر للانسحاب من ذلك المشهد.. خرج من الجامعة ليشكو إلى البحر كما اعتاد.. لكن هذه المرة ليس من نافذة بيته.. لقد ذهب إليه بنفسه.. أراد أن يمتزج مع موج البحر الهادر كي يفيق مما هو فيه.. لكن ما بداخله صراع ليس للبحر إيقافه.. صراع بين حب وكرهية.. حبه لتلك الفتاة التي أسرت قلبه.. وكرهيته لتلك الغريمة السياسية.. أحقا السياسة تستحق كل هذا؟! أحقا تستحق أن تفرق بين الأصدقاء؟! بين الآباء وأبنائهم؟! بين قلبين لم يجتمعا أصلا وحالت بينهم تلك العداوة السياسية؟! أحس أن انغماسه في تلك الحياة الافتراضية أفقده طعم الواقع وجعله يسيء الحكم على الناس.. تساءل في نفسه مالذي حمله على الكراهية لمن يخالفونه في الرأي؟ بل والأخطر من ذلك هل كان هو سببا في حمل أحدهم على كراهية أخيه أو من يحب؟ كان يخشى أن تكون إجابته بنعم.. لذلك لم يفكر في السؤال كثيرا.. واكتفى بالنظر إلى البحر يريد أن ينسى كل ما كان.

Love and Hate Conflict

Mahmoud El Mohr. Egypt

She returned home after a long day at university. She greeted her mother, took her lunch and turned on her personal computer to begin a new debate on Facebook.

Wafaa was a twenty-two year old girl studying her third year at the Faculty of Mass Communications, an energetic girl and an activist rejecting the prevailing political and economic conditions. She joined a political party that she considered a representation of all her beliefs and principles. She dedicated herself to the party and to defending its views for she saw it as her hope for long-awaited reform. She did not join demonstrations organized by the party, and nor did she participate in any actual event, but she was a cyber activist. She used to write essays on the party's official website, and share essays written by her colleagues on Facebook pages, political or otherwise. She considered that such essays contributed to raising awareness of what she called political corruption and unjust capitalism. She was well known in the internet world, and her name "Wafaa Ahmed" became linked with harsh political criticism of the government and the ruling party. Her criticism even extended to those who sympathize with them.

She was famous in that virtual world, but was unknown in reality. No one would even think of her as the same person writing serious essays on the internet. In reality, she was a delicate, quiet, smiling girl. She said little but this was not her way on the internet. She was academically successful, ahead of her classmates, who all loved her. Maybe if they knew who she was in the virtual world, things would have changed significantly.

She lived a routine life divided between her university studies and heavy debates on the internet. Nothing broke this routine, until one day she heard a voice calling her:

"Excuse me, Miss."

"Yes." She replied looking behind her calmly.

"You have drop..pp... dropped your pen," he said.

"Thank you," she replied with a cute smile.

He had not seen her before, or maybe he had seen her but without interest. Anyway, he certainly had not seen her that close before. He did not know why he was so embarrassed. He had not experienced such a feeling before. He did not spend much time thinking before he verified what his eyes saw. When he was just a few steps away, he looked back to take another look in order to be surer about his feelings. Better if he had not taken that last look, as it made him collapse. The moment he decided to look back at her until she looked away was like years. He saw her features up close. In that short moment, he saw her black hair falling on her shoulders, and her toned face. Maybe she had common features, but her symmetry as well as her pure eyes and cute smile made her more attractive.

He was astonished, while she was indifferent. She was not even aware of him. She was actually thinking of her future opportunities. A famous newspaper was offering training for second, third and fourth year students. The newspaper offered a significant training period. It was really a great opportunity. If she worked hard and gained her tutor's favor, she would have more chances after gradua-

tion. If not, it would be a significant experience for her to strengthen her skills.

She opened the door and rushed into her house. She turned on her PC and began to fill in the training application online. This was the first thing she did as soon as she got back home. She did not greet anyone, nor did she even take off her shoes. The training was so important for her that she even forgot to enter her account on Facebook to resume her political discussions. She forgot her political opponent, that guy called “Kamel”, a member of the ruling party and always defending the government. Maybe he had written a new essay defending the government and offending the opposition party. She was always criticizing his essays, his party and the government. He was always teasing her opinions and criticizing her opposition party and calling it childish with only a big mouth. She forgot all about that and slept, dreaming about that training.

On the other side of the city, the young man was staring through his window overlooking the sea. He was breathing fresh air, surprisingly thinking about what had happened to him. He never thought he would fall in love one day. He saw many girls. He saw admiration in their eyes, but he was indifferent. He was focusing on his studies and his political activities. He dreamt of being a political writer for a major newspaper. He studied mass communications and worked as an activist in order for his essays to be more credible. He was wondering what distinguished this girl from others. Why was he attracted to her? Was it her magic smile? Or the way she walked or talked? What made him change his mind? He could not find any answers to his questions. So he just gave into that new feeling, and realized that such feelings are out of anybody’s control. It is only controlled by one’s heart, which decides on the person and the time.

He woke up early and rushed to his university without having breakfast. He was eager to see her before he began his lectures. If he could not see her at the beginning of the day, he would not be able to go on with the day’s activities, and would not be able to concentrate on his classes. He became really fond of her. He used to see her every morning entering her classroom. After some time, he got bored of just watching her. Something was pushing him towards the next step. He was not satisfied with just watching her. He wanted to talk to her... to tell her what he really felt towards her. He waited in the Faculty café, drinking coffee and staring at the gate through which she entered every day. He waited till the beginning of the first session. She seemed late. He waited till the end of the first session. Maybe she had overslept and would come to the second session. He continued to wait. Maybe she had already entered and he did not realize. He went into the classroom, looking at everybody’s faces like an idiot, but he did not care about that. He only wanted to see her. He could not go a day without seeing her face. He wanted to ask her classmates, but he knew nothing about her. He did not even know her name. How could he ask about an unknown person? He began to think that maybe something bad had happened to her. There was nothing he could do other than go back home disappointed.

The next day he did not wait outside, but entered the classroom to sit near to her and talk to her as he had already planned. It was not difficult for him to find her among all these students. He did not see anyone else around her. All other faces were vague. He saw her features very clearly; but he saw sadness in these features. He thought maybe this was not the right moment to talk to her, but he wanted to know what was bothering her. He sat behind her to try to overhear her conversation.

“Why were you absent yesterday?” asked her friend. He was so eager to ask her this question himself.

She turned her face away and said:

“I don’t want to talk about it.”

“But you don’t seem ok. Just tell me, I’m your friend.”

“I wasn’t accepted on the newspaper training course.”

“I’m so sorry. But maybe they preferred grade four students, and you are grade three. Anyway, it’s not the end of the world, there are many newspapers out there and you can...”

“That’s not the problem,” she interrupted, and went on impulsively: “If they rejected me for not having enough experience, I wouldn’t have been annoyed. But the problem is that they rejected me just because I’m a member of the party. I used to be excluded from life just because I’m a girl. I suffered disrespect for my opinion among the male community. I used to suffer disrespect for my opinion even among my family, just because I’m a girl who, they say, doesn’t know anything. But I haven’t experienced discrimination for my ideas and political views, as if the discrimination I already suffer is not enough.”

She tried in vain to calm her down:

“I told you before to make your essays on the internet less severe. You became famous, and the name ‘Wafaa Ahmed’ became known for criticizing the government. Why did you think they would accept you in such a famous newspaper?”

“Isn’t this my right in a country claiming to be democratic? I have the right to say whatever I want without any fear, I...”

He was listening to every word she said till it came to her name. His heart beat violently after hearing her name. Not because he was eager to know it, but because he knew this name well: “Wafaa Ahmed”. It was the name of his opponent on the internet, this member of the opposition party. He would not have even imagined this. Who could imagine that “Kamel Ali”, the government supporter on the internet, would fall in love with his opponent?

He could not stay in his place. He left the university complaining and talking to the sea as he used to do but this time not through his window. He went to the sea directly. He wanted to immerse his sadness into the waves of the sea. But his sadness was more than the sea could consume. It was a conflict between love and hate: his love for this girl and his hatred for her as a political opponent. Is politics really worth all this conflict? Is it worth losing a friend? Or losing the relationship between parents and sons? To part two loving hearts even before they meet? He felt that being so immersed in such a virtual world made him lose any interest in the real world. Furthermore, it made him disrespect people. He was wondering why he hated those who have opinions that contradict his. Most importantly, was he the reason for people hating each other? He was afraid to find that the answer was yes, so he stopped thinking, and just stared at the sea to forget everything.

Το Γατόψαρο

Ηλίας Κολοκούρης. Ελλάδα

*Well I wish I was a Catfish,
Swimming in, Lord, the deep blue sea.
I'd have a, all you pretty women,
fishin' after me. Oh Yeah.*

*When I went down, my girlfriend's house.
And I sat down, Lord, on her front step.
And she said a, come in now Jimi.
My husband just now left.*

*Well there's two, two trains runnin',
but there's not one, Lord, that's goin' my way.
You know there's a one train runnin' at midnight.
Other one leave just for a day.*

Catfish Blues (arr. Jimi Hendrix)

Έχεις στη λίστα των φίλων σου κανέναν αποδημήσαντα εις Κύριον; Εγώ έχω έναν. Για αρκετό καιρό τον έβλεπα συχνά πυκνά στον ύπνο μου. Το Γατόψαρο.

Φθονούσα πάντα τον Ανδρέα το Γατόψαρο, από το δημοτικό σχολείο. Ο Ανδρέας πάντοτε έκανε παρέα με τα πιο ωραία και νόστιμα κορίτσια της τάξης. Τον ζήλευα, γιατί τις καταλάβαινε και έπαιζε μαζί τους. Όλες οι ωραίες τρέχανε πίσω του. Η Δέσποινα, με το όμορφο μαλλί της καρεδάκι, στερεωμένο στη λευκή στέκα της, του τσιμπούσε διαρκώς τα μάγουλα με τα κοντά κοντά δάχτυλά της και τον χάιδευε στον σβέρκο και του έκανε όλα εκείνα τα ναζάκια και τα παιγνίδια που ήθελα να κάνει σε εμένα. Επίσης, ο Ανδρέας το Γατόψαρο πάντοτε γνώριζε τι συνέβαινε στον ακατανόητο κόσμο των κοριτσιών. Όταν η Κάτια έλαβε τον ανώνυμο κρίνο μαζί με το σκοπίμως ανορθόγραφο ραβασάκι, ανήμερα του Αγίου Βαλεντίνου, ο Ανδρέας γνώριζε γιατί η Κάτια έβαλε τα κλάμματα, με ποιον ήθελε να τα φτιάξει η Κάτια και από ποιον είχε καταλάβει ότι προήρχετο ο ανώνυμος ανθός. Ενώ εμείς; Εμείς δεν γνωρίζαμε τίποτε. Ήμασταν τυφλοί, στο άρρεν σκοτάδι, στα σκισμένα γόνατα και στη μπάλα.

Ο Ανδρέας δεν έπαιζε ποτέ μαζί μας ποδόσφαιρο, αλλά ήταν πρώτος στο βόλει και στο τρέξιμο. Και στο φατούρο. Δηλαδή, φωνάζαμε “Φατούροοοοο!” και τρέχαμε όλοι κατά πάνω στον Ανδρέα και τον χτυπάγαμε μέχρι να πέσει κάτω. Εκείνος πάσχιζε με μια φωνή εντόμου, μια ρινική απελπισία να τραυλίζει “Γιατί ρε παιδιά;” αλλά δεν τον άκουγε κανείς. Γιατί άραγε; Γιατί είχε πλάκα. Ας είμαστε ειλικρινείς, το φατούρο, αυτή η ομαδική βιαιοπραγία ήταν μια απόλαυση για όλους μας. Ωρες – ώρες τον λυπόμουν, και μια φορά που είχαν αποφασίσει ότι θα του ανοίξουν τη μύτη και τον χτυπούσαμε επί δέκα ολόκληρα λεπτά, κατά τη διάρκεια του

διαλείμματος, του είχα πιάσει γερά τη μύτη ώστε να μη σπάσει. Δεν έσπασε τελικά, χτύπησε το κουδούνι και πήγαν όλοι στις τάξεις τους. Έμεινα πίσω, τον ρώτησα “Καλά είσαι ρε;” και εκείνος ψέλλισε “Τώρα θα δείτε όλοι σας”. Την επόμενη μέρα με κάλεσε ο διευθυντής να με ρωτήσει γιατί είχα δείρει τον Ανδρέα το Γατόψαρο και με ποιο δικαίωμα τον φώναζα “γατόψαρο”. Μάλιστα. Την μία και μοναδική φορά που είχα επιλέξει να μην τον δείρω, αλλά να τον προστετέγω όπως όπως, με είχε καρφώσει, μόνον εμένα από όλα τα μαγκάκια του σχολείου.

Η αδερφή μου τα πήγαινε αρκετά καλύτερα με τον Ανδρέα. Παιζανε και κούκλες μαζί στο σπίτι, αν είναι δυνατόν. Είχα σιχαθεί την εταιρεία παιγνιδιών El Greco, ήθελα να τους βάλω φωτιά να καούν. Ο Ανδρέας είχε τον Τζον Τζον με τη μπλε φόρμα του σκι, ενώ η αδερφή μου είχε την Bibi bo σε ροζ αποχρώσεις, μαζί με ποδήλατο και ρούχα μπαλέτου. Τόσο πολλή παρέα κάνανε, που όταν γέννησε η σκύλα του Ανδρέα, εκείνος προσφέρθηκε να μας δώσει ένα κουτάβι. Ο πατέρας μου υπήρξε σαφής “Μόνο αρσενικό μπορούμε να πάρουμε, δεν γίνεται να τρέχουμε για σειρώσεις και τέτοια. Θέλουμε σκυλί – φύλακα!”. Και εγένετο Μπούμπης! Μα Μπούμπης; Ήταν όνομα αυτό για σκυλί; Αφ’ ενός η σιχαμάρα που έθρεφα για τον ίδιο τον Ανδρέα και τους κοριτσιστικούς τρόπους του, αφ’ ετέρου αυτό το άθλιο όνομα, τι Μπούμπης, τι Μπούλης, δεν το χώνεψα ποτέ αυτό το κωλόσκυλο. Καφέ χρώματος, με τα αυτιά κάτω, ούτε ράτσας ούτε κοπρίτης, ένα έρημο μπάσταρδο που κούναγε όλη την ώρα την ουρά του, δεν μπορούσε να περπατήσει καλά και γέμιζε τον τόπο κίτρινες κίτρινες σβουნიές. Άσε που δεν φαινόταν καλά καλά το τέτοιο του. Μικρό ήταν βέβαια, κουτάβι, θα το βλέπαμε με τον καιρό. Δεν τον άντεχα τον Μπούμπη, κι ας ήθελε παιγνίδι όλη την ώρα, γιατί μου θύμιζε τον Ανδρέα το Γατόψαρο. Πώς γινόταν να έχουμε δεχτεί για σκυλί – φύλακα ένα κουτάβι από ένα παιδί που όλοι το φωνάζανε Γατόψαρο;

Παρ’ όλα αυτά το δεχτήκαμε το σκυλί, το μεγαλώσαμε, το μάθαμε να έρχεται και να κάθεται όταν φωνάζαμε “Μπούμπη κάτω”. Περνούσε ο καιρός κι εκείνος γάβγιζε σε ό,τι έβρισκε. Γάτες, μηχανάκια, φορτηγά με ψάρια. Μετά από περίπου ενάμιση χρόνο ο Μπούμπης άρχισε να παχαίνει ακατανόητα. Έτρωγε τον περιδρομο είναι η αλήθεια, και αυτό ήταν το μόνο στο οποίο συνεργαζόμασταν. Πήγαινα και του άδειαζα κάθε πρωί όλο το ζεστό γάλα που δεν ήθελα να πιω, κι εκείνος το κατέβαζε μονορούφι. Άσπριζε η μουσούδα του και τον σκουπίζα καλά καλά. “Ναι, μαμά, το ήπια, είμαι έτοιμος να φύγουμε” φώναζα και του έκλεινα το μάτι συνωμοτικά. Και όλα τα μπλιαχ τα κατέβαζε, χόρτα, φασολάκια φρέσκα, αγκινάρες και φακές. Αλλά δεν δικαιολογούσαν όλα αυτά την κοιλάρα που είχε κάνει ο Μπούμπης. Κανείς δεν καταλάβαινε γιατί πάχαινε και όλο πάχαινε το σκυλί. Ωσπου μια μέρα ο Μπούμπης γέννησε. Μάλιστα, γέννησε. Τέσσερα μικρά μικρά κουταβάκια που ποιος ξέρει πού τα είχε συλλάβει και εμείς δεν είχαμε πάρει χαμπάρι. Όλη μέρα στην αυλή, κάποιος σερνικός μπήκε και ο Μπούμπης που τελικά ήταν Μπούμπα έμεινε έγκυος. Εμ, βέβαια, από το Γατόψαρο σιγά μην παίρναμε σκυλί σερνικό.

Στο Γυμνάσιο το Γατόψαρο ξέφυγε. Άρχισε να βάφεται μαζί με την αδερφή μου, και τον θυμάμαι στο δωμάτιό της να ποζάρει μπροστά στον καθρέφτη με μια ηδυπάθεια όλο σιχαμάρα. Αλλά κρατιόμουν, δεν μπορούσα να τον βρίσω. Οφείλα να τον ανεχτώ. Καθόταν με την αδερφή μου στο ίδιο θρανίο, παίρναμε και οι τρεις το λεωφορείο για το σπίτι και άλλωστε είχε πάντα τον πατέρα του να τον βρίζει. Μια φορά σε ένα πάρτυ γενεθλίων, το Γατόψαρο έβαλε να ακούσουμε το Nothing Else Matters. Να χορέψουμε μπλουζ! Εμένα το μυαλό μου καρφώθηκε κατ’ ευθείαν στη Σοφία. Εκείνο το βράδυ φορούσε ένα ξεδιάντροπο μινάκι φόρεμα, αλλά το Γατόψαρο ήρθε και μου ζήτησε να χορέψουμε. “Έλα ρε, για πλάκα!” επέμεινε. Τσαντίστηκα,

το είπα στον πατέρα του και έγινε το έλα να δεις. Μας άκουσε όλος ο Ψαθόπουργος. Το πάρτυ διαλύθηκε μέσα σε πέντε λεπτά. Ο γέρος άρχισε να σπάζει βάζα, να εκσφενδονίζει τα λουκάνικα που έψηνε και να κατεβάζει καντήλια και Χριστοπαναγίες. Η μητέρα του από την άλλη, από όσα έμαθα κατόπιν, έπαιρνε πάντα το μέρος του σε αυτούς τους τσακωμούς. “Ο,τι θέλει ο Ανδρέας” έλεγε. Αλλά ο πατέρας διαφωνούσε και ο Ανδρέας έβαζε τα κολλητά του και έβγαине βόλτα μέχρι το άλλο πρωί, την στιγμή που όλοι διαβάζαμε για τις πανελλήνιες εξετάσεις. Ήθελε να περάσει Φιλολογίας Θεσσαλονίκης, αλλά κατάφερε να φτάσει μέχρι τα ΤΕΙ Λογοθεραπείας. Όλοι φύγαμε από τον Ψαθόπουργο, ο Ανδρέας ξέμεινε πίσω, να φυλάει τα μπόσικα. Στην ψάθα.

Πέρασε ο καιρός, χαθήκαμε με τον Ανδρέα. Εντελώς. Σπούδασα στην μεγάλη πόλη. Ερωτεύτηκα, πλανεύτηκα, φχαριστήθηκα. Ο ετήσιος νόστος στον Ψαθόπουργο πρόσφερε σπιτικό φαγητό και ηρεμία. Χριστούγεννα, Πάσχα, Καλοκαίρια. Άλλη δουλειά δεν είχα, να βγαίνω με τον Ανδρέα. Κάποια στιγμή η αδερφή μου τον ξαναβρήκε στο διαδίκτυο και άρχισαν να ξαναμιλάνε. Τον έκανα απλώς accept. Κανόνισαν να βγούμε λίγο πριν την Πρωτοχρονιά. Μας είχε έκπληξη! Θα πηγαίναμε να δούμε τι απόγινε το “Συnergieio”, το περίφημο μπαρ όπου είχα δώσει την μία και μόνη αποτυχημένη ροκ συναυλία του Λυκείου. Να είναι καλά οι Τρύπες, τα Ξύλινα Σπαθιά και η Γενιά του Χάους. *Δικαιώματα που ξέρατε τώρα δεν υπάρχουν. Υπάρχει μια σκατοζωή και μια τυφλή υπακοή. Με την εκμετάλλευση και τον ηλίθιο φόβο οι μαλάκες αρχηγοί σου γαμάνε την ψυχή. Δεν είναι δημοκρατία, δεν είναι ελευθερία, είναι μόνο μία Μπασταρδοκρατία.* Και όντως. Οι Μπάσταρδοι είχαν κάνει το “Συnergieio”, εκεί, που στη γωνία πίσω από την κολώνα είχα φιλήσει πρώτη φορά την Σοφία, το είχαν κάνει γκέι κλαμπ. Αν είναι δυνατόν. Μόλις είδα τι έγινε, βγήκα τρέχοντας στην πλατεία, να δω τα Ψηλαλώνια, να συνέλθω. Τίποτε ίδιο, ποτέ ξανά. Έκανα τσιγάρο και γύρισα μέσα. Θα κόλλαγα λίγο στα κορίτσια της παρέας. Θα φεύγαμε σε κανα διωράκι. Άλλωστε, η ώρα δεν ήταν επικίνδυνη, χωρίς Σαββατόβραδο.

Πώς την περνούσε το Γατόψαρο όλα αυτά τα χρόνια; Να δες, εδώ μας έφερε, στο γκέι κλαμπ, άρα... Ξέρω γω; Αυθαίρετα συμπεράσματα: φαντάζομαι μια ισορροπημένη γκέι ζωή με τους φίλους του, την τρανς αισθητική του. Έτσι θα ζούσε. Με τους ερωτικούς του συντρόφους, μέσα σε μια πόλη που διαθέτει πια και το κατάλληλο μπαρ της. Και η μαμά φυσικά να τον αποδέχεται και να τον υποστηρίζει. Μόνο πρόβλημα ότι εκ της υποθέσεως αυτής, μόνο το έσχατο σκέλος ίσχυε. Ναι, τον απεδέχεται η μαμά, αλλά μόνον εκείνη. Ο πατέρας έδιωχνε διαρκώς τον Ανδρέα από τον σπίτι. Του έριχνε βρισίδια – ψιθύρους, διότι έπρεπε “ο μικρότερος αδερφός τουλάχιστον, να μεγαλώσει σωστά”. Οι ερωτικοί σύντροφοι του Γατόψαρου μόνον κανονικοί δεν ήταν. Μια από εδώ, μια από εκεί. Σα να έκλεβε από εκκλησία. Μια σχέση κανονική δεν έκανε. “Όπου το βρω, δεν το αφήνω!” μας είπε “Αλλά δεν το βρίσκω εύκολα!” Ο Ανδρέας ταυτόχρονα πάσχιζε να φύγει, να σπουδάσει Φιλολογία στην Σαλονίκη, να ησυχάσει από όλα αυτά. Τα κατάφερε. Πέρασε μετά από δεύτερες πανελλήνιες εξετάσεις, άπειρο κόπο και διάβασμα. Θα κατακτούσε την ελευθερία του. Μονάχα η μάνα του, μας είπε κι αγχώθηκε, έδειχνε πολύ άρρωστη. “Στενοχωριέται που φεύγω σιγά σιγά, αλλά πού θα της πάει; Θα της περάσει!” Και όλα θα γίνονταν κατά πως ήθελε ο Αντρίκος.

Κι εμένα τι με ένοιαζαν όλες αυτές οι αηδίες; ΤΙ ΜΕ ΕΝΔΙΕΦΕΡΑΝ; Γιατί τα κάνουν τα reunion; Μπορεί να μου εξηγήσει κανείς; Η απουσία ελληνικής λέξης για τον θεσμό δείχνει πόσο αμερικανιά και πόσο βλακεία είναι. Άμα χάνονται μερικές παρέες, καλώς χάθηκαν! Τι θες και τα σκαλίζεις; Η αδερφή μου ξανακόλλησε με το Γατόψαρο, άρχισαν να βγαίνουν τακτικά

και να τα λένε. Η μάνα του Γατόψαρου πέθανε μέσα σε τέσσερις μήνες, έτσι, σιωπηλά και απροκάλυπτα, από το τσιγάρο κι έναν όμορφο οστεοφάγο καρκίνο. Ο Γατόψαρος έχασε το μόνο οικιακό του στήριγμα. Κι άρχισε να ψάχνει πάλι διαδικτυακώς. Εμένα δεν μου έστειλε ποτέ τίποτα, δόξα στον ρουφιάνο το facebook, καταλάβαινε από τις φωτογραφίες πως είχα κοπέλα και δεν τολμούσε. Μια φορά μονάχα μου μίλησε, με ρώτησε για τη Φιλολογία και με ενημέρωσε πως είχε επιτύχει στις Πανελλήνιες εξετάσεις και με το νέο του Απολυτήριο από Οκτώβρη θα ήταν φοιτητής!

Να πω την αλήθεια, το Γατόψαρο συγκρατιόταν. Ή τελοσπάντων είχε όντως μερικές φιλολογικής φύσεως απορίες, δεν ξέρω. Αλλά εμένα η σιχαμάρα μου έβγαине. Έβλεπα και κάτι τύπους που είχε φίλους, με την τρίχα έξω στις φωτογραφίες και τα χείλη σουφρωμένα και ήθελα να ξεράσω. Ένα βράδυ το Γατόψαρο με είδε ενεργό πολύ αργά και με ρώτησε.

Liako eisai online? Thelw na se rwthsw kati gia ton De Sade.

Ήμουν. Αλλά ακόμα και τα greeklish που έγραφε, μου θύμιζαν κορίτσι. Σιχάθηκα με το που το διάβασα. Έκλεισα τον υπολογιστή. Ταυτόχρονα, ένιωθα άσχημα που δεν μπορούσα να του απαντήσω με ασφάλεια και δίχως σιχαμάρα. Αλλά όλα, όλα διάολε μου θύμιζαν γκόμενα, εκτός από τον ίδιο τον Ανδρέα. Το ότι έβλεπε Game of Thrones, το ότι πόσταρε Evanescence και Britney Spears, τα ποντικάκια και τα γατάκια κι όλα τα ζώακια του δάσους στο προφίλ του. Έκλεισα τον υπολογιστή και έπεσα για ύπνο. Θα του απαντούσα το πρωί και με ασφάλεια.

Έλα ρε μαν. Τι κάνεις; Έπεσα για ύπνο και τώρα το είδα. Η Φωλιά του Βιβλίου είναι εκεί, απέναντι από το Δημοτικό, θα βρεις πολλά βιβλία του Ντε Σαντ. Μόνο προσοχή στο πώς τα διαβάξεις! Καλημέρα!

Και ο Ανδρέας το Γατόψαρο ήταν ακόμα online και απάντησε ευθύς.

Hehe! Ithela na se rwthsw kati gia ta latinika. Apothetika – imiapotheitika rimata exoun soupino? Thanx ek twn proterwn!

Είχα κανένα λόγο να απηδίσω με αυτή του την απορία; Η πραγματικότητα είναι πως δεν είχα. Αλλά διαβάζοντας του μήνυμά του σε άπταιστα greeklish, το πείραξα λίγο στο κεφάλι μου. Τα αποθετικά ρήματα έγιναν εντελώς απωθητικά ούτε καν ημιαπωθητικά, μα εντελώς απηδαστικά και ενοχλητικά. Το δε σουπίνο έγινε σου πίνω. Και άρχισα να παραληρώ πάνω από τον υπολογιστή. “Τι μου πίνεις ρε παλιομαλάκα; Τι μου πίνεις και σου πίνω που να σου πάρει ο διάολος τον κόλο;” Ήθελα να τον σβήσω από την λίστα και να ησυχάσω. Με ενοχλούσε, δεν ξέρω γιατί, αλλά ήθελα να ξεράσω. Δεν του απάντησα ποτέ. Αλλά αυτό το ποτέ έμελλε να γίνει των ποτών.

Γιατί μόλις μία εβδομάδα μετά, το Γατόψαρο, αφού τσακώθηκε με τον πατέρα του για τις επερχόμενες σπουδές στη Φιλολογία, αφού μίλησε online με δυο τρεις αδίστακτους τριχωτούς, φόρεσε τις πτζάμες του, βγήκε στην Εθνική και κάπου έξω από τον Ψαθόπυργο φούνταρε πάνω σε μία διερχόμενη νταλικά. Έγινε λιώμα. Δεν είχε ταυτότητα μαζί του και επί τρεις ημέρες οι δικοί του τον έψαχναν, ενώ το άψυχο απομεινάρι σώματος, ο άσχημος πολλός του έκείτο στα αζήτητα του Νεκροτομείου.

Όταν πια μαθεύτηκε ο θάνατός του με έζωσαν τα φίδια. Γιατί δεν του είχα απαντήσει; Τι με είχε ρωτήσει άλλωστε; Τι μου έφταιγε το όνειρό του να γίνει φιλόλογος και να διδάξει ελληνικά σε παιδιά; Να μάθει και ο ίδιος και όλα όσα ονειρεύεται ένας άνθρωπος να τα κάνει. Άρχισα να βλέπω εφιάλτες. Δεν τον είχα δει ποτέ στον ύπνο μου, αλλά τώρα τον έβλεπα, τον Ανδρέα το Γατόψαρο, με μια ουρά γοργόνας και στα χέρια γατίσια νύχια. Καθόταν πάνω σε ένα φλεγόμενο θρόνο και με ρώταγε μέσα από τα μουστάκια του ξανά και ξανά “Τα αποθετικά και

ημιαποθετικά ρήματα έχουν σουπίνο; Πες μου φιλόλογε! Πες μου! Είδες; Δεν ξέρεις και εφηύρες την αηδία για να ξεπεράσεις την άγνοιά σου! Λέγε φιλόλογε! Έχουν σουπίνο;”.

Αντρίκο, εύχομαι ο κόσμος να ήταν αλλιώς. Να μην αηδίαζα κάθε φορά που έστελνες μήνυμα. Να μη σε χτυπάγαμε στο δημοτικό. Να παίζαμε και εμείς βόλει, και εσύ ποδόσφαιρο. Ενίστε. Όπως αρέσει στον καθένα, όποτε του αρέσει. Να μη σε έβριζε ο πατέρας σου. Να μην πέρναγε η νταλικά. Να μη φορούσες την πυτζάμα σου, να έδινες κατατακτήριες, να γινόσουν φιλόλογος.

Τα αποθετικά ρήματα είναι εκείνα που έχουν μόνον παθητική φωνή, αλλά ενεργητική σημασία. Από την ενεργητική φωνή δανείζονται το σουπίνο τους.

Τα ημιαποθετικά ρήματα παίρνουν μερικούς τύπους από την ενεργητική, μερικούς τύπους από την παθητική φωνή. Δεν έχουν σουπίνο.

Ωστόσο, να θυμάσαι πως το σουπίνο είναι ρηματικό ουσιαστικό *αρσενικού* γένους. Γιατί το ονομάζουμε με ουδέτερο και λέμε το σουπίνο; Γιατί υπάρχει μόνο στην αιτιατική *-um* και στην αφαιρετική *-i*. Έτσι, μάς δημιουργείται η εντύπωση πως είναι ουδετέρου γένους. Αλλά είναι αρσενικού. Η αιτιατική δηλώνει κίνηση με σκοπό, μετά από ρήματα όπως το *eo* και το *venio*. Η αφαιρετική δηλώνει αναφορά μετά από τα επίθετα *facilis*, *difficilis* και άλλα.

Ad salutandum, non mentitum, sed veritum, in Paradiso vale!

Catfish

Ilias Kolokouris. Greece

*Well I wish I was a catfish,
Swimming in, lord, the deep blue sea.
I'd have a, all you pretty women,
fishin' after me, fishin' after me,
fishin' after me. Yeah.
Ohh yeah, ohh yeah, ohh yeah, ohh yeah.*

*When I went down, my girlfriends house.
And I sat down, lord, on her front step.
And she said a, come in now Jimi.
My husband just now left, just now left.
Ohh yeah, ohh yeah, ohh yeah, ohh yeah.*

*Well there's two, two trains runnin',
but there's not one, lord, that's goin' my way.
You know there's a one train runnin' at
midnight.
Other one leave just for a day,
leave just for a day.
Ohh yeah, ohh yeah, ohh yeah, ohh yeah.*

Catfish Blues (arr. Jimi Hendrix)

Got anyone on your list of friends who's departed for the Lord? I have. He'd come to me in my dreams for a long while after. The Catfish.

I always envied Andreas the Catfish, ever since primary school. Andreas always hung out with the prettiest, tastiest girls in our class. I was jealous of him, because he understood them and knew how to play with them. He always had a line of babes running after him. Despina, a beautiful bob held in place with that white headband of hers, was forever pinching his cheeks with those stubby little fingers of hers, stroking his neck and doing all the flirty things I wanted her to do

to me. And Andreas the Catfish always knew what was up in that incomprehensible girl-world of theirs. When Katia got the lily and the anonymous note with all those deliberate spelling mistakes on Valentine's Day, Andreas knew why she burst into tears, who it was she wanted to hook up with, and who she'd realized the flower was from. As for us... we knew nothing. We could only grope around blindly within our male darkness, with our grazed knees and our football.

Andreas never played football with us, but he was the greatest at volleyball and running. And at *fatouro*. Meaning we'd all yell "*Fatouroooooo*", charge at Andreas and thump him till he fell down. He'd been cursed with this little insect's voice, a nasal nightmare stuttering hopelessly "Why?", but no one paid him any heed. Why indeed? Because it was fun. To be honest, *fatouro*, this act of group violence was a source of pleasure for all of us. I'd feel sorry for him now and again, and once when the gang had decided to give him a nose bleed and hit him for ten minutes straight during the break, I'd grabbed his nose really hard to save it from breaking. And it didn't break; then the bell rang and we all went into class. I hung back and asked him, "You OK?", and he'd lisped "I'll show the lot of you." The next day, the headmaster called me to his office and asked why I'd beaten up Andreas the Catfish, and who'd given me the permission to call him "Catfish" anyway. There you go. The one time I made a choice not to beat him, but to protect him as best I could, he'd fingered me, just me from all the little hooligans in the school.

My sister got on quite well with Andreas. They even played with their dolls together

in our house, for Christ's sake. I was so sick of those silly little figures, the toy brand itself "EL GRECO". I wanted to burn the lot of them. Andreas had John John in the blue ski uniform, and my sister had Bibi Bo in the pink, plus a bike and a tutu dress. They spent so much time together that when Andrea's dog had her puppies, he offered her one. My father made himself crystal clear: "We can only accept a male. We can't be running around spaying animals and the like. We need a guard dog!" And so Booby was born! Booby? Was that any name for a dog?

The combination of my disgust at Andreas and his girlish ways plus that awful name was just too much! I never could stand that bloody dog. Booby the Bent. Brown with floppy ears, neither a pedigree nor a mutt, just a lonesome mongrel, a bastard that never stopped wagging its tail, that walked funny and left little piles of bright yellow poo wherever it went. To cap it all, you could hardly see its thingy. Of course, he was still a puppy and it would grow. I couldn't stand Booby, even if the beast was always ready to play, because he reminded me of Andreas the Catfish. How the hell could we have accepted a puppy from a kid they called Catfish?

But we did take him in and feed him and teach him to come and sit when we shouted "Down, Booby!" Time went by and he kept on barking at anything that moved: cats, motorbikes, trucks loaded with fish. About eighteen months later, Booby really started putting on weight inexplicably. Of course, he did eat anything and everything, which is the only time the two of us helped each other out. I would pour the hot milk I didn't want in his bowl every morning, and he'd down it in one. His muzzle would be snow white afterwards, but I'd wipe it clean. "Yeah, I drank it, mum. I am ready for school!" I'd shout and shoot him a conspiratorial wink. He'd eat all

the yucky stuff, too: boiled greens and runner beans, artichokes and lentils. But still, that huge belly of Booby's was fairly inexplicable. No one could understand why that dog just kept on getting fatter and fatter. Until he had his pups. Yeah, pups. Four eensy weensy little puppies conceived who knows where, and we'd had no idea. With Booby shut up in our backyard all day, some dog had got in and Booby, who ended up having boobies rather than being one, got knocked up. I mean... as if we'd ever have got a male off the Catfish.

The Catfish really went off the rails in high school. Him and my sister started making themselves up together, and I remember him in her room posing in front of the mirror with a lasciviousness that sickened me. But I held myself back, I couldn't curse him out. I had to put up with him. He sat at the same desk with my sister, the three of us took the same bus home, and, in any case, he already had his dad to call him names. I remember this one time at a birthday party when the Catfish put "Nothing Else Matters" on the radio. A chance to get up close and personal! My mind went straight to Sophia, who was wearing a shameless little mini-dress that night. But then the Catfish came up and asked me to dance. "Come on! It's just for fun!" he persisted. I was pissed off and told his dad. Well, the shit hit the fan. The whole neighborhood must have heard the racket and the party was over in five minutes flat. Chaos! His old man started smashing vases, hurling the sausages he'd grilled into the night and cursing all the saints. From what we heard later, though, his mum always took his side when his father started scolding him: "Whatever Andreas wants," she said. But his dad didn't agree and Andreas pulled on his skin-tight jeans and didn't come back till morning. This was when we were all studying like mad for the university entrance exams. He want-

ed to get into Thessaloniki to study Literature, but only got offered Speech Therapy at the local college. We all upped and left the neighborhood, the Strawfortress, but Andreas stayed behind to hold the fort. All alone.

Time went by and we lost touch, Andreas and I. Completely. I was studying in the big city. I fell in love, was led astray, had the time of my life. The yearly breaks and homecoming meant home and rest, first Christmas, then Easter, then the summer holidays. I had so many things to do, why go out with Andreas? At some point, my sister hooked up with him on Facebook, and they got talking again. It was just a matter of clicking on “accept” for me. They arranged to go out just before New Year. He had a surprise for us! We’d go see what had become of our old hang-out, the “Garage” where we’d performed our one and only gig in High School. I wish all those rock groups that inspired us back then well: the Holes, the Wooden Swords, Generation Chaos. *Rights you knew were gone for good, leaving just a life of shit and blind obedience. The bastards in charge use fuckwit fear and exploitation to fuck your soul. This isn’t a democracy, this isn’t a freedom, it’s just a Bastardocracy.* And it really is. The Bastards had turned our “Garage”, where I’d kissed Sophia for the first time, there in the corner behind the column, into a gay bar. Damn them! The moment I saw what had gone down, I ran out into the square, to square myself up against the Threshing Heights, the Psilalonia and the mountains, to come round. Nothing would ever be the same again. I lit a cigarette and went back inside. I’d flirt a bit with the girls in company. We’d be out of here in an hour or two. In any case, the witching hour was a long way off... there was no risk this early on a Saturday night.

What had the Catfish been up to all that time? Well, here was the answer: he’d brought

us here, to a gay club, so... who knows? Arbitrary inference: I imagined him living a balanced gay life, with his friends and his transsexual aesthetic. I had nothing whatsoever to back this up but yes, that’s how he’d live. With his sexual partners in a town that now had its very own proper gay bar, meaning a suitable environment for them all to go about their business. And, of course, with his mum’s acceptance and support. But there was a problem with my hypotheses: only the last leg of propositions was stable and true. Yes, his mum accepted him, but she was the only one. His father kept on throwing Andreas out of their house. Again and again. With curses, whispered curses, because “his younger brother should grow up right, at least.” The Catfish’s sexual partners were anything but normal or regular. One here, one there. It was like stealing from a church. He hadn’t had a single normal relationship. “I never let an opportunity go to waste!” he told us, “though opportunities are hard to find!” Andreas was desperate to get away, to study Literature in Thessaloniki, to escape all that. And he pulled it off. He retook the entrance exams, studied day and night and passed. Now freedom was his to take. It was just that his mum, and his expression changed when he said this, seemed really ill. “She’s sad I’m leaving and getting sadder, but she’ll come round. She’ll be fine!” And everything would happen just as Andy wanted it to.

But what did I care about all that crap? Why did I give a shit? What is it with all that getting-back-together stuff? Could anyone explain it to me? The fact that there’s actually no Greek word for “reunion” shows what a stupid American concept it is. So what if a thousand groups of friends go their separate ways? I wish them God speed! What’s the point raking it all up again? My sister and the Catfish were inseparable again, and they started going out together and talking on the

phone all day long. The Catfish's mum died a few months later from all the cigarettes and a lovely little ossivorous cancer of the bones. She just slipped away quietly without any fuss and the Catfish had lost his only ally in the house. So he hit the Internet again. He never sent me anything at all. Thanks to Facebook's inability to keep a secret, he'd seen the photos and knew I had a girlfriend. He didn't dare. He spoke to me just the once to ask about the literature department and to tell me he'd passed the university entrance exams and would be starting in October thanks to his new leaving cert!

Truth be told, the Catfish was holding back, being quite restrained. I mean, maybe he really did want to ask me some literary stuff, I don't know. But I felt the old disgust rising up. And when I saw his friends letting it all hang out on his Facebook page, pursing their lips, the hairy bears, they made me want to puke. One night, the Catfish saw me online in the small hours and messaged me a question:

U online, Liako? Wanna ask u bout De Sade.

I was. But even his text-speak was girly. It made me sick just reading it. I closed the lid on my laptop. I felt bad for not being able to answer safely and without disgust, but everything about him, everything, reminded me of a girl, except Andreas himself. That he watched *Game of Thrones*, that he posted Ev- anescence and Britney Spears, the cute mice, kittens and little forest creatures that populated his profile. I switched off the computer and went to bed. I'd answer in the morning, safely.

Hi ya, man. How's it hanging? I fell asleep and just saw your message. Try the Book Nest opposite the primary school. You'll find a lot about de Sade in there. Just be careful how you read it! Have a good day!

And Andreas the Catfish was still online and answered in a flash.

Hehe! Wanted to ask u smt bout Latin. Do semi-deponent verbs have a supine? Thanx in advance!

Why on earth should his question have left me feeling queasy? There was no reason at all. But reading his textspeak was messing with my head. Or I was swimming lost in the messed-up text. His deponent verbs left me feeling *depugnant*, not just *semi-depugnant* but repulsed and annoyed. As for his supine, it got so supping down his throat. And my fingers went delirious on the keyboard. "Supine? Is that how you want me? You supine and me supine, with me supping down your mouth? Run Devil run up your ass!" I felt like defriending him on the spot, for a little peace of mind. He bothered me, I don't know why, but I wanted to throw up. I never did answer him. But fate would end up adding an "ever" to that never.

Because just a week later, after fighting with his father over his upcoming studies and chatting with a couple of merciless bears online, the Catfish put on his pajamas and headed for the highway. There, just outside our town, he jumped in front of a truck. There wasn't much left. He didn't have his ID on him, and his family was out looking for him for days while his lifeless remains, his pulverized flesh, lay unclaimed in the morgue.

When word got out that he was dead, the guilt snakes really set in. Why hadn't I answered him? What was it he'd asked of me, anyway? What problem could I possibly have with his dream of getting a literature degree and teaching kids Greek? With him getting an education, too, and making his dreams come true? I started having nightmares. I'd never seen him in my sleep before, but now there he was, Andreas the Catfish, with a mermaid's tail and cat's claws sitting on a flaming throne asking me through his whiskers, over and over: "Do deponent and

semi-deponent verbs have a supine? Tell me, you linguist! Tell me! See? You don't know, and you made up the nausea to get over your ignorance! Well, speak up, linguist! Does it have a supine or not?"

Andy, I wish the world was a different place. I wish I didn't feel sick every time you sent me a message. I wish we hadn't beaten you at primary school. I wish we'd played volleyball with you, and you'd played footie with us. Once in a while. As you like it. As we like it. Whenever and if at all. I wish your dad didn't curse you out all the time. I wish you hadn't put on those pajamas, I wish you'd got into uni the first time, I wish you'd studied literature.

Deponent verbs are those that have a passive voice but an active meaning. They

borrow their supine from the active. Semi-deponent verbs take some of their forms from the active and some from the passive voice. They have no supine.

But you'll need to remember that the supine, as a verbal noun, is essentially *masculine* in gender. So why does the word look like it does in Greek? Because it only exists in the accusative *-um* and the ablative *-u*. Which makes us think it's actually neuter. But it's masculine. The accusative denotes *movement with a purpose*, but only after a verb like *eo* or *venio*. The ablative denotes a *reference* after adjectives including *facilis* and *difficilis*.

Ad salutandum, non mentitum, sed veritum, in Paradiso vale!

Ode alla frontiera

Giulio Pitroso. Italia

Le storie meritano sempre di cominciare con un esordio azzeccato. Alcuni esperti dicono che l'incipit debba catturare. Ma la maggior parte della gente che lo dice non è mai stata costretta ad ascoltare storie straordinarie –a volte anche dagli inizi incerti– senza potersene distaccare. Scrutare attentamente il fondo diafano dell'abisso delle vite di testimoni e narratori con le labbra insozzate da parole orribili: ah, non è certo un belvedere, nossignore. La passione può essere articolata e spietata, slanciata come una catena di urli e sospiri. Spesso e volentieri si può voler venire meno al proprio compito e cercare di dimenticare. E l'apatia è una lastra di ghiaccio, un crampo fastidioso e vorace. Mi divora nel mezzo della notte, spesso e volentieri. Il senso di colpa è un prezzo accettabile per la liberazione scaturita dall'oblio. La fuga può essere lenitiva. Ma come possiamo fuggire da noi stessi? Qui, rifugiati in un'ovatta insensibile. Mi ripeto spesso: "sfuggito, scampato, salvo". Non basta. L'altalena delle nostre emozioni ci fa a pezzi di frequente e la serenità sembra pure starci stretta.

La strada ha un colore che non è colore, ma un pallido alone giallastro, che mi travolge dentro e mi stravolge l'intestino. Se un Dio c'è, non è qui. Se un inferno c'è mai stato, questo può essere nella nostra stanza. Una mattanza di parole e impressioni, di espressioni del volto e piaghe sparse che abita sotto la nostra pelle e i nostri abiti: organizzata per bene, disciplinatamente, così lucidamente esplicita dal nome della residenza, l'indirizzo di via Asmara 35, residuo coloniale di uno dei dolorosi domini che gli uomini hanno imposto a loro stessi nella lunga e snervante catena dell'esistere. La nostra lussuosa cattività non merita certo lamentele o reclami, a confronto di quello che patiscono ogni giorno i cordoni di uomini e donne vomitati come fiotti di sangue dal cuore duro dell'Africa. Ma quello che ci succede dentro non lo possono capire, gli altri. Questo cordone invisibile che ci tiene tutti uniti, nella nostra nuova e scomoda posizione, che ci rende per sempre diversi da chi non è come noi: lo guardo e lo riconosco negli occhi di Gabriel, seduto alla mia destra e intento a suonare una vecchia chitarra.

«Tutto il tempo del mondo è già stato. E quello che stiamo vivendo è già successo. Questo mi può consolare, almeno questo. Questa scomoda libertà è un esilio dolce ed un vivere insipido...» dice Gabriel con aria assorta «Lo scorrere temerario del tempo e delle cose è solo vile apparenza e tutte le nostre lagnanze sono solo un soffio nel vento». Poi, sospirando, intreccia una melodia perduta, di cui neppure noi comprendiamo oramai il testo, fatto di parole intraducibili, generata prima e fuori da tutti i giorni che gli uomini hanno visto e vedranno. La nostra condizione ci impedisce di ricostruire il significato delle singole parole, che pure intuiamo. La loro pronuncia è inesatta, l'inflessione errata. Somiglia lontanamente a un canto di un pastore errante dell'Asia centrale, a un cortile immenso e fresco circondato da balaustre intarsiate, a una calda carezza d'inverno, a una fonte fresca d'estate. Noi lo chiamiamo "Ode alla frontiera", perché noi stessi lo intonavamo guardando lo spazio oltre i limiti che ci erano stati imposti, scrutando e immaginando tutte le cose possibili oltre una cortina immaginaria costruita dai vincoli a noi imposti.

Io sento fuori il fiume scrosciare. Sono i giorni della prima estate. I ghiacciai a monte si sono sciolti e ingrossano il corso d'acqua che qui chiamano Po'. I fiori hanno riempito l'aria di un tenero senso di malinconia. Ed è come se anche dentro di noi qualcosa crescesse e si aprisse. Qualcosa d'effimero e dolce, che nulla può contro l'eternità immobile descritta dal chitarrista malinconico. Gabriel si tocca i capelli morbidi e biondi, gli scivolano sulla pelle chiara, più chiara di quanto sia ritenuto normale dalla gente che vive su questa terra. Che cos'è che fa marcire tutto, fuori dal vetro della nostra finestra? Un'afa terribile e umida ci s'è attaccata alla pelle. Non la conosciamo. No, non c'è dalle nostre parti. A chi ci chiede, noi diciamo che siamo dell'Est, là non fa tanto caldo e l'estate è mite. Possiamo distinguere candidamente il profilo dei Balcani nella nostra mente, mentre ci giustifichiamo parlando di quei luoghi. Diciamo "scappati", diciamo "sfuggiti", diciamo "esuli". Quando camminiamo, ripieno di ossa e carne dentro impermeabili leggeri e giacche, parliamo della nostra gioventù perduta e della nostra maturità inaspettata. Sono frammenti di immagini e corridoi leggeri del tempo mortale, così dannatamente costretto dall'irreversibilità degli eventi.

Tangeri era e resta per me il viso di una donna, che nella mattina più fresca, con l'aurora nascente, saluta un marinaio in lacrime: i loro occhi profondi mi disvelano ancora oggi significati oscuri, che le trame della vita mi nascondono dissennatamente. Lei aveva un viso mediterraneo e forme gentili, la chioma riccia e voluminosa le incorniciava il viso e i suoi occhi erano sottolineati da rime di trucco scuro. Mi perdo ancora adesso in quel lungo sguardo fiero e insieme perduto, come quello di una penelope sconosciuta alla Storia. Il suo ulisse pezzente, armato di stracci e immobilità, con tutte le sue esperienze imbottigliate da un'aria intensamente tragica e insieme dolce. Le macchie di malinconia sono una sofferenza di miele, sviluppata senza filtri tra di noi solo da poco tempo. Per Gabriel, che guarda spesso il cielo mentre racconta il suo pezzo di verità, Tangeri è solo il canto di una donna anziana, seduta ai margini di un vicolo, una melodia sciolta e amorevole, rivolta in tempi perduti a una prole strappata alla patria dalle persecuzioni e dalla fame.

In città, sui gradoni e sulle lastre prospicienti le vetrine dei negozi hanno piantato degli spuntoni di ferro, perché nessun barbone o gitano vi ci si possa addormentare. Le panchine sono ben pattugliate. Un uomo dal profilo smunto rovista tra i rifiuti: ha ciabatte disastrate, stracci puzzolenti, un fare da malandrino. Noi ne possiamo leggere l'animo e capirne la sofferenza. Per questo, ogni volta che lo vediamo, a San Salvario o alle Vanchiglie, distogliamo lo sguardo, anche se la tentazione è forte. Non vogliamo essere rapiti ancora dal suo dolore. Una volta, per togliersi dalla testa la figura di una madre nera che ha attraversato il deserto, Gabriel ha bevuto più che potesse. Ha chiesto che qualcuno gli mettesse delle gocce di whisky giù per le cornee, ma lo abbiamo fermato.

La notte attraversiamo le strade su una vecchia signora d'acciaio. Il motore romba sonoramente e ci trascina il basso ventre nella dimensione effervescente del rischio. Quando si è nella nostra condizione, per sentire qualcosa, bisogna pur farsi male. Le vie sono dorate, d'un colore barocco e ambrato. I lampioni lasciano larghe zone d'ombra alle nostre spalle. Sulle colline intorno a Superga, attraverso i profili intristiti di Mirafiori, tra le discariche urbane e i fumi tossici di qualche fabbrica, le gomme si consumano e la nostra testa diventa leggera.

Il pub ha un suono rilassante. Dormirei qui, a volte; forse, non andrei mai via. Raffaele, quello che fra noi ha l'indole forse più buona, ha la vocazione a guarirci l'anima, anche dall'in-

soportabile dolore del ricordo. Abbiamo visto larve di uomo incatenate alla bottiglia, un'ancora inflessibile che trascina a fondo: è una di quelle cose che non comprendiamo. Perché ancora tutta questa fatica per procurarsi della sofferenza? Tutta la potenza dei monti e delle foreste, dei fiumi e dei laghi, del pulsare iracondo delle viscere terrestri, ecco lo sento, per un momento: come si può rinunciare all'ordine di queste figure e devastare se stessi e il mondo? Noi ci siamo innamorati di questa bellezza e continuiamo a non capire il male di vivere.

La notte, fuori, è ancora immensa. Suonano ancora le chitarre e la batteria. Una bionda balla da sola, ha capelli di grano bruciato lungo gli omeri, ha occhi penetranti, zaffiri. Ha braccia leggere e movimento sinuoso. Fissandola Gabriel mi dice: «Nel libro di Enoch è scritto che gli angeli abbandonarono la loro condizione per la bellezza delle donne che vollero prendere per mogli. Caddero sul duro suolo e decadde dal loro stato». Ed io rido. La verità è che tutto questo mondo è infestato di donne bellissime e di angeli caduti e questa è una fortuna, perché probabilmente ne vale la pena. Incrocio lo sguardo di Uriel, che tra noi è l'osservatore migliore; ha un tono accigliato, perché pensa che sono ben altre le ragioni per cui si rischia la dannazione. Noi le conosciamo benissimo, ma ora non è il tempo di pensarci.

La notte è matura e focosa, rimbomba fertile nelle nostre tempie. Siamo ancora fratelli e siamo ancora vivi. La macchina taglia le strade di Torino, larghe distese d'asfalto deserto. Quando ci fermiamo, su un promontorio, ci accolgono le braccia calde dell'alba. Il finestrino abbassato, una specie di brezza leggera. Io mi ricordo mio padre, i giorni scomparsi in cui la nostra intimità familiare era un focolare sacro. Gli occhi mi si sono arrossati. «Ma che hai?» chiede Michele. No, no, è il fresco, stramaledetto fresco del primo mattino.

Ci piace divertirci e dimenticare il nostro esilio. Ci vestiamo in modo strampalato e ci fingiamo artisti di strada. Lo facciamo nei giorni più noiosi. Vecchi abiti da mercatino, nasi di gomma e trombette. Io suono il violino, una chitarra per Uriel, una tromba per Michele, un tamburello per Gabriel. Urliamo e facciamo i simpatici, specie con i bambini. Il sorriso dei bambini ci ristora, è un'iniezione di speranza, non si sente la fatica. Al parco c'è un bimbo biondo che gioca con la figlia di una signora avvolta da uno hijab azzurro, seduta su una panchina. Ha lineamenti dolci ed esprime un senso di serenità. Quando Uriel si fa uscire un mazzo di fiori dalla manica, tutti i piccoli presenti esplodono nella meraviglia. La nonna del bimbo partecipa allo scherzo. Noi abbiamo dimenticato per un attimo delle nostre brutture di profughi.

Cala una sera umida e soffocante. E torniamo a noi stessi. Siamo ancora in macchina e poi a fare un giro a piedi. Un vecchio ci urla contro chissà che cosa. Avremo sbagliato strada. Che vuole? «Tornatevene al vostro paese» grida. Oddio, un altro scemo. «Vai a dormire, nonno!» gli faccio. La sua faccia sparisce per un vicolo poco illuminato. Quest'atmosfera onirica e da incubo mi fa venire un'ansia fastidiosa, attenuata solo da un ottundimento assonnato.

Tornando a casa osserviamo un lungo viale alberato. Con le donne in piedi, ad aspettare. Nere, più scure della notte stessa e della terra che le ha generate; oppure bianche, con in bocca un accento slavo, che sbucca fuori non appena qualche autista rallenta. Sì, deve essere anche un inferno, ma un inferno dappoco, un inferno invisibile il nostro, seppure così lancinante. Ma questo, questo che è così evidente, questo inferno di sole donne scivola nascosto. Ancora inconcepibile per noi.

Casa. «Dio ci salvi dagli uomini e da noi stessi. E se un dio non c'è, salviamoci noi» fa Uriel, affannandosi a ricercare un senso alle cose viste. Io mi addormento sul divano. L'eternità

è un peso insostenibile di parole e fatti. Le storie che ho ascoltato erano raccontate con gesti tanto violenti quanto incruenti per la dura linea della Storia, insofferente agli eventi marginali delle loro vite. Il senso di tutto è inafferrabile, si discioglie nell'eroina dei tossici addormentati sotto i ponti, nelle palline di coca tirate su dai muratori alle sei e mezzo nel cantiere della strada di fronte, nel coma etilico di un altro ragazzino ai Murazzi, nel senso insoddisfatto di una relazione inappagante, nella violenza insistente delle reti unificate, nel moralismo di un qualche altro profeta di cui non abbiamo bisogno. Nessuno ci può salvare, neppure un dio, se non salviamo noi stessi. Questo penso, mentre squilla il telefono.

«Pronto» faccio io, con una voce sepolcrale. «Potete tornare» dicono dall'altro capo «Tornate su. E non prendetevela troppo con voi stessi. L'oblio è una facoltà attiva: perdonate e vi sarà perdonato. Perdonate gli uomini». La gioia mi esplose per tutte le arterie, anche se avrei ancora la tentazione di mettere giù la cornetta. Come potremo mai perdonare e perdonarci?

Ode to the Border

Giulio Pitroso. Italy

Stories always deserve to begin with an appropriate introduction. Some experts argue that the opening lines must capture the reader. But most people who say this have never been compelled to listen to extraordinary stories – sometimes also with uncertain starts – without being able to distance themselves from them. To carefully scrutinize the diaphanous depth of the abyss of the lives of witnesses and narrators with lips soiled with horrible words is not a viewpoint. Passion can be articulated and ruthless, slender like a chain of yells and sighs. Very often, you stop doing what you have to do and try to forget. Apathy is a plate of ice, an annoying and voracious cramp. Very often, it devours me in the middle of the night. The sense of guilt is an appropriate price for emancipation resulting from oblivion. Fleeing can be a relief. But how can we flee from ourselves, sheltered here in insensitive wadding? But I often repeat to myself: “fled, escaped, safe.” It’s not enough. The pendulum of our emotions frequently breaks into pieces, although serenity seems near.

The street has a color which is not a color, but a yellowish pallid aura, which overwhelms me inside and shakes my bowels. If God exists, He is not here. If there’s a hell it could be in our room. A massacre of words and emotions, of facial expressions and tears, which lives under our skin and our clothes: well-organized, in a disciplined way, so clearly explained by the name of the residence. The address of no. 35, Asmara Street, a colonial residue of one of the painful domains that men have imposed on themselves throughout the long and irritating chain of existence. Our lux-

urious captivity does not deserve complaints, a confrontation of those who every day suffer the invisible cordon of men and women thrown up like spurts of blood from the harsh heart of Africa. But the others cannot understand what happens here inside. This invisible cordon, which keeps us united, in our new and uncomfortable position, which always makes us different from those who are not like us: I look at him and I recognize him in the eyes of Gabriel, sitting on my right, and I try to play an old guitar.

“All the time in the world has already elapsed. And the time we are living has already happened. This at least can comfort me. This uncomfortable freedom is a sweet exile and a dull living...” says Gabriel with an absorbed air: “The reckless passing of time and things is only a wicked appearance and all our complaints are merely a gust in the wind.” Then, sighing, he weaves a lost melody, whose lyrics we don’t understand, made out of untranslatable words, which have emerged from all the days that men have seen and will see. Our condition prevents us from reconstructing the meaning of words, which we also sense. Their pronunciation is inaccurate, the inflection failed. It distantly resembles a chant of a wandering shepherd from central Asia, an enormous and fresh courtyard surrounded by inlaid balustrades, a warm winter caress, a fresh summer spring. We call it “Ode to the Border”, because we ourselves used to sing it while looking at the space beyond the limits imposed on us, scrutinizing and imagining all the possible limits beyond an imaginary curtain imposed on us, which is made of constraints.

I feel the river's stream pouring down. It's the first days of the summer. The glacier has melted upstream and swells the flow of the water that here we call Po'. The flowers have filled the air with an affectionate sense of melancholy. And it is as if something inside us is growing and unfolding. It is something ephemeral and sweet that cannot be compared with the motionless eternity described by the melancholic guitar player. Gabriel touches his soft blonde hair; it slips on his clear fair skin, clearer than what is considered normal by the people who live in this land. What withers everything, outside of our window pane? A terrible heat and humidity has stuck to the skin. We do not know it. No, it does not exist where we come from. To whoever asks, we say that we are from the East, where it is not so hot and the summer is mild. We can candidly distinguish the profile of the Balkans in our minds while we justify talking about those places. We call ourselves "escaped", we call ourselves "runaway", we call ourselves "exiled". When we walk, stuffed with bones and flesh inside light raincoats and jackets, we talk about our lost youth and our unexpected maturity. They are fragments of images and light passages of mortal time, so awfully compelled by the irreversibility of events.

Tangiers was and remains for me the face of a woman, who in the cooler morning, with the rising dawn, greets a crying sailor: their profound eyes still reveal to me dark meanings, which the fabric of life deliriously hides from me. She had a Mediterranean face and kind features, framed by her curly and voluminous hair, and her eyes were highlighted by lines of dark make-up. I still lose myself in that proud and lost gaze, like that of a Penelope unknown by History. Her beggar Ulysses, armed with rags and immobility, with all his experience bottled by an

intensively tragic and sweet air. The stains of melancholy are sweet suffering, only recently developed without filters just between us. For Gabriel, who often looks at the sky and remembers his piece of truth, Tangiers is only the chant of an old woman, sitting at the edge of an alley, an agile and loving melody, thinking in distracted moments of her children torn from the homeland by oppression and hunger.

In the city, on the steps and the slabs, the shop windows have planted iron spikes so that no tramp or homeless person can fall asleep there. The benches are well patrolled. A man with a pinched profile searches among the garbage: he wears worn-out slippers, stinking clothes, and acts like a criminal. We can read his spirit and understand the suffering. For this reason, every time we see him, in San Salvatio or in Vanchiglia, we look away, even if the temptation is strong. We still do not want to be abducted by his pain. Once, to remove from his mind the figure of a black mother who passed through the desert, Gabriel drank more than he could. He asked someone to put drops of whisky in his eye, but we stopped him.

At night, we drive through the streets in an old van. The car rumbles loudly, dragging our insides into the effervescent dimension of risk. When people are in our condition, in order to feel something, they must hurt themselves. The ways are gilded with an ornate amber color. The lampposts cast wide areas of shadow on our shoulders. On the hills surrounding Superga, through the saddened profiles of Mirafiori, between the urban dumps and the toxic fumes of some factories, the tires are burning and our mind becomes light.

The pub has a relaxing sound. I would sometimes sleep here, perhaps never to leave.

Raffaele, perhaps the one with the best character among us, seeks to cure our souls from the unbearable pain of memory. We have seen human larvae chained to the bottle, a still inflexible dragging at the bottom: it is one of the things that we do not understand. Why still all this trouble to suffer? For a moment, I feel here all the strength of the mountains and forests, of streams and lakes, of the irascible beat of terrestrial viscera. Here it is, I hear it for a while: how can you deny the order of these elements and destroy yourself and the world? We are in love with this beauty and we still do not understand the pain of living.

The night, outside, is still enormous. The guitars and the drums are still playing. A blonde girl is dancing alone; she has hair of burned grain, she has sharp sapphire eyes, she has light arms and sinuous movements. Staring at her, Gabriel tells me: "In the Book of Enoch it is written that the angels left their condition for the beauty of women who they wanted to have as wives. They fell on the hard ground and fell from their state." And I laugh. The truth is that this entire world is infested with very beautiful women and fallen angels and this is lucky, because it is probably worth it. I intersect the gaze of Uriel, who among us is the best observer; he has a worried look, because he thinks that there are other reasons why he risks damnation. We know them well, but now it is not the time to think about them.

The night is mature and passionate, and echoes fertile in our head. We are still brothers and we are still alive. The car crosses the streets of Turin, wide strips of empty tarmac. When we stop on a hill, we are embraced by the warm arms of dawn. The window lowered, a kind of light breeze. I remember my father, the days vanished when our family privacy was a sacred hearth. My eyes turned red. "What's wrong?" Michele asks. No, no,

it's the damned fresh air of the early hours of the day.

We like to have fun and forget our exile. We are dressed oddly and pretend to be street artists. We do so on the most boring days. Old clothes from a flea market, rubber noses and small trumpets. I play the violin, a guitar for Uriel, a trumpet for Michele, a tambourine for Gabriel. We scream and pull faces, especially for children. The smile of the kids revives us. It's a shot of hope, we don't sense the trouble. In the park there's a blonde baby boy playing with the daughter of a lady wrapped in a blue hijab, sitting on a small bench. She has charming features and exudes an air of serenity. When Uriel pulls out a bunch of flowers from his sleeve, all the kids explode in wonder. The baby's grandma participates in the trick. For a moment, we forgot our ugly destiny.

A humid suffocating night overwhelms us. And we return to ourselves. We are still in the car and then we go for a walk. An old man shouts something at us. We must have taken the wrong street. What does he want? "Go back to your country," he shouts. Oh God, another idiot. "Go to bed, grandpa!" I tell him. His face disappears in a poorly lit alley. This dreamlike and nightmarish atmosphere annoys me, only diminished by a drowsy numbness.

On our way back home, we see a long avenue with trees. With women standing, waiting. Black, darker than the night itself and the land which created them. Or white, with a Slav accent, which resounds as soon as a driver slows down. Yes, ours must also be hell, but an invisible yet penetrating hell. But this inferno of lonely women exists concealed under a veil. It is still inconceivable to us.

Home. "God save you from men and from us. And if there's no god, let us save

ourselves.” Uriel struggles to find a meaning for what he has seen. I fall asleep on the couch. Eternity is an unbearable burden of words and matters. The stories I heard were told with both violent and bloodless gestures through the harsh line of History, intolerant at the marginal events of their lives. The sense of it all is elusive; it dissolves in the heroin of junkies sleeping under bridges, in the little balls of coke sniffed by builders at six-thirty on the construction site of the street in front, in the ethylic coma of a young boy in Murazzi, in the dissatisfied sense of an unfulfilled relationship, in the persistent vi-

olence of united networks, in the prudery of another prophet who we do not need. No one can save us, not even a god, if we don’t save ourselves. While thinking about this, the telephone rings.

“Hello?” I say, with a sepulchral voice. “You can come back,” they say from the other end of the line. “Come back. And don’t get too angry with yourselves. Oblivion is an active power: forgive and you will be forgiven. Forgive men.” The joy explodes through my arteries, even if I were still tempted to hang out. How can we ever forgive and forgive ourselves?

النافذة الزرقاء!

وسام عماد العزام. الأردن

يحمل حقيبة السفر بيده اليمنى , و سيجارة في يده اليسرى , يتساءل عن بروتوكول التدخين في فرنسا , هل مسموح التدخين كما هو عندنا ؟ يلقي سيجارته و يدخل باب العمارة بلهفة , يريد ان يستخدم المصعد , لكن هناك ما يقول له انت الآن في باريس , يجب أن تستغل كل دقيقة باستكشافها , فيقرر صعود الدرج , يعد الطوابق , حتى وصل الي الشقة ب ثمانية و خمسين , طرق الباب مرة , مرتين . لم يجب احد , أمسك يد الباب و أداره , حتى سمع طرقعة المسننات في قفل الباب , الهواء الداخل الي الشقة من الخارج يأتي بزائر لطالما قد انتظرته مونيكا , بعد الآلاف من المحادثات و الآلاف من الشكوك التي اعترتها خوفا من استقبال زائر عربي لم تعرفه سوى عن طريق الفيسبوك , لكن عندما اقلت ببصرها عليه , تلاشى كل شيء .

كانت مونيكا واقفة عند النافذة , لا يعلم هو ان كانت تنتظر قدومه ام تسرح بالمدينة ! لكنه أراد التعرف على النافذة , لم يقل شيء , فقط وقف عند النافذة و قوس ظهره حتى لامست يديه المعقودتين بلاطة النافذة , وراح يسرح بمشهد المدينة التي تخيلها كثيرا , قوست مونيكا ظهرها حتى لامست ذراعيها المعقودتين ظهره و استقرت عليه , و سرح الاثنان في المدينة .

اتعلمين يا مونيكا , انها المرة الاولى التي أرى فيها هكذا مشهد رائع!
أعلم

هل هذا برج ايفيل ؟ أشار باصبعه الى عامود طويل جدا
نعم

أتوقع انه يبعد عنا مسافة 3 كيلو متر , أريد ان اذهب إليه الآن .
حسنا ... لكن فات موعد المترو .

سنذهب سيرا

هل احضرت حذاء الجري اذا ؟

لا لم احضره , لا املك واحدا حتى

ضحكت مونيكا , ضحك هو , و استمر ضحك غير مبرر لفترة , حتى امتلات النافذة الزرقاء ببخار الضحك .

كان هو يقلب صفحات الفيس بوك بملل بعد ضج من النفاق الاجتماعي الذي اصبح هو الطابع العام على الشبكة العنكبوتية و منتجاتها , فهذا يضبع تعليق لأخر بكل الحب و المودة و بتعليق آخر يسبه و يشتمه و تصل به حتى الكره .

و تجد للبعض عشرات المواقف السياسية كل موقف يعتمد على نوع الصفحة التي وضع لها اعجاب , حتى الثقافة لم تسلم فتجد احدهن تكتب شيء متواضع جدا و التعليقات تظهر العكس فيظن هو ان المتبني قائل هذه الابيات , هذا كله ما دفعه للبحث عن صديق من خارج هذه الدوامة , و شاء القدر ان يقترح صديقا عليه , بالأحرى صديقة اسمها مونيكا .

يدخل على حسابها، يرى مكان السكن "فرنسا"، الدراسة "فنون"، اهتماماتها القراءة والكتابة والموسيقى والرقص، يدق قلبه مسرعا بلا سبب، يتردد في ان يضغط على زي إضافة كصديق، يضع المؤشر فوق الزر ويشاور نفسه، يقول لا لن أضيفها، فيضغط على الزر بالخطأ.

تدخل مونيكا الى غرفتها متعبة قليلا من العمل، تلقي بحقيبتها على الأرض وترمي بنفسها على السرير ثم تتناول حاسوبها وتفتحه، اول خيار عندها فيس بوك، ترى على الزاوية اليمين اشعار طلب إضافة صديق، تفتحه فتري "سامي خليل" يريد اضافتك كصديق، لم توافق فورا فهي لا تضيف الغرباء، فتدخل الى حسابه، رأت كل شيء، هواياته وتعليمه وعمله ودراسته، احست انها ارتبطت بهذا الشخص بلا سبب معين، لكنها عندما رأت أنه عربي، توجست قليلا، وبدأت كل مشاهد قتل ودمار تحصل هناك تخطر على بالها، فخافت وقررت ان لا تضيفه، لكن قالت لنفسها دعك من هذه الأفكار فليس كل الناس مثل بعضهم، يبدووا لطيفا ومحترما، فوافقت على طلب الصداقة.

مرت عدة أيام وهم يتبادلون الاعجاب على الصور، وبعض التعليقات باللغة الإنجليزية لأنه هو لا يتكل الفرنسية وهي لا تتكلم العربية، ومن ثم تلتها اول محادثة، ومن ثم تلتها آلاف المحادثات التي عرفتهم على بعض أكثر، حتى كسر حاجز الصداقة سامي وقال لها انه يحبها، وهي ردت بانها تحبه الأخرى.

قرر سامي ان يذهب لفرنسا ويزورها، اشترى بطاقة الطائرة واتجه لهنالك، وصل من المطار الى أمام منزلها وصعد اليها، كان يعتليها بعض الشكوك حتى بعد كل هذه المحادثات وهذا الحب الصغير، لكن كل شيء تبدد بعد ان رآته في الحقيقة بعيدا عن العالم الرقمي.

أراد سامي ان يرى برج ايفل برفقتها، وذهب الى هناك سيرا على الاقدام ما رين بكل شوارع باريس، يتحدثان في كل موضوع تحدثا عنه على الانترنت وكأنهم لم يتحدثوا به من قبل.

جلسا في مقهى وطلبوا قهوة، جلست مونيكا بجانب سامي والتقطت صورة لهما ورفعتها على فيسبوك وكتبت فوقها في علامة مع سامي خليل. كان كل شيء ممتاز، وكان الحياة لم تحمل يوما حزينا قط، إلا عندما قرأ تعليقات الناس والأصدقاء على الصورة، فأصدقائها يقولون كيف انت على علاقة مع هذا الشاب، لم تخبرينا عنه قط، انه عربي!!، حتى احدهم قال انها مجنونة. بالمقابل تلقى سامي تعليقات لا تقل عنها، أنت مجنون، انها اجنبية، و احد افراد العائلة يقول له "خيبت ظننا فيك"، لا تعد الى بلدك و ابق معها.

وقع هذه التعليقات نغص عليهم هذا اليوم الجميل، فعادت هي الي بيتها وهو بقي الفندق على ان يلتقيا في اليوم التالي.

رن هاتف سامي على الساعة التاسعة صباحا، فتح الخط على صوت مونيكا "أين انت انا انتظرك في الساحة هيا تعال"، نزل مسرعا وراها تجلس على مقعد خشبي، ضوء الشمس ينعكس على خصلات شعرها الذهبية، قال في نفسه أبقى معها للأبد رغما عن الجميع ورغما عن كل ما يقال.

يجلس بجانبها , تبدو حزينة بعض الشيء , فينظر اليها و يقول " أنا جئت اليك في زيارة , لكن بعد الذي حصل البارحة ... " ساد صمت غريب , نظرت إليه و قالت " أنا اقدر ظروفك و ان اردت الذهاب اذهب و لكن اعلم ان قلبي سيبقى معك " .
 يبتسم معلنا عن خبر مغاير للذي في بال مونيك " لا بعد الذي حصل البارحة سأبقى هنا عندك , سأعمل و أعيش الى جانبك الى الابد " .
 ادعت عيني مونيك فرحا , امسكت بيده و شدت عليها , قالت له " و أنا كنت أتمنى ان تبقى هنا ولا ترحل ابدا "

قررا أن يحذفا حسابيهما من الفيس بوك و يريحا رأسهما من كل هذا التعب و من المجتمع الذي لا ينفك من أن يدمر كل شيء جميل .
 الحب ينتصر على كل تكنولوجيا العالم.

The Virtual Window

Wissam Emad Mo'hd Alazzam. Jordan

He holds his baggage in one hand and a cigarette in the other and wonders about smoking rules in France.

“Is smoking permitted as in my country?”

He threw away his cigarette and entered the building eagerly. He wanted to use the lift, but he heard a voice saying “you are in Paris, don't waste time.” He decided to go up the stairs. He counted the stairs till he reached fifty-eight. He knocked the door twice.

Nobody answered. He held the door handle and turned it till he heard the clicking of the door lock. The door revealed the person she had been waiting for so long. After thousands of conversations, Monique had doubts about receiving an Arab visitor she only knew through the internet. When she saw him, all doubts were dispelled.

Monique was standing by the window. He didn't know if she was waiting for him there or just watching the city. He wanted to look through the window. He said nothing. He only stood by the window and shifted till his hand touched the window panes. He stared at the city he had previously imagined. Monique shifted till her hand touched his and they both watched the city together.

“You know, Monique, it's the first time I've seen such a splendid view.”

“I know.”

“Is that the Eiffel Tower?” he asked, pointing to the tall building.

“Yes.”

“I think it's 3 km away. I want to go there.”

“Well, the metro has already closed.”

“We will go on foot.”

“Did you bring your running shoes?”

“No, I didn't. I don't have any.”

They both laughed, and continued laughing for no reason.

He had started looking at Facebook pages. He was bored with the hypocrisy prevailing of the internet and everything on it. You can see someone sending a comment full of love, and another full of bad names and hatred. You can find several political views from the same person depending on the type of page. Even culture was no exception. You can find someone who writes very poor material although the comments indicate otherwise. All this made him search for a friend outside this network. It was his destiny to find friendship in Monique.

He entered her account, and viewed the details: she lives in France, studies arts, and her hobbies were reading, writing, music and dancing. His heart was beating quickly. He didn't know why. He hesitated to click on the button “add friend”. After hesitation, he clicked the button unintentionally.

Monique entered her room, and after a tiring day at work she threw her bag on the floor and threw herself on her bed. Then she turned on her PC and entered Facebook. She saw a friendship request from an account named “Sami Khaled”. She didn't accept immediately, as she does not add strangers. She entered his account and discovered everything about him, his hobbies, education, work, and study. She felt as if something unknown linked her to that person. When she found out he was Arabic, some fears rose in her mind. She recalled all the scenes of kill-

ing and destruction, so she decided not to add him. But finally she decided to get rid of these ideas. Not all people are alike. He seemed nice and decent, so she accepted his friendship.

They exchanged likes and some comments in English. She didn't speak Arabic, and he didn't speak French. They had thousands of conversations till they got to know each other more. He suddenly broke the friendship barrier to tell her he loved her. She replied that she also loved him.

Sami decided to go to France and visit her. He bought the tickets and headed to France. He went from the airport directly to her house. She had some doubts despite all their conversations and such newly-born love. After she saw him, all her doubts vanished.

Sami wanted to see the Eiffel Tower with her. They walked through the streets of Paris, and talked about everything they had talked about before as if it was their first time. They sat in a café and ordered coffee. Monique sat beside Sami and shared a photo of them on Facebook and wrote a title about her relationship with Sami Khalil. Everything was perfect.

It seemed that they had never suffered until he read friends' comments on the photo. Her friends were wondering how she could have a relation with an Arab, and how she didn't tell them about it. One of them called her crazy.

He got similar comments. They called him crazy because she was a foreigner. A family member told him: "You let us down. Don't come back, stay with her." Their comments spoiled his day. She returned to her house and he stayed at the hotel till they met the next day.

Sami's phone rang at nine o'clock in the morning. He replied to hear Monique's voice on the other end: "Where are you, I'm waiting for you in the park, come on." He rushed down to see her sitting on a wooden chair, with her blond hair reflecting sunrays. He said to himself he would stay with her, regardless of anybody else.

He sat next to her. She seemed a little sad. He looked at her and said: "I came here to visit you. But after what happened yesterday..." Silence prevailed. She looked at him and said: "I understand. If you need to go away, you can go and I will still remember you."

He smiled to contradict what she was thinking. "No, after what happened yesterday, I will stay with you forever. I will work and stay beside you."

Tears of happiness filled her eyes and she held his hand tight: "and I wanted you to stay here and not go away."

They decided to close their Facebook accounts and free themselves from all comments and escape from the community always keen to destroy everything beautiful. In the end, love defeats technology.

Mana interneta dzīve

Agnija Kazuša. Latvijas Republika

Pamostos šodien neparasti tramīgs. Izraušos no gultas, izstaipos, uzvelku halātu un eju uz tualeti. Kamēr čurāju, domāju, ka šogad tāds lietains pavasaris. Vēl iedomājos par savu tumši zilo lietussargu. Nez, kur būtu to nolīcis? Jāaizstaigā līdz bibliotēkai. Vakar zvanīja Rīta un teica, ka esot atsūtījusi vēstuli uz manu epasta kasti. Varbūt tāpēc manī tāds satraukums.

Pēc tualetes – vannasistaba. Iztīru zobus un eju uz virtuvi. Paskatos uz termometra stabiņu logā – septiņi grādi. Tiešām pavēss priekš aprīļa. Ieslēdzu Latvijas Radio. Runātāja noziņo, ka ir trešdiena, 18. aprīlis, un vārda dienas svin Lauras un Jadvigas. Tad viņa uzliek tādu jestrū melodiņu. Vēl! Tagad šitas man visu dienu skanēs galvā. Bet ko nu. Ķeros pie brokastīm. Lallinu dziesmai līdzī un cepu savas iemīļotās vēršacis. Divas. Tad nogriežu divas šķēles rupjmaizes un apziežu ar treknu sviesta kārtu. Virsū uzlieku tomātu šķēles. Uzvāru kafiju un vienatnē brokastuju. Laukā vēl liņā.

Nezinu, cik ilgi būšu bibliotēkā, tāpēc uztaisu līdz četras tomātu maizes un uzvāru tēju, ko ieleju termosā. Saģērbjos un sāku meklēt savu tumši zilo lietussargu. Skapī nav. Pieliekamajā nav. Virtuvē uz ķebļiem nav. Kur es būtu to nolīcis? Visbeidzot atrodu uz gludināmā dēļa. It kā visu esmu paņēmis. Pusdienas, lietussargs. Nē, nav viss. Atceros, ka drošības pēc jāpaņem datorkursu klade. Izņemu to no rakstāmgalda atvilktnes un ielieku tīkliņā. Tad apģērbju mēteli un dodos ceļā.

No mana dzīvoklīša bibliotēka atrodas pusstundas gājienā, ko mēroju samērā lēnā gaitā. Ieeju bibliotēkā, atstāju savu samirkušo lietussargu priekšstelpā un dodos uz lasītavu. Tur pie galdiņa sēž jauna, nopietna dāma melniem, viļņainiem matiņiem. Saku, ka vēlos izmantot datoru. Patiesībā nekad to bibliotēkā neesmu darījis. “Protams, pirmais ir brīvs,” bibliotekāre atbild, pieceļas kājās un aizved mani līdz pirmajam datoram, kas novietots pie loga. Pavisam te ir četri datori. Pie diviem no tiem sēž jauni puisiņi.

“Tiksiet galā vai vajag palīdzību?” bibliotekāre noprasa, kad grasos apsēsties. Šis nu gan mani nedaudz aizvaino. Tikai tāpēc, ka esmu cienījamā vecumā, vajag tūlīt pieņemt, ka neko nejēdzu.

“Man ir sertifikāts par datorkursu beigšanu,” šerpi viņai noziņoju un sajūtos lepns, ka dēļ mani toreiz iekārtoja kursus. Sākumā gan es pretojos, taču dēļ uzstāja, turklāt vēl aizrādīja, ka esmu viens un, sēžot mājās, sajukšu prātā.

“Labi, labi, es tik tā,” bibliotekāre nedaudz pabrīnās, neveikli pasmaida, tad aiziet prom. Uz brūnās parketa grīdas nokludz viņas kurpju papēži.

Esmu beidzot apsēdies. Nolieku zemē tīkliņu un satveru peli. Dators jau ir ieslēgts. Beigās tiem kursiem tiešām nebija nekādas vainas. Ko tik mums tur neiemācīja! Tagad man ir gan sava ekasīte, gan profils *draugiem.lv*. Gājiens no darbvirsma uz internetu man vēl ir svaigā atmiņā. Divi strauji klikšķi uz *Google Chrome* un atveras kaut kāda bibliotēkas lapa. Nepievēršu tai uzmanību un augšējā logā rakstu *www.inbox.lv*. Tur man izveidota pasta kaste. Lai gan kursi beidzās pirms mēneša, neteiktu, ka būtu aktīvs lietotājs un ka man būtu vajadzība pēc interneta. Vēl joprojām dodu priekšroku ziņas lasīt avīzē vai dzirdēt pa radio un vēstules saņemt pa pastu.

Ir atvēries mans epasts. Kurš tad par mani atcerējies? *Dormeo* matracis, *Top-shop*, un jā – tik tiešām vēstule no Ritas. Klikšķinu virsū, vēstule atveras, un Rita raksta:

Sveiks Arnold,

Kā Tev klājas? Vai Tavā pusē arī lietains pavasaris? Pie mums līst aumaļām. Nosūtu Tev mūsu kursa kopbildi. Ak, cik mums tomēr labi gāja! :)

Sirsnīgi,

Rita

Noklikšķinu uz atsūtīto bildi, un te nu tā atveras: mūsu četrpadsmit vecīšu grupa pēdējā dienā datorklasē. Astoņas dāmas un seši kungi. Uz galda kliņģeris un šampānietis. Pasmaidu un nodomāju, ka vēlētos fotogrāfiju izprintēt. Velns! Bet, kā lai to izdara? Parasti ir tāds *file*, *print* augšējā malā kreisajā stūrī. Bildei neko tādu neredz. Kā nu tur bija? Ieskatos kladē. Neko neatrodu. Esmu spiests saukt bibliotekāri. Gurnus grozīdama, viņa pienāk man klāt, noliecās kreisajā pusē un sagrābj manu peli. “Peles labais taustiņš un tad *print*,” viņa saka. Sajūtu viņas jasmīnu aromātu un kuplos, viļņainos matus, kas teju skar manu zodu.

“Tas maksās piecdesmit centus. Jo bilde krāsaina,” viņa piebilst. “Vēlāk samaksāsiet.”

“Liels paldies, mums kursos bija citādāki datori,” cenšos attaisnot savu nezināšanu par printēšanu.

Bibliotekāre aiziet prom un atnes izprintēto lapu. Palūdzu to ielikt plēvītē. Viņa to mīļi izdara. Tad rakstu atbildi Ritai.

Sveika Rita,

Paldies par fotogrāfiju un skaistajām rindām. Manā pusē arī līst. :(Bet var jau būt, ka pavasaris ar mums spēlējās. ;)

Bučas,

Arnolds

Pārlasu un spiežu “sūtīt”.

Ka jau reiz esmu atnācis, domāju ieiešu arī draugos. Daudz draugu tur man nav – visi datorkursu biedri, dēls ar ģimeni un vēl daži paziņas. Ieeju iekšā. Tur vienmēr viss tik raibs, bet kaut kā šo sistēmu esmu puslīdz sapratis. Skatos, man ir viens jauns uzaicinājums un viena jauna vēstule. Atveru vispirms uzaicinājumu un neticu savām acīm – Lidija Lazda vēlas ar mani draudzēties. Lidija? Pēc visiem šiem gadiem! Kā viņa mani te atradusi? Tūlīt pat atceros savu jaunības dienu mīlestību – klasesbiedreni Lidiju. Mūsu palaidnības bērzu birzī pie manām mājām, kā mēs aizlaidām uz jūru un lasījām oļus, kā es turēju viņas roku kinoteātrī pēdējā rindā. Tūliņ nospiežu “apstiprināt” un atveru viņas profilu. Tas pats smaidis ar bedrīti kreisajā vaigā. Mati jau nosirmojuši, bet sirsnība viņas gaiši zilajās acīs mājō vēl arvien. Atveru vēstuļu kasti, un jā – vēstule ir no viņas.

Kur tie gadi, Arnold!

Re, kā pasaule mums liek mainīties. Kopš meita man iemācīja rīkoties ar draugiem, šad tad te var interesanti pavadīt laiku. Uzmeklēju tevi. Biju tik priecīga, ka Tu atradies sistēmā, ka teju sasītu plaukstu datora priekšā. Kā Tev ar veselību? Mans Uldis piesiets pie gultas, es vēl kaut kā turos. Bērni ar mazbērniem šad tad atbrauc ciemos. Citādi dzīvojam.

Visu labu,

Lidija

Uz brīdi samulstu, jo nezinu, ko un kā atbildēt. Pēdējo reizi tikāties skolas salidojumā. Desmit gadu atpakaļ? Varbūt piecpadsmit? Viņa bija atnākusi ar Uldi. Nekad neaizmirstīšu, kā viņš man toreiz jaunībā Lidiju nocēla deguna priekšā! Tā vienkārši. Uldis bija bagāts, nodrošināts, ar savu saimniecību. Es – nabags, bet traki iemīlējies Lidijā. Romantisks sapņotājs. Rakstīju viņai dzeju un dziedāju serenādes. Vēlu vakaros staigāju gar viņas logiem. Laikam tas bija viņas vecāku pirksts, kas noteica par labu Uldim. Tā nu es pārstāju gan dzejot, gan dziedāt.

Tagad manā priekšā ir viņas vārds, profila bilde, kas uzņemta kaut kur dārzā starp narcisēm, un balta lapa, uz kuras rakstīt atbildi. Apzinos, ka dzīve mums katram bijusi sava. Arī savu sieviņu es mīlēju. Bet tad paskatos uz tiem jauniešiem man blakus, kas kaut ko čalo savā nodabā. Paskatos laukā pa logu, kur lietus mērcē bērzus. Tiem tagad nozīmīgs laiks: cilvēki brauc ar kannām un spiež sulas. Bērzi ar tām labprāt dalās un turpina dzīvot tālāk. Brīdi padomāju, tad, sajūtot spēcīgu atskārsmi, ka esmu dzīvs, ka šodien pa radio dzirdēju dziesmu, kas man vēl tagad galvā, ka atnācu uz bibliotēku, sajūtot lietus lāses dejojām man pa lietussargu, es ieelpoju krūtīs jasmīnu parfīmu, ko bibliotekāre te atstājusi, paskatos uz kalendāru ar aprīli pie sienas un rakstu:

Sveika, dārgā Lidija! :)

Kāda laime, ka Tu mani uzmeklēji. Esmu vaļsirdīgs.

Mana sieviņa jau piecus gadus kā zem zemes. Pats kaut kā dzīvoju. Dēls mani nosūtīja kursus, tāpēc apguvu interneta pamatus. :)

No lielās sajūsmas nezinu, ko vēl rakstīt, tāpēc pabeidzu vēstuli.

Uz drīzu sadzirdēšanos!

Bučas,

Arnolds

Nolemju iet prom. Gribu padomāt par Lidiju vienatnē. Samaksāju bibliotekārei par izprintēto lapu, pasaku “uz redzēšanos” un izeju no lasītavas. Priekštelpā mani gaida lietussargs, bet to izmantot nav nepieciešamība. Ir pārstājis līt.

Izgājis laukā, atceros, ka man līdzi ir termoss ar maizītēm, tāpēc domāju apsēdīšos parkā uz soliņa, ieturēšos un mazliet padomāšu. Visi soliņi vēl mitri no lietus, bet es palieku apakšā savu balto maisiņu un apsēžos. Atveru termosu un iedzeru karstu tēju. Paliek pavisam labi. Piekožu savas tomātmaizes un jūtos laimīgs. Parkā neviena nav, izņemot kādu sievieti, kas pastaigājas ar suni. Jūtos netraucēts. Iegrimstu atmiņās un domāju par Lidiju. Cik viņa toreiz bija skaista! Kā mani valdzināja viņas biklums un naivums! Kad reiz aizbraucu pie viņas ciemos, viņa bija tik nokauņējusies no vecākiem, ka izleca pa pirmā stāva logu tieši nātrēs iekšā. To, ka viņas vecākiem nepatiku, jutu uzreiz. Lidija tomēr augusi turīgā ģimenē. Bet mani vecāki bija prasti laukstrādnieki.

Tagad pēc tik daudziem gadiem uzrodas tāds internets un paver neticamas iespējas. Esmu apēdis maizītes un dodos mājās. Lidijas vēstule man sāk pamazām izdzist no atmiņas, bet es gribu atcerēties katru viņas atsūtīto vārdu. Nolemju, ka rīt atkal iešu uz bibliotēku un pārrakstīšu viņas vēstuli savā datorkursu kladē. Atveru to vaļā jau tagad, atšķiru jaunu, tīru lappusi un lieliem, drukātiem burtiem ierakstu “Mana interneta dzīve”.

Nākamajā dienā, teju cilpodams, dodos uz bibliotēku. Esmu nolēmis Lidijai aizsūtīt simts sarkanās rozes. Vienmēr sapņoju, ka dāvāšu viņai rozes. Daudz, daudz rožu, bet simtu nekad nebūt atļāvies nopirkt. Ielogojos draugos un ceru, ka Lidija būs ko atbildējusi. Jā, ir! Mana sirds satraukumā palecas.

Sveiks Arnold,

Izsaku līdzjūtību par sieviņu. Tā jau ir. Dieva gribu mums neietekmēt. Prieks, ka Tev iet labi. Vēlu veselību un dzīvesprieku!

Lidija

Viņas atbilde mani satrauc vēl vairāk, un es ieskrējies spiežu taustiņus, lai rakstītu atpakaļ.

Sveika Lidija,

Priecājos no Tevis atkal dzirdēt! :)

Zini, es vakar par mums abiem daudz domāju, sēžot parkā uz soliņa un ēdot tomātmaizes. Atcerējos to reizi, kad ar drauga aizlienēto velosipēdu aizbraucu pie Tevis ciemos, un Tu biji tik samulsusi, ka ielēci nātrēs. Man kļūst vai žēl Tavu nātru sadzelto kājiņu, kuras, iespējams, Tev sūrst vēl šodien. Lai savu vainu mīkstinātu, nosūtu Tev simts sarkanas rozēs.

Atveru smaidiņu sadaļu, atrodu to, kas tur rokās ziedu, un spiežu. Viens, divi, trīs, četri... kamēr simts ziedus esmu ielicis vienā vēstulē.

Lai Tavā istabā smaržo vēl ilgi!

Bučas,

Arnolds

Mirkli padomāju, tad man ienāk prātā vēl kaut kas:

P. S. Pagaidām šis portāls nepiedāvā iespēju nosūtīt rozlapu vannu. Bet, ja varētu – zini, es Tev tādu aizsūtītu.

Nosūtu vēstuli un tad, kā iecerējis, atveru savu kladīti un uzmeklēju vakar izveidoto sadaļu “Mana interneta dzīve”. Tur pārrakstu abas Lidijas atsūtītās vēstules ar datumu un laiku. Ierakstu arī savas atbildes uz tām.

Nākamajā dienā eju uz bibliotēku un domāju, ko Lidija būs atbildējusi. Varbūt aicinās uz īstu tikšanos? Vai arī man būtu jāspēr pirmais solis? Tas nemaz nebūtu tik vienkārši. Dzīvojam dažādās pilsētās, un mūs šķir trīssimt kilometri. Turklāt viņa stāstīja par savu sasirgušo vīru. Iespējams, viņai domas tagad kur citur, bet es nespēju neko padarīt. Pierakstos bibliotēkā pie datora, pamanu, ka bibliotekārei šodien mati sapīti ciešā bizē. Pie datoriem sēž tie paši puisiļi, kurus jau iepriekš esmu redzējis. Abi kaut ko ķiķina savā starpā. Es pieeju pie bibliotekāres ierādītā trešā datora un pārbaudu vēstules. Tukšums. Ne ziņas no Lidijas. Ieeju ekastītē, apzino ties, ka diez vai viņai zināma mana epasta adrese, bet arī tur mani traucē tikai *Dormeo* matracis. Nedaudz skumstu, tad netīšām noklausos blakus sēdošo jauniešu sarunu. “Nu, ko lai es viņai rakstu?” saka jauniešs ar brillēm. “Raksti, ka tu ļoti nožēlo to, kas notika, bet tev joprojām patīk viņas...” – “Krūtis?”

“Nē, taču.” Abi sasmejas.

“Aizsūti dzejoli!” man netīšām pasprūk. Jaunieši paskatās manā virzienā.

“Ko?” puisis ar brillēm iesaucas.

“Vismaz, kad es biju jauns, es rakstīju dzejoļus, un meitenēm patika.”

“Pašsacerētus?” puisis pārprasa.

“Nu tā jau ir labāk. Bet, ja nevari izdomāt pats, paņem no kāda dzejnieka. Ar atsauci, protams. Galvenais, lai ir patiesi un nāk no sirds.” Es pasmaidu. Viņi skeptiski paskatās viens uz otru, tad jauniešs ar brillēm saka: “Paldies, onkulīt. Mēs padomāsim.”

“Lūdzu, lūdzu,” es priecīgi atbildu.

Tai dienā atkal nolemju kādu brīdi pasēdēt parkā. Tur pa vidu ir lielas šūpoles, kur brīvdienās nāk ģimenes ar bērniem un šūpina viens otru. Nezinu, kas man uznācis, bet eju taisnā ceļā uz šūpolēm. Apsēžos uz koka dēļa un viegli šūpojos. Turp un atpakaļ. Viegļā, lēnā ritmā. Ieelpoju pavasari. Dzirdu, kā skan šūpoļu eņģes. Dzirdu putnus. No tīkliņa izvelku savu kladi, atveru to vaļā un pārslasu visu, ko sadaļā “Mana interneta dzīve” esmu ierakstījis. Domāju par Lidiju un sajūtu poētiskus vārdus pinamies pa galvu. Vai tiešām atkal sāksu dzejot? Vai tas tāpēc, ka ie-teicu rakstīt dzeju tiem diviem puisiņiem? Nedrīkst idejas laist garām, tāpēc izņemu no maisiņa pildspalvu un sāku likt vārdus uz papīra. Veidojas smuks pantiņš. Pārrakstu to četras reizes, un gala versiju ierakstu jaunā lapā:

*Mīlo Lidij,
Cik viegli šūpoties te parkā
Ar putniem, sauli, pavasari apkārt,
Cik viegli sasniegt Tevi tīklā
Un atgriezties jaunībā.*

*Vai atceries to birtzalu,
Kur gājām pēc skolas,
Vai atceries, kā Tevi skūpstīju,
Glāstīdams Tavas rokas.*

*Tevi redzēt būtu laime,
Bet kas zina, kāds likten's gaida.
Ja karogu vairs nevar pacelt mastā, -
Sarakstāties ēpastā!*

Sajūtos tik lepns par savu veikumu, ka nākamajā dienā no klades pārrakstu to Lidijai uz sienas. Šīto man dēls iemācīja: kā atšķirt sienu no vēstulēm. Siena, kā viņš teica, ir publiska. Manu ziņojumu redzēs citi un varēs to padot tālāk. Kā tās zīmītes, ko mēs skolā rakstījām. Izlasi un padod tālāk! Skolas laikā varbūt būtu kaunējies šādu dzejoli rādīt citiem, bet tagad sajūtu sevī īpašu dzīvības sulu. Kāpēc turēt sevī? Bērzi dod savas sulas, es – savējās. Lai izplatās tālāk! Lai sasniedz ne tikai Lidiju, bet arī citus!

Lidija vēl joprojām man neko nav atbildējusi, un es jau sāku bažīties. Vai tiešām būtu kas atgadījies? Cenšos atvairīt ļaunas domas. Ejot prom, pasaku bibliotekārei “visu labu”. “Uz redzēšanos,” viņa atbild, tad noliec galvu un turpina kaut ko rakstīt. Skatos viņas melno matu pakausī un sajūtu vēlmi pateikt viņai ko jauku. Iepriekš esmu bijis lepns.

“Jums šodien interesanta pildspalva,” pasaku pirmo, kas ienāk prātā. Nekā interesanta tur patiesībā nav. Parasta lodīšu pildspalva ar zilu uzgali.

“Ak, paldies.” Viņa paceļ galvu un sajūtas nedaudz pārsteigta. “Nu jau kādas divas nedēļas ar šo rakstu,” viņa piebilst un pavirpina pildspalvu rokās.

“Laikam būšu pamanījies tikai šodien,” atbildu un pasmaidu.

Eju mājās, priecīgi dungodams meldiņu, ko dzirdēju šodien pa radio. Pēc divām dienām man pensija. Ienāk prātā pavisam traka doma. Kā būtu, ja es satiktos ar Lidiju? Kaut kur mums

abiem pa vidu. Katrs atbrauc savā autobusā. Tad mēs ieejam kafejnīcā. Dzeram kafiju, ēdam eklērus. Ai, kā viņai toreiz garšoja eklēri!

Nākamajā rītā jau atkal esmu bibliotēkā. Bibliotekāre smaida un neliekas pārsteigta par manām biežajām vizītēm. Pierakstos pie datora. Pamanu, ka šodien te atkal tie paši jaunieši. Laikam šiem brīvlaiks.

“Onkulīt,” kāds mani pasauc no aizmugures. Pagriežos un ieraugu, ka tas ir jaunietis ar brillēm.

“Jā?” es pārsteigts atbildu.

“Tas dzejolis tiešām nostrādāja. Viņa man piedeva un nāks ar mani uz randiņu.”

“Nu, ko es neteicu! Vai pats sacerēji?”

“Kopā ar draugu.” Viņš pasmaida.

“Lieliski! Man prieks par tevi! Arnolds, starp citu,” sniedzu jaunietim roku.

“Harijs,” viņš saka un paspiež man savējo, tad piebilst: “Paldies, Arnold.”

“Sīkumi. Ja vēl ko vajag, es tepat vien būšu,” pasaku un apsēžos pie sava datora. Harijs aiziet pie savējā. Atveru draugus un nespēju noticēt savām acīm. Vēstule no Lidijas. Dzeja tik tiešām strādā! Atveru viņas vēstuli. Kladīte blakus, lai nofiksētu katru Lidijas vārdu. Tad lasu:

Nu ko Tu, vecais, āksties. :)

Rozes un tāds dzejolis! Paldies.

Man jau pietiktu, ja Tu atsūtītu punktu, lai zinātu, ka Tu vēl dzīvs.

Lidija.

My Internet Life

Agnija Kazuša. Latvia

I wake up unusually restless this morning. I get out of my bed, stretch, put on a robe, and go to the toilet. While peeing, I think about this spring and how rainy it is. I also think about my dark blue umbrella. I wonder where I have put it. I should go to the library. Rita called yesterday and said that she has sent a letter to my e-mail box. Maybe that is why I am feeling so restless.

After the toilet, I go to the bathroom. I brush my teeth and go to the kitchen. I look at the thermometer behind the window: seven degrees. Really, it's a bit cold for April. I tune to Latvian Radio. The narrator says that it's Wednesday, April 18th, and Laura and Jadviga celebrate their name day today. Then she plays a lively tune. Damn! Now it will sound in my head all day. But what can I do? I start cooking breakfast. I hum the song and prepare my favorite fried eggs with the yolk intact. Two of them. Then I cut two slices of brown bread, cover them with a thick layer of butter, and put sliced tomatoes on top. I make some coffee and have my breakfast alone. It is still drizzling outside.

I don't know how long I will stay in the library, so I prepare four tomato sandwiches and make some tea, which I pour in a thermos. I get dressed and start looking for my dark blue umbrella. It is not in the wardrobe. It is not in the storeroom. It is not on the kitchen stools. Where have I put it? At last, I find it on the ironing board. It seems that I have everything I need. My lunch, the umbrella. No, not everything. I remember that I should take the notebook from my computer course with me just in case. I take it out from the desk drawer and put it in my bag. Then I put on my coat and get going.

It is a half-hour walk from my small flat to the library, and I take my time getting there at a relatively slow pace. I walk into the library, leave my wet umbrella in the lobby, and go to the reading-room. There is a young, serious looking lady with black, wavy hair sitting at a table. I tell her that I would like to use a computer. Actually, I have never done that in a library. "Sure! The first one is available," the librarian answers. She gets up and takes me to the first computer located by the window. There are four computers in total. Two of them are occupied by young boys.

"Can you manage or do you need help?" the librarian asks, as I am sitting down. I find the question a bit insulting. Is my honorable age enough to assume that I am ignorant?

"I have a computer course completion certificate," I answer harshly and feel proud of being signed up for the course by my son. I resisted at first, but my son was persistent. He said that I am alone and staying at home will drive me crazy.

"Ok, ok! I was just wondering," the librarian is a bit surprised. She smiles awkwardly and then walks away with her heels clicking on the brown parquet floor.

I have sat down at last. I put my bag on the ground and grab the mouse. The computer is already on. That course wasn't half bad in the end. We learned a lot of stuff. Now, I have my own e-box and a *draugiem.lv* profile. I still clearly remember how to get from the desktop to the Internet. After two rapid clicks on *Google Chrome* some library page opens. I ignore it and write *www.inbox.lv* in the upper window. I have my mailbox there. Though the course ended a month ago,

I wouldn't say that I am an active user or need the Internet. I still prefer to read the news in a paper or hear it on the radio, and receive letters by mail.

My e-mail has opened. Who has remembered me? *Dormeo* mattress, *Top-shop*, and, indeed, there is a letter from Rita. I click on it and the letter opens. Rita writes:

Hello, Arnolds!

How are you? Is the spring rainy in your area as well? Here it is raining in streams. I am sending you a group photo of our course. Ah! What a great time we had! :)

With love,

Rita

I click on the received photo, and it opens: there we are: a group of fourteen oldsters on our last day in the computer room. Eight ladies and six gentlemen. A big pretzel and a bottle of champagne on the table. I smile and think to myself that I would like to print the photo. Damn! But how can I do it? Usually, there is an option *file, print* in the upper left corner. I can't find it in the picture. What was I supposed to do? I look in my notebook, but find nothing useful there. I have to call the librarian. She approaches, swinging her hips, leans down on my left, and grabs the mouse. "The right mouse button and then *print*," she says. I can feel her jasmine scent and thick, wavy hair almost touching my chin.

"It will cost fifty cents because it is a color picture," she adds. "You will pay later."

"Thank you very much! We studied on different computers during our course," I try to justify my lack of knowledge about printing.

The librarian walks away and returns with the printed page. I ask her to put it in a plastic pouch. She does it gladly. Then I write an answer to Rita:

Hello, Rita!

Thank you for the photo and those beautiful lines. It is raining here as well (but maybe the spring is playing with us).

Kisses,

Arnolds

I read the letter once more and press *send*.

Since I am here, I decide to check my *draugiem.lv* profile. I don't have a lot of friends there – just all of my computer course buddies, my son and his family, and some acquaintances of mine. I go in. It is always so crazy and confusing, but I have somehow managed to get fairly familiar with this system. I see that I have one new invitation and one new letter. I start with the invitation and can't believe my eyes. Lidija Lazda wants to become my friend. Lidija? After all these years! How did she find me here? I instantly remember the love of my youth – my classmate Lidija. I remember us fooling around in the birch grove near my home, going to the sea and picking pebbles, and me holding her hand in the back row of a cinema. I press *confirm* and open her profile at once. It is the same smile with a dimple in the left cheek. The hair has turned grey, but there is still sincerity in her light blue eyes. I open my letterbox and find a letter from her.

It has been a while, Arnolds!

You see how the world makes us change. Ever since my daughter taught me how to use draugiem.lv, I can spend some quality time here now and then. I looked you up. And I was so happy to find you in the system that I almost clapped my hands in front of the computer. How is your health? My Uldis is chained to the bed, but I am still going on somehow. My children and grandchildren visit sometimes. Other than that, we go on living.

All the best!

Lidija

I am confused for a while because I don't know what and how to answer. We last met at a school reunion. Was it ten years ago? Or was it fifteen? She had come with Uldis. I will never forget how he picked Lidija right under my nose when we were young. Just like that. Uldis was rich and well situated and had his own farm. I was poor, but madly in love with Lidija – a romantic dreamer. I was writing poems and singing serenades. Late at night, I was walking past her windows. Probably, her parents influenced her to choose Uldis, so I stopped writing poems and singing.

Now, I am looking at her name, profile picture taken somewhere in a garden between narcissus, and a white page where I can write my answer. I realize that each of us had our own life. I also loved my wife. But then I look at the youngsters sitting next to me and chatting amongst themselves. I look through the window, at the birches being soaked by the rain. It is an important time for them: people are coming with cans and extracting the sap. Birches gladly share the sap and live on. I think for a while and then, moved by a powerful revelation of being alive, not being able to get out of my head the song I heard on the radio, coming to the library, and feeling the raindrops dance on my umbrella, I breathe in the jasmine perfume left by the librarian, look at the calendar on the wall, showing that it is April, and start writing:

Hello, dear Lidija! :)

*I am so happy about you finding me.
I am being frank.*

My wife has been buried for five years now. I keep on living somehow. My son sent me on a computer course, and that's how I learned the basics of the Internet.

I am so excited that I don't know what else to write, so I am ending this letter.

Hope to hear from you soon!

*Kisses,
Arnolds*

I decide to leave because I want to think about Lidija alone. I pay the librarian for the printed page, say "See you", and walk out of the reading room. My umbrella is in the lobby, but I don't need it. The rain has stopped.

Outside, I remember the thermos and sandwiches I have with me, so I decide to sit on a bench in the park, have a bite, and think a bit. All of the benches are still wet from the rain, but I put my white bag under me and sit down. I open the thermos and have a hot tea. Now I feel really good. I take a bite of my tomato sandwich and feel happy. The park is empty except for a woman walking with her dog. I feel undisturbed and sink into my memories. I think about Lidija. She was so beautiful back then! I was so captivated by her timidity and naiveness! Once, when I visited her, she was so ashamed in front of her parents that she jumped out of the first floor window and landed right in the nettles. From the beginning, I felt that her parents didn't like me. Lidija was raised in a wealthy family, but my parents were simple field workers.

And now, after so many years, the Internet comes along and grants unbelievable possibilities. I have eaten the sandwiches and head home. Lidija's letter is starting to slowly fade from my memory, but I want to remember her every word. I decide to go back to the library tomorrow and rewrite her letter in my computer course notebook. I open the notebook, find a new, blank page, and write "My Internet Life" in large upper-case letters.

The next day, I almost run to the library. I have decided to send Lidija one hundred red roses. I always dreamt of giving her roses, lots and lots of roses, but I would never dare to buy a hundred. I log into *draugiem.lv* and hope that Lidija has replied. Yes, she has! My heart jumps from excitement.

Hello, Arnolds!

Accept my condolences for your wife. It is what it is. We can't influence the will of God. I am glad that you are doing well. I wish you health and joy of living!

Lidija.

Her answer makes me even more excited, and I quickly press the keys to write her back.

Hello, Lidija.

I am glad to hear from you again! :)

You know, I was thinking a lot about us yesterday, while sitting on a bench in a park and eating tomato sandwiches. I remembered the time when I visited you on a bicycle borrowed from a friend and you were so embarrassed that you jumped into nettles. I feel almost sorry for your nettled legs which, perhaps, burn even today. To redeem myself, I'm sending you one hundred red roses.

I open the smileys, find the one with a flower in its hand, and press the button. One, two, three, four times... until I have put one hundred flowers in one letter.

May your room smell for a long time!

Kisses,

Arnolds

I think for a while and have another idea:

P. S. For the time being, this portal does not offer an option to send a rose-leaf bath. But if it did, know that I would send you one.

I send the letter and then, as planned, I open my notebook and find the section "My Internet Life" I created yesterday. There, I rewrite both letters from Lidija, marking the date and time. I also write down my answers to those letters.

The next day, I go to the library, thinking about what Lidija could have replied. Maybe she will invite me to meet her in person? Or should I make the first move? It wouldn't be so easy. We live in different cities three

hundred kilometers apart. Besides, she was writing about her sick husband. Maybe she has other thoughts right now, but I can't help myself. In the library, I register to use a computer and notice that the librarian is wearing her hair in a thick braid today. The same boys I saw before are sitting by the computers. They are both giggling. I walk to the third computer, assigned to me by the librarian, and check my letters. Emptiness. There is no word from Lidija. I enter my e-box, knowing that she probably doesn't know my e-mail address, and find only a letter from *Dormeo* mattress. I feel a bit sad, but then I accidentally overhear the conversation between the youngsters sitting next to me.

"What should I write to her?" the boy with glasses asks.

"Write that you are really sorry about what happened, but you still like her..." – "Breasts?"

"No, of course not!" Both of them are laughing.

"Send her a poem," I offer with no previous intention. The youngsters look in my direction.

"What?" the boy with glasses shouts.

"At least when I was young I wrote poems to girls and they liked it."

"Self-written?" the boy asks.

"That would be better. But if you cannot write a poem, borrow one from some poet. With reference, of course. The important thing is that it is sincere and comes from the heart." I smile. They exchange skeptical looks, and then the boy with glasses says: "Thank you grandpa. We will think about it."

"You are welcome," I answer joyfully.

On that day, I decide to sit in the park for a while again. There is a huge swing in the middle of the park, and families with children go there to push each other during the hol-

idays. I don't know what's wrong with me, but I am going straight to the swing. I sit on the wooden plank and swing gently. Back and forth. In a gentle, slow rhythm. I breathe in the spring. I hear the hinges of the swings, and I hear birds. I take my notebook out of the bag, open it, and once more read all I have written in the section "My Internet Life." I think of Lidija and feel poetic words tangling in my head. Will I really start writing poetry again? Is it because I suggested that those two boys write poetry? The ideas should not be ignored, so I take a pen from my bag and start putting words on paper. A nice verse forms. I rewrite it four times and write the final version on a new page.

Dear Lidija!

*It is so easy to swing in this park,
With birds, sun and spring all around,
It is so easy to reach you on the net
And return to the time when we were young.*

*Do you remember the grove
Where we went after school,
Do you remember the kiss
And me stroking your hands?*

*I would like to see you soon,
But who knows our fortune.
If the flag is not going up the mast,
Correspond through e-mail we must!*

I feel so proud of my accomplishment, that I rewrite it from my notebook on Lidija's wall the next day. My son taught me how to distinguish between the wall and letters. He said that the wall is public. Others will see my message and will be able to pass it on. Just like the notes we wrote in school. Read and pass it on! In school, I would probably be ashamed of showing this poem to others, but now I feel a special sap of life in me. Why

should I hold it in? Birches share their sap, I'm sharing mine. Let it spread further! Let it reach not only Lidija, but also others!

There is still no answer from Lidija, and I am becoming anxious. Has something really happened? I try to get rid of the bad thoughts. When I leave, I say to the librarian: "Goodbye!" "See you," she answers, then lowers her head and continues writing something. I look at the back of her black-haired head and feel a desire to say something nice to her. I was arrogant before.

"You have an interesting pen today," I say the first thing on my mind. Actually, there is nothing interesting about it. It is a regular ball-point pen with a blue cap.

"Oh, thank you!" She lifts her head and feels a bit surprised. "I have been using it for about two weeks now," she adds and rolls the pen in her hand.

"I guess, I noticed it only today," I reply and smile.

I go home, joyfully humming the tune I heard on the radio today. In two days I will receive my pension. A totally crazy idea crosses my mind. What if I meet Lidija? Somewhere inbetween. Each of us would come on a separate bus. Then we would enter a café and have a coffee and some éclairs. Ah, how she liked éclairs back then!

The next morning, I go back to the library. The librarian is smiling and doesn't seem surprised by my frequent visits. I register to use a computer and notice that the same youngsters are here again. Most likely, they are on holidays.

"Grandpa," someone calls me from behind. I turn around and see the boy with glasses.

"Yes?" I respond with surprise.

"That poem really worked. She forgave me and will go out with me on a date."

"I told you so! Did you write it yourself?"

“Together with a friend.” He smiles.

“Great! I am happy for you! My name is Arnolds, by the way,” I extend my hand to the youngster.

“Harijs,” he says, shakes my hand, and then adds: “Thank you, Arnolds.”

“Don’t mention it. If you need anything else, I will be right here,” I tell him and sit down at my computer. Harijs walks to his computer. I open *draugiem.lv* and cannot be-

lieve my eyes. There is a letter from Lidija. Poetry really works! I open her letter. The notepad is prepared for writing down every one of Lidija’s words. Then I start reading:

Stop fooling around, old-boy! :))

Roses and such a poem! Thank you!

For me it would be enough to receive a dot from you, just to know that you are still alive.

Lidija

Kapliczka

Jarosław Macnar. Polska

— Drodzy rodacy – zaczął wójt – Bracia. Oto nadszedł wielki dzień dla całego naszego regionu. A i można by powiedzieć, że dla całej Polski, skoro jest z nami tutaj Jego Ekscelecja Biskup – tułów wójta wykonał skłon a czoło niemal obilo się o mikrofon ustawiony na statywie. – Wspólne dzieło naszych rąk, obiekt, o który walczyliśmy jak lwy i który staje się prawdziwym symbolem polskości na naszych ziemiach. Oto, mimo przeciwieństw i nagonki na nasze działania prowadzonej przez niektóre organizacje – tu wójt zrobił przerwę, by każdy domyślił się, że chodziło o pewne media masowe – oraz jawnie antypolskiej polityki – przerwa, tym razem po to by dotarło do słuchaczy, że taką politykę prowadzi rząd – mamy wreszcie upragnioną, wymodloną przez nas wszystkich kaplicę. Nie ma wątpliwości, że gdyby nie wsparcie naszego hojnego darczyńcy – tym razem wójt zgiął się w kierunku właściciela pieczarkarni – nie powstałaby ta perełka architektury. Teraz, skoro już stoi, skoro już po długoletniej walce z przeciwnościami – ton głosu przemawiającego stawał się coraz głośniejszy i coraz bardziej wojowniczy – wydaliśmy naszym wrogom to co nasze i postawiliśmy na swoim, cieszymy się wspólnym dziełem. Jednakże pamiętajmy, że walka trwa, a wrogowie czają się na każdym kroku. Wojna będzie zawzięta, a i ofiary mogą się pojawić – tu wójt poczuł, że nieco się zagalopował. – Pomimo to, warto iść na ten bój o Nas, o normalną rodzinę, o Polskę! – emfaza mówcy rosła wykładniczo z każdym wypowiedzianym przez niego słowem. Na koniec jeszcze wyrzucił dwa palce w górę w geście „victorii” i zakrzyknął w mikrofon – Zwycięzimy!!!

To zadziwiająco krótkie przemówienie, patrząc na rangę do jakiej urosło to wydarzenie w oczach wójta, spowodowało niemałe poruszenie wśród gawiedzi. Ci stojący bliżej, a trzeba wiedzieć iż układ miejsc był niczym w kościele z Reymontowskich „Chłopów” – im dalej od mównicy tym niższa pozycja społeczna, poczęli gorączkowo bić brawo. Niektórzy odważyli zakrzyknąć „Dokładnie!” a co bardziej egzaltowani „Wiwat wójt!”. Spośród stojących dalej dało się słyszeć niemrawe oklaski. Było też parę osób, które postanowiło wygwizdać tyradę. Łatwo jednak było się domyślić, przynajmniej tak sądził wójt, że była to dywersja zainspirowana przez jego konkurenta w zbliżających się wyborach. Po tym przemówieniu dopełniono wszelkich ceremoniałów z przecięciem wstęgi oraz poświęceniem przez biskupa.

Następnego dnia, zmęczony wójt zwlekł się z kanapy na której zasnął w garniturze. Ożywiona dyskusja z dygnitarzami trwała do bardzo późna, zaschnięte gardło pokazywało wagę wymiany zdań a lekko trzęsąca ręka, nadszarpnięte odmiennymi poglądami jego interlokutorów nerwy. Godzina 12. – jak na kogoś kto prowadzi „dyskurs” do późna, niemalże wczesny ranek, więc zrozumiałym jest, że wójt nie wstałby, gdyby nie natarczywość „Poloneza a-moll” Michała Ogińskiego, którego dźwięk wójt ustawił jako dzwonek do drzwi. Bardzo lubił tę melodię, usłyszał ją kiedyś w którymś filmie¹ i od tej pory ustawiał ją na każdym urządzeniu

¹ Prawdopodobnie był to „Polonez Ogińskiego” Lwa Goluba z 1971 (Belarusfilm), jednakże ze względu na pochodzenie jak i wydźwięk filmu, wójt mógł wyprzeć to z pamięci.

na jakim miał taką możliwość – od mikrofalówki po telefon komórkowy. Tym razem przeklinał w myślach, że nie ustawił czegoś innego, najlepiej czegoś, czego by nie usłyszał. Osobą, która tak zawzięcie się dobijała, był jego sekretarz. Sam również „debatował” do późna więc jego twarz nie wyglądała lepiej od wymiętego garnituru wójta. Pierwszą rzeczą jaką usłyszał gospodarz było:

— Wspaniale pan wczoraj przemawiał. Tłum pana kocha, mówił pan jak Cyceron, Izokrates, Lincoln albo jakiś Roosvelt.

Takie słowa padały z ust sekretarza po każdej publicznej przemowie szefa, zmieniał tylko oratorów wymienianych na końcu, zapamiętując dobrych mówców z Wikipedii. Wójt natomiast, ze względu na swój stan niezbyt był poruszony pochlebstwem.

— Po to tu przyszliście? – zawsze zadawał pytania w liczbie mnogiej.

— Oczywiście, że nie panie wójcie. Ktoś zdewastował naszą kapliczkę, naszą nowiuteńką, świeżo poświęconą kapliczkę – sekretarz bardzo starał się rozplakać.

— Co? – wykrzyknął wójt. – Moją kapliczkę? Kiedy? Kto?

— No między wczoraj a dzisiaj najwyraźniej. Mówią że Cyganie. Albo Żydzi. Oni to nie lubią kapliczek a ostatnio przecież byli u nas na cmentarzu.

— Co będziemy zgadywać – powiedział zaskakująco przytomnie wójt. – Wszystko się okaże. Teraz dajcie mi już spokój.

Po chwili jednak, przypomniał sobie o nadchodzących wyborach.

— Wiecie, zawieźcie mnie tam. Muszę osobiście przypilnować by złapano kogo trzeba.

Eklektyczna (jeżeli połączenie wszelkich znanych ludzkości styli architektonicznych metodą „na bogato” może być tak nazwane) kapliczka stała na uboczu drogi. Faktem jest, że ludzie od dawna przychodzili w to miejsce się modlić, właściwie nikt nie wie dlaczego. Nie było tam ani źródła, ani nie domniemywano cudu. Nikt nie wiedział dlaczego tam. Później postawiono prosty krzyż, a wczoraj odsłonięto „perełkę architektury” (słowa starosty) z figurką patrona okolicy, na którego szyi, widniały odlane w gipsie słowa: MADE IN CHINA. Budynek przy wsparciu parafian, piecarkarni oraz, o zgrozo, Funduszy Europejskich. I to pomimo, eufemistycznie mówiąc, wyraźnego eurosceptycyzmu. Tym razem na Fundusze przystano milczącą zgodą wszystkich, a tabliczkę, obowiązkową przy tak finansowanych projektach umieszczono, jednakże tak by nikt nie widział. Teraz szyby w witrażyku z przodu były wybite a cała frontowa i boczna ściana oblane czerwoną farbą.

— Kto śmiał? Kto był tak bezczelny? – tłum zadawał pytania. Przyjazd gminnego sedana z wójtem i sekretarzem na pokładzie, oderwał policjantów od ich zajęć.

— Kto to zrobił? – padło bez przywitania z ust wójta. Wiedział, że musi pokazać surowość, ludzie to uwielbiają. A jeszcze w sprawie, która jednoczy niemal wszystkich, musi pokazać, że jest bezwzględny wobec chuliganów. Zresztą surowość i walka z przestępczością była główną myślą programu jego partii.

— Nie wiemy panie wójcie – przeproszająco powiedział posterunkowy. Na swoje usprawiedliwienie dodał standardowe – prace trwają.

— Pewnie któryś Cygan – z pewną miną powiedział wójt. Tłum, którego domniemania już wcześniej podążały w podobnym kierunku, podchwycił wątek. Wójt cieszył się autorytetem już od paru kadencji.

Później nastąpiło drobne acz płomienne przemówienie odnośnie sprawcy, którego „czeka los gorszy niż sięga wyobraźnia kogokolwiek a nawet samego wójta”, cokolwiek by to nie znaczyło. Nie było potrzeby pozostawiania dłużej wśród gawiedzi, toteż samorządowiec z sekretarzem odjechali.

Piękno Internetu polega na tym, że stał się miejscem gdzie można znaleźć wszystko – od forów makatkowych po dokumenty supermocarstw. Współczesny Hyde Park, gdzie zamiast pudełka wystarczy odpowiedni kabel i opłacony rachunek, i już można głosić wszystko. Również w miejscowości, której tyczy się ta historia, większość korzystała już z jego dobrodziejstw. Oczywiście młodzi odwiedzali inne strony niż ich rodzice. Jednak często odwiedzany, niezależnie od przedziału wiekowego, był adres lokalnej telewizji internetowej, prowadzonej przez trzech licealistów. W takim miejscu na próżno było się spodziewać zajmujących wydarzeń. A jako że nie robili tego charytatywnie, chcieli przecież zarabiać na reklamach, każda drobnostka zyskiwała tytuł skłaniający do kliknięcia. Tabloidyzacja nie przeszkadzała odbiorcom, toczącym zażarte dyskusje pod dodawanymi materiałami.

Licealiści wracali do rodzinnych domów po południu – uczęszczali do szkoły w mieście powiatowym kilka kilometrów dalej. Zatem dopiero wtedy mieli możliwość dodania relacji. Informacja o zniszczeniu świeżo odsłoniętej budowli ukazała się każdemu kto przeglądał stronę. Tytuł na czerwonym pasku głosił: „Zbezczeszczenie cudownego miejsca!!! Sprawdź czy już wiemy kto to zrobił!”. Taki sam nagłówek znalazł się na stronie głównej. Czcionka była trzykrotnie większa niż w przypadku codziennych wydarzeń z okolicy w rodzaju jasełek w szkole czy zawodów pożarniczych jednostek OSP. W tekście umieszczono drastyczny opis „skandalicznego zachowania pomyleńca (-ców?)”, zdjęcia miejsca zdarzenia, oraz zapis słów wójta na miejscu. Na koniec zadano pytanie: Czy komukolwiek z naszej społeczności przyszłoby w ogóle do głowy takie zachowanie? A może jest to rodzaj zemsty?”. Nie trzeba było wybitnych zdolności intelektualnych by domyślić się, że dotyczyło to ostatnich wydarzeń z Romami.

Romowie bowiem, zamieszkali pastwisko – formalnie gminny teren po pegeerze. Od dwóch lat próbowano się ich pozbyć. Nie podobało się mieszkańcom, że „chodzą, nic nie robią a do szkoły dzieci posyłać to by chcieli”. Nie wiadomo czy bali się, że któreś z ich dzieci zarazi się „Romstwem”, czy też mieli inne uzasadnione obawy. Na razie jednak kończyło się na utarczkach i wzajemnym odgrażaniu się.

Pod artykułem rozgorzała dyskusja. Rozpoczęło od się od słów niedowierzania i dezaprobaty: „Jak można? Czy ten ktoś w ogóle zdaje sobie sprawę co zrobił?” napisał *MRT12*;

„Skandal!!!!” krzyczał, jak niemal pod każdym wpisem *Kemal*;

Lecz gdy tylko *rawor* rozpoczął wpisem „Nie wierze ze policja znajdzie tego debila” dyskusję odnośnie sprawcy, zawrzało jak jeszcze nigdy dotąd na serwerach tej strony.

„Masz racje, musimy sami zadzaalac jak nie to nic nie pomoze!” pisał, gubiąc litery ze zdenerwowania, *trager_gold*, ortografią i wypowiedzią wsparł go *erwin* – „bioro pieniadze a nie scigaja prawdziwych przestepców. a przecierz wiadomo kto to zrobil!”.

I o ile *erwin* jeszcze się powstrzymywał, o tyle *wlad56* nie przebierał w słowach „Zaj***ć skur***li!!! Nieroby pier***!!”². Komentarz podzielił społeczność strony, ok. ¾ użytkowników

² W rzeczywistości *wlad56* nie użył autocenzury i wulgaryzmy widniały w swojej pełnej formie.

zgodziło się z *władem* „dokładnie! co oni sobie k** myśla? przepędzić ich raz na zawsze”, „niech już wyp** do Rumunii”.

Komentarzy z poparciem było jeszcze sporo, na nieliczne zarzuty o brak dowodów, oskarżyciele albo nie odpowiadali, albo popierali swoje tezy argumentami z życia metropolii „u mojej kuzynki w Krk też problemy z cyganami. Nikt nie wie co zrobić ale coś trzeba bo się panoszą jak na swoim. A mieszka na prywatnym osiedlu!!!!”³.

Od oskarżania i nawoływania do samosądów, szybko przeszło do podziałów i politycznych pyskówek „popieram!! Załatwmy to sami, wiadomo, że policja też ma związane rece. lewacka polityczna poprawność...” – twierdził *Krycha123*. Nie było oczywiście innej możliwości odpowiedzi na taką zaczepkę jak tylko zmasowane ataki z lewej strony. „A jakie masz dowody faszystowski poje**e?” – grzecznie pytał *anty_fa*, na co sviatope argumentował „Pytał cie ktos o zdanie czerwona ku***?”. „Wyczuwam prawackie bóle d**y :D” trzeźwo zaobserwował *planb6*.

Co na to prowadzący stronę? Zdecydowanie byli zaniepokojeni – ruch na stronie wrósł kilkukrotnie a oni wykupili najtańszą opcję hostingu.

Oczywiście wójt również śledził dyskusję i doskonale zdawał sobie sprawę z nastrojów. Dlatego też, gdy do jego gabinetu wszedł zaniepokojony sekretarz, krzycząc coś o zbliżającym się samosądzie, wójt tylko kazał mu usiąść.

— Co sugerujecie zrobić?

— Chyba trzeba zamknąć tę stronę panie wójcie. Nie widzę innej opcji.

— A ja widzę. Dodajcie tam moje przemówienie z otwarcia, to o wrogach polskości.

— Ale panie wójcie, to tylko pogorszy sprawę.

— Pogorszy? Moją poprawi. A to się liczy.

— Naprawdę wójt myśli, że to Cyganie?

— Skłaniałbym się raczej ku Żydom – wójt powiedział wzrokiem po biurku by wskazać na swoją ostatnio ulubioną książkę „Chazarska dzicz panem świata. Od Kaina do Lenina.” Henryka Pająka.⁴

— Sprawdziłem to panie wójcie. Ich wycieczka wyjechała 2 tygodnie temu...

Przez chwilę wójt nie wiedział co zarzucić takiemu alibi.

— Ale i tak na pewno maczali w tym palce. No dobrze idźcie już teraz mam sporo pracy – chciał jak najszybciej zakończyć temat.

— Tak jest panie wójcie – odpowiedział kornie sekretarz i wyszedł za obite dermą drzwi.

— Tylko nie zapomnijcie dodać tego filmu – rzucił jeszcze wójt i po zamknięciu drzwi, wrócił do pracy, czyli otworzył „Chazarską dzicz...” i zagłębił się w błyskotliwych demaskacjach macek żydobolszewizmu przez autora.

W dniu następnym cała właściwie społeczność spotkała się w kościele. Oczywistym były słowa potępienia ze strony proboszcza, jednak akurat on, tonował z ambony antyromskie nastroje. Najgoręcej było jednak po zakończeniu, kiedy to tradycyjnie wszyscy dyskutowali.

³ Por. http://forum.gazeta.pl/forum/w,61,44346431,44346431,Cyganie_na_Osiedlu_Europejskim.html

⁴ Pozycja ta istnieje naprawdę <http://www.abcksiegarnia.pl/53837,chazarska-dzicz-panem-swiatea-tom-4-od-kaina-do-lenina.html>

— Ja tam mówię, trza iść i załatwić to samemu, no chyba że pan panie posterunkowy to załatwisz – jeden z mężczyzn drwiąco zaczepił policjanta.

— Dobrze pan wiesz, że ja służbowo nie mogę, no nie mogę choćbym chciał – tłumaczył się mundurowy.

Raptem jeden z dysputantów zwrócił się do nieuczestniczącego w rozmowie starca,

— A wy co? Z nami czy przeciw nam?

— Ja już stary jestem, nie wiem czyja racja – zaczął. – Wiem, że Cyganie zawsze co jakiś czas tu przychodzili. Problemy były, wiadomo, ale co by oni takie rzeczy robili, to ja nie powiem, nie było. We wojne tyż, jak trza było to my ich ukryli a i oni jak co mieli to dali.

Bibliotekarz, bardziej niż zdewastowaną kaplicą przejmował się tym co ujrzał na stronie internetowej.

— Wie pan, ja znam jedną z nich – powiedział mając na myśli romską dziewczynę. – Często przychodzi po książki do mnie, najczęściej ze wszystkich w szkole. Mądra dziewczyna, wiem że wchodzi też na tą stronę, nawet nie wyobrażam sobie jak musiała się czuć...

— Zgoda – przyznała nauczycielka. – Ale to nie tylko u nas się tak pisze. Poza tym jak pan chce takie wpisy ograniczyć? W Internecie nic nikomu nie zrobisz...

— Wie pani, ja myślę, że można karać. Da się ustalić kto pisał. Niech do więzień idą – wtrącił się jeden z mężczyzn.

— I co to da? Zapłaci Pan tylko za ich utrzymanie i nic z tego nie będzie.

— No to na roboty.

— Nie chodzi o to, to nic nie zmieni, na ich miejsce przyjdą następni, a oni sami jak wrócą z tych, jak pan to mówi „roboty” dalej będą robić swoje.

— Eee tam za komuny jakoś nie było problemu – szukał rozpaczliwie ratunku mężczyzna.

— Nie było też Internetu. Trzeba edukować – odpowiedziała nauczycielka.

— Słusznie, ale wszystkich pani nie wyedukuje. Zawsze będą tacy co obrażą. Za Wielkiej Prohibicji surowo karali za alkohol. I co? Gangi tylko się wzmocniły – powiedział bibliotekarz. – To co trzeba robić, to nie wdawać się z pieniaczami w dyskusje. Ignorować ich i zgłaszać. Jak ich będą systematycznie usuwać, to skończą. Zrozumcie, oni żyją tymi wojenkami, sprawia im przyjemność gdy się z nimi nie zgadzacie – zakończył, a reszta, choć nie miała zamiaru podzielać jego zdania, milczała nie potrafiąc odpowiedzieć celnym argumentem.

To milczenie przerwał postawny mężczyzna z ogorzałą twarzą

— Dobra, wy tu dyskutujcie a ja idę nauczyć tych brudasów porządku. Kto ze mną? – krzyknął. – No co wy? Boicie się tych małych?

Szczególnie męska część nie mogła sobie pozwolić na takie aluzje. Wśród grupy dało się słyszeć przytakiwania, a tych którzy chcieli wrócić spokojnie od domów wyzywano od „tchórzów” i pytano czy chcą by ich dzieci bawiły się z „barbarzyńcami”. W efekcie niemal wszyscy, prócz próbujących powstrzymać samosąd starca i bibliotekarza, wyruszyli kierunku obozowiska Romów.

Około trzydziestu odświętnie ubranych mężczyzn dotarło na pastwisko a z ich ust leciały wzywiska. Jeden z przybyłych krzyknął „Tak jak wójt mówił! Walczmy o Polskę. Jeśli wójt z nami, kto przeciw nam?”. Kto mógł wyciągał scyzoryki lub chwycił za narzędzia w obozowisku. Ciekawe, że wśród walczących nie było wójta ani jego sekretarza. Gdy byli już pierwsi ranni, uwagę wszystkich przykuł czarny samochód terenowy. Większość rozpoznała pojazd właściciela pieczarkarni. Wyszedłszy z auta, przemówił:

Bracia! Skończmy spory, dlaczego nie miłujemy się? Dlaczego walczymy ze sobą? Łzy napływają mi do oczu gdy patrzę na bratobójcze wojny – patetyzm sięgał zenitu.

Trzymający się za fraki „bojownicy” patrzyli z niedowierzaniem.

— Nie ma znaczenia kto zniszczył kapliczkę. Zapłacę za jej oczyszczenie. Dodam też nowe wota. Teraz czas na pokój – niczym mistrz wschodniej duchowości zakończył przedsięwzięcie.

Część mężczyzn rzeczywiście się opamiętała. Jak widać strzelista przemowa podziałała na ich filisterskie serca. Reszta została przekonana przez wychodzących z nowoprzybyłych SUV-ów osiłków – ochroniarzy pieczarkarni.

I nastał pokój. Skończyło się tak, że po pobiciu Romów, ktoś zawiadomił media, które nagłośniły sprawę. Przemówienie wójta w całym kraju uznano za skandaliczne a on sam, za przyczyną presji społecznej zamieszkał u swojej rodziny w odległej miejscowości. Kto został nowym wójtem? Właściciel pieczarkarni.

A kto zdewastował kapliczkę. Mieszkańcy do tej pory nie wiedzą. Jako narrator wszechwiedzący, wiem że był to przedsiębiorca, oczywiście nieosobiście – zrobili to jego pracownicy. Był on sprytniejszy niż wszyscy wokół; przewidział na kogo padną podejrzenia, wiedział jak zachowa się wójt i wiedział, że część Romów uzyskała prawa wyborcze...

„Aby trzymać narody w ryzach, trzeba wciąż wymyślać im wrogów”

Umberto Eco⁵

⁵ Id. *Wymyślanie wrogów*, Rebis 2011

Little Chapel

Jarosław Macnar. Poland

“My dear fellow countrymen!” the village mayor began. “My brothers! This is an important day for the whole region. And, as his Excellency, the bishop, is among us,” the mayor’s torso bowed and his chin almost hit the microphone, “we might say that it is a big day for Poland. The common fruit of our work, for which we have fought like lions, which becomes the true symbol of Polishness on our land... Here, in spite of difficulties and persecution on the side of some organizations,” here the mayor paused so that everyone could guess that he meant certain mass media, “and the blatantly anti-Polish politics,” the pause here was meant to indicate that it was the politics of the present government, “we finally have here the chapel that we wished for and that we prayed for. There is no doubt that this architectural pearl would not have been possible without the help of our generous patron,” this time he bowed towards the owner of the mushroom farm. “Now, as it already stands after the long war against obstacles,” the speaker’s tone was becoming louder and more and more militant, “now as we have taken what’s ours from the enemy and that we have had our way, let us enjoy our common creation. We must not forget, however, that the battle is still on, and that the enemy is lurking everywhere. The war shall be fierce, and there may be casualties,” here the mayor felt that he had gone a bit too far, “nevertheless, we should go and fight for Us, for a normal family, for Poland!” and with each word there was an exponential growth of the emphasis. Finally, he made a “victory” sign with his fingers and shouted: “We shall win!” into the microphone.

This speech, remarkably short considering the enormity of the event according to the village mayor, has resulted in considerable excitement among the village folk. Those in the front – and it should be known that, like in the church scene in Władysław Reymont’s *The Peasants*, the further from the speaker, the lower the social position – started applauding with frenzy. Some even ventured to yell out “Exactly!” and those more exalted among them let out a “long live the mayor!” Those in the back reluctantly clapped, and some of them decided to jeer by whistling. It was clear, however, at least to the mayor, that it was a sabotage inspired by his opponent in the upcoming elections. After the speech, all necessary rituals, including the cutting of the band and consecrating the chapel by the bishop, were undertaken.

The next day the tired mayor got up from the couch on which he had fallen asleep in his suit. His lively discussion with the village officials went on for a very long time. The dryness in his mouth was proof of the weight of the exchanged views, just as his slightly shaking hand showed the state of his nerves after hearing the contrasting opinions of his interlocutors. It was noon, which, for people “discussing” late into the night is almost early morning. It is understandable that the mayor would not have gotten up so early were it not for the sound of Michał Ogiński’s *Polonaise in A minor*, which the mayor uses for the doorbell. He really liked the melody. He had heard it in some film¹ and since then he

¹ It was probably the 1971 Lev Golub film *Polonez Ogińskiego* (Belarusfilm), but given the origins and meaning of the film, the mayor might have repressed it.

has used it on every device possible – from his mobile phone to his microwave. This time he was cursing internally that he had not set the doorbell to play something else, preferably something he would not have heard.

The person so persistently trying to reach him was his secretary. He too has spent the night debating, so his face did not look much better than his boss' suit. The first thing the mayor heard was: "You have spoken exceedingly well, sir. The crowd loves you, you were like Cicero, Isocrates, Lincoln or some Roosevelt."

These were the words that followed every public speech made by the mayor. The secretary only mentioned different orators, having done proper research on the subject on Wikipedia. This morning the mayor was in no state to appreciate such praise.

"You came here only to tell me that?" he asked.

"Of course not, sir. Someone has vandalized our chapel, sir. Our brand new, freshly consecrated chapel," the secretary really tried to shed some tears.

"What?" cried out the mayor, "My chapel? When? Who?"

"Well, apparently sometime between yesterday and tomorrow, sir. They say it was the Gypsies. Or the Jews. They don't like chapels, sir, and recently they were seen at the cemetery."

"Well, let's not jump to conclusions," the mayor said, surprisingly soberly, "everything will come out. Now leave me alone."

After a while, however, he remembered the upcoming elections.

"You know what, drive me there. I must personally make sure they catch the right guy."

The eclectic (if that's what you call the combining of all architectural styles known to man in accordance with the "just make it look rich"

method) chapel stood on the side of the road. It is true that for a long time people had been coming to this spot to pray, though nobody knew why. There was no spring, it was not a place of any supposed miracle. Nobody knew why they came there. Later, a simple cross was built, then yesterday the "architectural pearl" (as the mayor called it) was unveiled. Inside was the figure of the local saint with "MADE IN CHINA" written on his plaster neck. The tiny building was built with the support of the parishioners, the mushroom farm and – the horror! – EU funds. The last one was in spite of the explicit euro-scepticism, to put it mildly. This time the EU funds were greeted with tacit agreement and the mandatory plaque was placed, though in such a place so as not to be visible. Now the coloured glass in the front was broken, and the whole front and one of the side walls were covered in red paint.

"Who could have done such a thing? Who could have been so bold?" asked the crowd. The coming of the county-funded sedan with the mayor and his secretary on board took the policemen away from their work.

"Who did this?" asked the mayor without saying hello. He knew that he should be strict, people love that. Especially in the case that concerns almost all villagers, he must show his toughness towards the vandals. Moreover, strictness and war against crime were the main tenets of his party's programme.

"We don't know, Mr. Mayor, sir," said the constable, apologetically. As a justification he offered the traditional: "we're looking into it."

"It must be one of the Gypsies," said the mayor with certainty written on his face. The crowd, whose suspicions had already taken a similar direction, clung to those

words. The mayor had been in power for for several terms now.

What followed was a brief but fiery speech concerning the wrongdoer, who “shall meet a fate worse than anyone, even the mayor himself, can imagine,” whatever that means. Afterwards there was no need to stay among the village folk any longer, so the mayor and the secretary drove away.

The beauty of the Internet is that you can find everything there – from cross-stitching forums to documents of superpowers. It is a modern Hyde Park, where instead of a soap-box all you need is an appropriate wire and a paid bill and you can say anything. It was also widely used by almost every citizen of the village in question. Naturally, the youths visited different websites to their parents. But regardless of age, the most visited in those days was the site of the local internet TV headed by three high-schoolers. In a place such as this it was hard to find any interesting events. As the site was not a non-profit venture and the high-schoolers wanted to make a little money on ads, each little happening was given with a title inviting the readers to click on it. The tabloidization did not discourage the readers, who led fierce discussions in the comment sections under each item.

The students attended a high school in the county capital a few kilometres from the village, so they came back home in the afternoon. Only then were they able to add news on their website. The information about the vandalising of the newly opened chapel was seen by everyone who entered the site. The title on the red banner read: “Desecration of a holy place of miracles!!! Click to see if we already know who did it!” The same heading was to be found on the home page. The size of the font was three times the size of the usual news on the site, like the information about

the school nativity play or a piece on the Volunteer Fire Department contest. The most recent article outlined “the scandalous behaviour of deviant or deviants unknown.” It was illustrated by a photograph of the scene of the crime and featured a transcript of the mayor’s latest speech. At the end of the article some questions are asked: “Would any member of our community even dream of acting like this? Maybe it is a kind of revenge?” You didn’t have to possess huge intellectual powers to understand that the authors meant the recent events with the Romani people.

The Romanis lived in the fields, which were formally village property and, during the Communist period, belonged to the State Agricultural Farms. The residents of the village have been trying to get rid of them for two years. They did not like the fact that the Romanis “just walked around, did nothing but still wanted to put their kids into the local school.” It’s hard to say if the villagers were just afraid that “Romanism” was contagious and posed a threat to their children or if they had other legitimate reasons. Up to this point, all that happened were minor clashes and browbeating from members of both communities.

The discussion in the comment section beneath the article was fierce. It started from statements expressing disbelief and disapproval:

MRT12 wrote: “How can you do such a thing? Does this person know what he’s doing?”

“Outrage!!!!” yelled *Kemal* under almost every comment.

But it was when *rawar* wrote “I dont believe that police will find this moron”, starting the discussion on the perpetrator, the heat of the discussion on the site rose to unprecedented levels.

“Your right we must act orselfs if not nothng ll help us!” wrote *trigger_gold*, being

so moved that he lost some letters. He was backed up by *erwin* both in message and in orthography: “they take moni and don cach reel criminals. but evryl nows who did this/.”

And while *erwin* still managed to get on without obscenities, *wlad56* did not hold back: “F*** those motherf*****s!!! Lazy f***s2!!” This comment divided the commenter. About ¾ of them agreed with *wlad*: “exactly! what the f*** are they thinkng? chase thm away once and 4 all!”, “they should f*** off to Romania!”

There were more similar reactions. The few comments that objected citing a lack of proof were either left unanswered or the accusers brought up examples from the metropolis: “my cousin in Krakow has gypsy problems too. No one knows what to do but sth must be done they wander around as if it was their land. and she lives in private housing3!!!!”

The situation quickly escalated from blaming and calling for lynching to political differences and hassles. *Krycha123* wrote: “agree!! lets take care of it ourselves. everyone knows that police has their hands tied. that leftie political correctness...” Naturally, this resulted in mass attacks from the left side; *anty_fa* asked politely: “Where’s your proof you fascist c***?” *Sviatope* retaliated “who asked you you commie b***?” “I’m starting to feel a rightie pain in the a** :D” soberly remarked *planb6*.

How did the owners of the domain react? Naturally, they were distressed – the site’s traffic skyrocketed and they had only bought out the cheapest hosting plan.

The mayor of course also followed the discussion and was perfectly aware of the feelings. That is why, when his secretary en-

tered his office yelling something about some imminent lynch mob, the mayor just asked him to sit down.

“What do you suggest is to be done?”

“I think the site must be taken down, sir. I see no other way.”

“I see another way. Send them a copy of my speech, the one about the enemies of polishness.”

“But sir, it will only make the matter worse.”

“Make it worse? It will help me. And that’s what matters.”

“You really think, sir, that the Gypsies are behind it?”

“I would rather think it’s the Jews.” The mayor looked at his desk and pointed at his new favourite book, *From Cain to Lenin. Khazarian Savages Rule The World* by Henryk Pająk.⁴

“But I checked it, sir. The trip left two weeks ago...”

For a moment, the mayor didn’t know how to undermine such an alibi.

“Nevertheless, I’m sure they had something to do with it. Alright, go now, I have work to do,” he wanted to quickly finish the subject.

The secretary said: “Yes, sir,” and vanished behind the soundproof door bound in faux-leather.

“Just don’t forget to add the video!” said the mayor. When the door closed, he returned to work, that is to his reading the witty unmasking of Jewish Bolshevik conspiracies by the author of *Kazarian Savages*.

The next day almost the whole of the local community met in church. Naturally, the parish criticized the act of vandalism, although

² Actually, *wlad56* did not censure his posts and all the vulgarities figured in their entirety.

³ See: http://forum.gazeta.pl/forum/w,61,44346431,44346431,Cyganie_na_Osiedlu_Europejskim.html

⁴ It is a real book: <http://www.abcksiegarnia.pl/53837,chazarska-dzicz-panem-swiata-tom-4-od-kaina-do-lenina.html>

he was also the one who tried to temper the anti-Romani atmosphere. The most heated discussions took place after the mass.

"I'm telling you, we should go and deal with the situation ourselves, unless you, constable, will deal with it," one of the men mockingly tried to provoke a police officer, who explained: "You know very well that I couldn't do that on duty, even if I wanted to."

Suddenly, one of the debaters turned to an old man who did not take part in the discussion: "And you? Are you with us or against us?"

"I'm old. I don't know who's right is right," he began, "All I know is that the Gypsies have been forever coming here. There were some problems, of course, but not things like that, that I cannot say. And during the war, we hid them when there was the need, and if they had something, they shared what they could."

The librarian was disconcerted not so much by the chapel, but rather by what he saw on the website. "You know what, I know one of them," he said with a Romani girl in mind. "She often comes to me for books, of all the schoolchildren she comes here most often. A smart girl, she is, I know that she must have visited that website, I can't imagine how she must feel..."

"Right you are," said the teacher, "but it's not only our folk that write things like that. And how can you limit such comments? In the Internet you can do nothing..."

"I think you can punish for that. I'm sure you can figure out who wrote what. They should be locked in the jail," threw in another man.

"What good will that do? Then they'll live on your taxes."

"So then hard labour instead of the jail..."

"That doesn't matter, it won't do any good. Others will take their place, and they

themselves will come back from that hard labour you talked about and do their thing."

"Oh, we didn't have such problems in Communist times..." the man tried desperately to win this argument.

"We didn't have the Internet then. You should educate people," said the teacher.

"True, but you can't educate everyone, ma'am. There will always be those who cause offence. During the Prohibition there were severe punishments for alcohol and to what effect? The gangs only grew stronger," said the librarian. "What we should do is to refrain from arguments with belligerent folk. They should be ignored and reported. If they are persistently blocked, they will stop. Believe me, they live for those petty wars, they like it when you disagree with them." He finished and the rest, although not wanting to agree with the librarian, was quiet for the lack of a solid argument.

This silence was broken by a massive man with a sunburnt face.

"All right, you can keep on talking here, but I'm going to teach those dirty scumbags some order. Who's with me?" he yelled, "What is it? Are you afraid of those apes?"

That was something that especially the male part of the community couldn't own up to. Some people started to agree with the sunburnt speaker. Those who would have preferred to go home were called cowards and asked if they want their children to play with "barbarians". As a result, nearly everyone started towards the Romani camp, with the exception of the old man and the librarian, who tried to stop the mob.

About thirty men in church clothes came to the field, yelling abuse. One of them called: "Just like the mayor said! Let's fight for Poland! If he is with us, who can be against us?" Everyone reached for their penknives or grabbed some tools from the camp-

site. Interesting – neither the mayor, nor his secretary were amongst them. After the first injuries, a black SUV appeared. Most people recognized it as the car belonging to the owner of the mushroom farm. The businessman got out of the car and said: “My brothers! Let us end our quarrels! Why don’t we love each other? I want to cry when I look on your fratricidal wars!” The loftiness of his words reached its peak.

The elegantly clad “fighters” stared, flabbergasted.

“It is not important who destroyed the chapel. I shall pay for the repairs. And I shall add a new entrance. And now it is time for peace,” finished the entrepreneur, as if he were some eastern master of ceremonies.

Some of the men really came back to their senses and stopped. Apparently, the gaudy speech warmed their philistine hearts. The rest were persuaded by the sturdy men getting out of their SUV’s – the mushroom farm’s bodyguards.

Peace came. After the beating of the Romanis someone alerted the media, who put the event in the spotlight. The whole country thought the mayor’s speech a disgrace. Due to the social pressure, he was forced to move to live with his family in a faraway town. Who became the new village mayor? The owner of the mushroom farm, of course.

And who vandalised the chapel? The villagers still don’t know. As I am an omniscient narrator, I know that it was the entrepreneur himself. Well, not literally himself, of course. It was the work of his subordinates. He turned out to be the shrewdest of all – he had predicted who would be blamed, he knew how the mayor would react, and he knew that some of the Romani had voting rights...

To keep nations on a leash, you must always invent new enemies for them.

Umberto Eco

A Message from the Future

Petra Iuliana Pintelei. Romania

Dear Sir: Good Afternoon!

I am sending a letter that might change the course of destiny from now to the near and maybe hard to reach future of human understanding and beyond. Let me introduce myself as Amos Adelpho Mirakovich, a mixture of Italian and Serbian Gypsy from the year 2593.

Yes, I say the word gypsy, even if it sounds very tough to your ears. I know you always used to avoid it under the name of Roma or dark nomad or whatever your past political correctness may have inspired you to say. But I am what I am, a humanoid creature without any prejudice and with suggestive features.

The difference between you and us in terms of appearance is the fact that we do not have a heart. It is only a small box tied to our chest like a necklace and it has the function both of a virtual blood cleaner and internal body scanner using gamma and X rays in a double magnetic flux. It is also an extension of our brain.

All the memories and information we collect is stored within and in order to kill one like us you have to destroy the small micro-particle that shines whenever you open the box. Why am I a gypsy in such an evolved world?

Well, just because my features are darker. Here we face no discrimination and I would have had no reason to write had it not been for a serious problem. Our nation has been attacked by a virus created from the past. It is said that the Balkan online press and blogging have produced negative information about we gypsies. Yes, we were great thieves and artisans, homeless for sure in the past and homeless now too, but we are the most brilliant hackers.

Even so, our system has been greatly damaged by the emergent virus we are coping with. To explain clearly, our historians are servers of ancient websites like the ones you are using now, for we no longer need such low technology as we use telepathic connections through energy rays, although the hostile attitude and aggressive language in your messages has caused this epidemic of huge contagion that is affecting our heart and memory boxes.

Once you come across such hostility in a blogging file, you instantly die and your loved ones catch the virus. They say it has been created by those who want to purify the Earth with the aid of old hostility and, as our research says that social media was the most important factor, I know that we are very capable of changing the world through a positive strike against online media from the past to combat the virus invading our world.

We are not worried about today's racism but we are worried about the contagion since it is so hard to detect and cope with, and I thought of communicating with you as an ultimate solution.

The message reached the early 2000s through a wormhole which opened straight into the office of a UN activist. His name was John Hoken and he was working as a reporter in Serbia especially to detect online aggression and profanity against minorities and gypsies.

This letter came as an unpleasant shock to him, for he was someone who wished for a long peaceful life on Earth. He copied it and posted it on his blog with the message that if he had to be a mad figure on the chessboard let the ones as mad as him conquer the rest of the enemy's figures.

As he started back on the journey to Geneva, his heart melted at the sight of the civilized world and he wrote a sad report about persecution in Serbia in the aftermath of the discrimination resulting from the Kosovo war as well as extremist aggression against Roma nomads. In his sad report he mentioned the lack of education, which subliminally encouraged the negative attitude of youngsters in the form of jokes and photographs with morbid symbols and profane references to the gypsy's darker skin.

The extra posting increased the heat of magnetic waves leading to the growth of the future virus, so Hokken decided to take action. Against the UN's will he posted and re-posted his ideal theory called "A message from the future", where he published the letter he had received along with his report.

He used the persuasive technique of telling people that harm and harassment will not bring about the eradicated strategy of purity and that the cyberspace attacks were as primitive as Stone Age thoughts.

Swearing online to him was just as rude as swearing on the street and the threat to destroy a nation made his desire for conquest grow. He gathered support from antiracist NGOs and independent activists as well as freelancers, who all started sending negative reports and counter-messages to protesting netizens (citizens of the internet).

Bloggers received diplomatic but contradictory arguments and the most important thing was the challenge to reeducate and recreate the universal order without fully extinguishing a ray of life.

Thus, in the past the future was moving towards salvation and the mostly evolved humans found the air growing lighter and systems restarting normally.

The gypsy who wrote the letter and sent it to the past was prosecuted at first because those humans were incapable of believing and understanding but in the end he overcame discrimination by being seen as a Serbian National Hero and receiving an award from the governing power.

The cyber counter attacks of the positive societies canceled the force of negativism and the nation learned that an opinion did not have to be carried to extremes for it would bring nothing but a revived memory of ancient mistakes...

There was joy in both worlds as a slight balance was established in diplomacy and online terms of service awareness. Thus, positive flows influenced the magnetic waves that guided the future and the seeds planted today led to the creation of a better world of new life and equal rights.

La ciutat fosca

Martí Vilagut. Espanya

En Desley va començar a escriure a partir de la tercera setmana. Va creure oportú manifestar el que sentia i quina era la seva experiència després de rebre aquell missatge. Segurament va sentir la necessitat de reflectir totes les seves sensacions en un paper i fer-ho a mode de diari per relatar la seva vivència en aquella habitació. Qualsevol que el llegeixi seguint la cronologia que correspon pot observar una evolució en el seu personatge. En Desley va acabar sent una figura que canviava de forma però que, d'altra banda, no descrivia la realitat d'una manera gaire exagerada i distorsionada per haver estat durant tant temps víctima d'un aïllament.

Desley, 3 d'octubre de 2018

Era una tarda més impregnada d'una rutina massa pesada. Aquella tarda tenia pensat sortir una estona sense tornar massa tard. Mentrestant, seguia tancat a la meva habitació mentre navegava per la xarxa per matar el temps, sense una finalitat concreta. Fins a aquell moment no m'havia sentit mai tan estrany, només era un nom més en una societat múltiple plena de defectes que mai ningú curaria, però una realitat potser ja massa acceptada. Seguia hipnotitzat per la pantalla quan vaig rebre un nou missatge. Mai no hauria imaginat que en un instant la teva vida pogués girar a tanta velocitat, canviar el panorama i convertir-te en una simple víctima, en el punt de mira. No en coneixia l'autor, era fet des de l'anonimat. Al llegir-lo no vaig sentir res més que un profund pànic. Algú a través d'internet m'acabava de dir que m'estaven buscant i que quan em trobessin acabarien amb la meva vida. Quan un rep aquest tipus de notícies en un primer moment pot notar un fals sentiment de culpa, uns instants de vacil·lació que provoquen confusió i desorientació, però no em podia enganyar a mi mateix.

Desley, 17 de novembre de 2018

No existia motiu, no tenia una explicació, almenys des d'un punt de vista racional. Però algú, proper o llunyà, em tenia identificat, em coneixia i sabia com contactar amb mi, algú que em volia matar i que no semblava tenir massa obstacles per fer-ho si és que podia avisar-me dels seus propis plans. D'altra banda, el missatge anava acompanyat d'unes quantes ofenses i insults contra mi mateix, com també contra la meva pròpia raça. No estic segur que la paraula «raça» sigui la més apropiada, potser estaria donant la raó als meus enemics, però, perquè ens entenguem, visc en una societat on la gent es dedica a perseguir les persones que no pertanyen al propi país. No us equivoqueu, aquesta carta no va ser escrita fa setanta anys, sinó que ha estat escrita en ple segle vint-i-u, però no ens estranyarà que l'essència de les persones segueixi sent la mateixa. La societat ha emmalaltit, i alguns en patim les conseqüències. Després de llegir el terrible missatge deixat al meu correu, vaig apagar l'ordinador, temut en aquells moments

com una gran porta d'accés per atacar la meva persona. Em vaig ficar al llit i em vaig adormir. El meu desig, però, era que el meu descans fos per sempre, i que amb una mica de fortuna mai més tornés a despertar, com a mínim, en aquell món en decadència.

Desley, 18 de novembre de 2018

Durant aquestes setmanes la meva son ha estat marcada per una successió de malsons i tortures mentals incapaces de mantenir un descans gaire prolongat. Però, de mica en mica, em vaig acostumar que aquesta realitat s'aniria instal·lant en aquesta habitació i que el meu futur no es podia escriure en un paper per falta d'alternatives. Les hores passaven, com també el dies i les setmanes. He començat a sentir-me en sintonia amb mi mateix, no necessito ningú, i puc sobreviure perfectament, encara que el meu cercle de relacions s'ha tornat molt limitat.

Desley, 2 de març de 2019

Ara mateix porto sis mesos tancat en aquesta habitació, no sé ben bé què és de la realitat exterior. Em crea un cert misteri, però la curiositat em podria posar en perill. Potser havia arribat massa lluny, massa extremat per una amenaça de mort? La veritat és que no ho sé. Però el meu propi captiveri em salvava dels individus salvatges que omplien els carrers. Em feia moltes preguntes, i així és com passaven les hores entre aquelles parets. Però la que més m'alterava era quant de temps em quedava allà dins. Fins a quin punt jo marcava el límit? Qui prenia les decisions si no era jo? El continuat aïllament provocava una angoixa creixent que posava en dubte la meva pròpia autoritat. Sortir a fora significava morir? Potser la llibertat estava en l'enfrontament. Però no oblidava que el xoc, el contacte que m'havia permès internet m'havia acabat convertint en un presidiari, en una persona incapaç de sortir a l'exterior.

Desley, 11 d'abril de 2019

He començat a pensar que hi ha d'haver algun tipus de cura, una alternativa a la malaltia de la societat. Però, i si ja no queden persones? I si aquells éssers autoritaris i dictatorials determinats per un caràcter irracional havien conquerit per complet les ciutats i havien propagat el contagi que a hores d'ara havia extingit la humanitat? Potser jo era l'últim supervivent, però alhora algú podia saber que en qualsevol moment jo puc sortir per aquesta porta. Res havia canviat, jo estava decidit a restar dins de la meva habitació, i d'allà res em traurà, doncs aquell era el meu món i la meua llibertat.

Desley, 6 de maig de 2019

Ha arribat el moment de prendre una decisió. Espero que allà a fora existeixi alguna cosa més que la que alguns pinten. Ara tinc més confiança, la por només limita els teus actes. Aquí la vida ha deixat de merèixer la pena.

En Desley va deixar totes aquestes cartes que va escriure mentre vivia tancat en una habitació de casa seva per una amenaça que havia rebut a través d'Internet, simplement perquè una persona racista i xenòfoba l'havia atemorit amb uns correus que deia que el matarien. Feia poc temps que vivia sol i, de fet, encara era prou jove. A posteriori es va conèixer l'autor d'aquests correus: el responsable havia estat un company que estudiava amb ell, però les seves intencions segurament no volien arribar tan lluny malgrat que la seva ideologia era força extremada. És dur saber que el teu propi fill ha temut per la seva vida durant tant de temps i que ningú l'ha pogut ajudar, fins al punt que ell sentia por del que hi havia fora de la porta de la seva habitació, i fins i tot potser es va arribar a témer a ell mateix. Va perdre el contacte amb la realitat, però potser mai havia estat tan a prop de comprendre que les relacions humanes estan en un punt mort. Durant tots aquests mesos en Desley va tancar-se per intentar superar la seva por i, alhora, poder pensar i entendre la complexitat de les relacions. Aquesta era la seva clau, per poder sortir fora un altre cop havia de poder captar el sentit de les coses, i en una llarga recerca únicament va trobar una única solució.

Una setmana més tard de que escrivís la seva última carta vam trobar el seu cos a la seva habitació. No havia pogut suportar no trobar la resposta, i la persistent inquietud que li creava aquell nihilisme i la sensació de veure el món com una amenaça constant va portar-lo a optar per fugir d'aquest món. La seva última carta no era, com alguns pensaven, una declaració d'intencions, un atreviment a sortir a l'exterior i enfrontar-se a la vella realitat, sinó una metàfora que indicava el seu fracàs perpetuat per la persecució d'un objectiu fallit que l'havia portat a creure que el món no estava fet per a ell i que potser més enllà existia un altre món que estava fet a mida i on trobaria les respostes que tant anhelava. En Desley ens va deixar, va voler marxar de forma sobtada però deixant-nos bons consells i unes conclusions que, malgrat el seu estat de tancament, no se separaven tant de la realitat. Perquè ell va morir perquè no veia que la seva vida tingués plaça en aquest món i l'única veritat és que les relacions humanes han entrat des de fa temps en un procés de decadència.

The Dark City

Martí Vilagut. Spain

Desley began writing from the third week. He thought it right to reveal his feelings and experiences after having received that message. He probably needed to reflect all his emotions on a sheet of paper and in the form of a diary to relate all he had been through in that room. Anyone who reads it following the chronology can see his character evolve. Desley finally became a figure in transformation yet his description of reality was not exaggerated and distorted considering he had been the victim of isolation for so long.

Desley, 3rd October 2018

It was yet another afternoon weighed down by overwhelming routine. I had planned to go out for a while without returning too late. Meanwhile, I stayed locked in my room surfing the Net to kill time, with no specific purpose. Until then I had never felt so strange; I was only another name in a multiple society full of defects that nobody would ever correct, but it was a reality perhaps too readily accepted. I was still hypnotised by the screen when I received a new message. I would never have imagined that, in a single moment, my life could take such a rapid turn, change the panorama and make of me a simple victim, the target. I didn't know who had written it, it was anonymous. When I read it, I felt only a profound panic. Someone on the Internet had just told me that they were looking for me and that when they found me they would end my life. When you receive this kind of news you might first feel a false sense of guilt, some moments of hesitation that create

confusion and disorientation, but I couldn't deceive myself.

Desley, 17th November 2018

There was no reason, no explanation, at least from a rational point of view. But someone, close or distant, had identified me, knew me and was able to contact me, someone who wanted to kill me and didn't seem to have too many obstacles to do so if they could warn me about their own plans. Moreover, the message was sprinkled with insults against me as well as my race. I'm not sure the word race is the most appropriate, perhaps I would be siding with my enemies, but to be clear; I live in a society in which people spend their time going after those who are not from their country. Make no mistake, this letter was not written seventy years ago but in the 21st century, but we shouldn't be surprised that people are essentially the same. Society is sick and some of us are suffering the consequences. After reading the terrible message left in my e-mail I turned the computer off, which for me was now a large gateway of personal attack. I went to bed and fell asleep. But my desire was to rest forever and, with luck, I would never wake up again, at least not in that world in decline.

Desley, 18th November 2018

Over these weeks my nights have been marked by a succession of nightmares and mental tortures which have prevented me from sleeping

properly. But step by step I've got used to the idea of this reality taking root in this room and that my future could not be written on a sheet of paper because there were no alternatives. Hours, days and weeks have gone by. I've started to feel in tune with myself, I don't need anyone, and I can survive perfectly even though my circle of friends has become very limited.

Desley, 2nd March 2019

Now I've been locked in this room for six months, and I don't exactly know what is happening out there. I find this mysterious, but my curiosity could put me in danger. Perhaps I've gone too far, pushed by a death threat. I don't really know. But my own captivity has saved me from the wild individuals filling the streets. I've asked myself many questions, and that's how the hours have gone by between these walls. But the question that upset me most was about how long I would remain locked in there. How far was it me who decided the limit? Who would make the decisions apart from me? The continuous isolation has caused growing anguish that challenges my own authority. Did going out mean dying? Perhaps freedom lay in confrontation. But I did not forget that the clash, the contact that the Internet had given me, had finally made me a prisoner, a person incapable of going outside.

Desley, 11th April 2019

I've started thinking that there must be some kind of cure, an alternative to society's illness. But what if there are no people left? What if these authoritarian and dictatorial beings guided by an irrational nature had fully con-

quered the cities and spread the contagion that had now extinguished humanity? Perhaps I was the last survivor, but at the same time someone must know that at any moment I could go out through this door. Nothing had changed, I was determined to remain in my room, and nothing would get me out because that was my world and my freedom.

Desley, 6th May 2019

The time has come to make a decision. I hope that there is something more out there than some suggest. Now I have more confidence, fear only limits your acts. Life is no longer worthwhile here.

Desley left all these letters he wrote while living locked in a room in his home following a threat he had received on the Internet, simply because a racist and xenophobic person had scared him with e-mails saying that they would kill him. He had been living on his own for a short time and was still very young. The writer of these e-mails, the person responsible, turned out to be a classmate, but he probably didn't intend to go so far although his ideology was quite extreme. It is hard to know that your own son had feared for his life for so long and that nobody was able to help him, to the extent that he was frightened of what was outside his room, and even feared himself. He lost contact with reality, but maybe he had never been so close to understanding that human relations are at an impasse. Over these months, Desley locked himself in to try to overcome his fear and, at the same time, to be able to think and understand the complexity of relations. This was his key: to go out again he had to grasp the meaning of things, and on a long search he found only one solu-

tion. One week after he wrote his last letter we found his body in his room. He couldn't stand not finding an answer, and the persistent concern that nihilism created him and the feeling of seeing the world as a constant threat led him to choose to escape it. His last letter was not like some people thought a statement of intent, a way of daring to go outside and face the old reality, but rather a metaphor that showed his failure perpetuated by the pursuit of a failed objective that had made him be-

lieve that the world was not made for him and that perhaps beyond there was another ideal world where he would find the answers he so yearned for. Desley left us, he decided to go abruptly but left us good advice and conclusions which, despite his state of reclusion, were not that removed from reality. He died because he didn't see that his life had a place in this world and the only truth is that human relations have for some time been in a process of decline.

فسيفساء

عامري عواطف. تونس

لم تكن تتخيل يوماً أنها ستعرض الى موقف مماثل للذي عاشته بالأمس...

استفاقت وهي تفتح عينيها المثقلتين بصعوبة، رفعت رأسها وشوشات زملائها تملأ أذنيها، حركت رأسها بقوة محاولة أن تطرد كل تلك الأصوات من مخيلتها.

راودتها أفكار كثيرة: ماذا لو لم تواجه أستاذها؟ لماذا كان عليها أن تتكبد هذا العناء دون فائدة؟

صفعت وجهها بقبضتها المملوءة بالماء محاولة أن توظف نفسها، فركت أسنانها على عجل ثم ارتدت ملابسها وهمت بالخروج لكنها عادت ووضعت مرآتها الصغيرة في حقيبة يدها وواصلت طريقها وعشرات الأسئلة تزدهم في رأسها. فاجأها صوت أمها تحثها على الإفطار قبل الخروج، تعللت بضيق الوقت فسألته أمها عن موعد إتمامها لدراستها لزيارة قريبتها المريضة، ردت عليها باقتضاب وتركت في إجابته مخرجا للتملص من هكذا إلتزامات إجتماعية تعتبرها كمقصلة لكل مواعيدها واللتزامات الشخصية.

أغلقت الباب وراءها ثم خرجت تسارع الخطى نحو موقف الحافلة. انضمت إلى حشد المنتظرين للعربة الصفراء حتى تجمعهم على كثرتهم واختلاف مشاغلهم ووجهاتهم وتوزعهم في أرجاء المدينة لتعود في وقت لاحق من النهار فتجمعهم مرة أخرى وتعيدهم لإكمال روتينهم اليومي.

طال انتظارها، وسرعان ما أحست بالملل.. كل شيء في هذه المدينة يجبرك على الإنتظار ويدفعك أن تتخذ من الصبر صديقا لك وإن كان من ألد أعدائك.

إمتدت يدها وأوقفت سيارة أجرة دون أن تشعر، إمتطتها وهي تبتسم ساخرة من قدرها، كانت دائما تعشق الطرق المختصرة، تكره الصخب وتحب أن تخلق لنفسها فجوة وسط كل هذه الفوضى والإزدحام.

دلت سائق سيارة الأجرة على "حديقته" التي اعتادت الهروب إليها، اليوم تفارقها أي رغبة في الذهاب إلى الكلية أو رؤية وجوه زملائها.

إتخذت مقعدا لها في ركن من الحديقة ثم فتحت حقيبتها وأمسكت بمرآتها، حدقت فيها طويلا، تمنعت في فتحتي أنفها الواسعتين، وضعت إصبعيها على شفثيها لتتحسس سمكهما، راق لها بريق عينيها اليوم، إبتسمت ثم أعادت المرأة إلى مكانها الأزلي في حقيبتها ومررت يدها سحبت بها دفترها من الحقيبة.

خطت مقولة لأحد الكتاب العرب كانت قد علقت بذهنها منذ مدة "يوما ما سيأتي السياح ليتفرجوا على جهلنا عوض الأثار" ثم كتبت تحتها " كل يوم علينا أن نحمي الإنسانية من محنة التمييز مخافة أن تتكلس عقولنا وتنقرض المبادئ فينا" وختمتها باسمها.

راودها شعور مماثل للذي انتابها ليلة وجهت رسالة إلكترونية لأستاذ الأدب الأمريكي، أحست أنها أمام مهمة صعبة تشبه الخط على الصخر. كيف لها أن تغير عقلية بأكملها وأن تمحو أفكارا متحجرة لترزع مكانها أخرى؟ ليس لأنها تريد ذلك فحسب، بل رفا بقيم الإنسانية التي تسكن أي واحد منا.

يومها كانت شديدة الانتباه في حصة واحد من أحب الأساتذة إلى قلبها، فالرجل رغم كبر سنه إلا أنه يتمتع بقدر كبير من النشاط والإقبال على الحياة بنفاؤل إلى درجة يتفوق فيها في بعض الأحيان على طلبته وهم في عمر أحفاده.

كان شديد الولع بمهنة التدريس وبالمواد التي كان يدرسها، وكانت تعتبره مثلها الأعلى إلى حين نفوه بتلك العبارات الهينة.

في تلك الحصة كان يتحدث عن تجربة معاشته "السود" في منطقة "هارلم" الأمريكية وكيف عانى من التدريس في تلك المنطقة.. كيف كان يشم رائحة جيرانه الكريهة المنبعثة من الطابق الأرضي وكيف كانت أصوات شجارهم المرتفعة تصله إلى غرفته، تحدث عن العنف المتفشي في ذلك الوسط الاجتماعي ثم أنهى خطابه بأنه يعتبرهم "أشخاصا دون مرتبة الإنسان"!!!!

يومها لم تستوعب مشاعرها قوة الصدمة ولم تغفر له ما نفوه به ولا وقاحته وعدم احترامه لإنسانيتها ومشاعرها ولون بشرتها، أحست في تلك اللحظات أنه يجردها من ملابسها أمام زملائها وأنه ينتهك كل حقوقها وخصوصياتها.

كانت تشعر انه يعن في إلحاق الأذى المادي والمعنوي بعائلتها وبكل شخص من بني جلدتها وبالبشر كلهم. هذا ما يمكن فعلا تسميته "بالحرب ضد الإنسانية".

أكثر ما حز في نفسها هو أن يصدر هذا الخطاب العنصري وكل هذا القدر من اللاإنسانية من شخص يربي أجيالا ليخرج للمجتمع أشخاصا يعانون من إعاقة ذهنية وإنسانية لا تشفى أبدا.

غادرت حصته لتنفرد بنفسها، قررت أن تتخلى عن جنبها وأن تعبر له عن إستيائها وحتى تؤكد له أنه ليس هناك من سبب يبرر كلامه.

استهلت رسالتها بتعبيرها له عما كانت تكنه من احترام وإعجاب بأسلوبه التعليمي في السابق وأن هفوة واحدة يمكن أن تقوض إنطبعا كاملا وأن تكشف لها عن بشاعة ما تخبؤه مظاهر مغالطة.

طرحت عليه عديد الأسئلة، كانت تريد إجابة عن سبب إبداعه في الإساءة للآخرين.. لماذا أورد اسم الشاعر الأمريكي الأسود "لانغستون هيوز" في برنامج مادة الشعر لهذه السنة إذا كان يؤمن بأنه "دون مرتبة الإنسان"؟ أم أنه فعل ذلك ليظهر تسامحا زائفا مع من يخالفونه في العرق والأفكار؟ هل تناسى أن الإسلام حرم التمييز على أساس اللون والجاه والنسب؟ أم أنه ممن يفصلون الأديان حسب قناعاتهم ليقتلوا ويسبوا؟ وهل تعتبر درجة الميلانين في بشرة الإنسان معيارا لتصنيفه ضمن أجناس قوارض وزواحف وحشرات كالحبوان؟ من أعطاه الحق بأن يحكم على غيره وأن يقلل من شأنهم؟ وهل تعتبر الإساءة حق؟ هل يمكن أن يرتقي هو إلى مرتبة الإنسانية بما يحمله في رأسه من أفكار؟...

لم تدون اسمها في الرسالة. فقط أكدت على أنها تنتظر إجاباته إن كان أصلا مهتما بإقناعها. حاولت أن لا تكون قاسية في عباراتها حتى لا تشرع له قساوة أفكاره وعباراته، لكنها كانت موقنة في قرارة نفسها أنه أجب من أن يجيبها وأن قناتمة أحكامه على الآخر لن تترك له مجالا ليحكم إنسانيته.. مثله

مثل آخرين لمست ذلك في طريقة كلامهم معها وفي منعهم لأبنائهم أن يلعبوا معها وأن يزوروا في بيتها وفي نظراتهم المحدقة في خصلات شعرها المجعدة.. أمور كثيرة تلتصق بذاكرتها مثل أدران لا تقدر على إزالتها الأيام والسنون.

رفعت عينيها، رأت مجموعة من الأطفال يتزاحمون على أرجوحة صدئة في مدخل الحديقة وتراءت لها أمهاتهم يراقبنهم ويحرسنهم ويحذرنهم من مغبة الوقوع أو إيساخ ملابسهم.. كل هؤلاء الأمهات لم يخيرن في شكل وجوه أبناءهم أو لون شعرهم أو أعينهم أو بشرتهم. جيناتهم هي التي تكفلت بكل ذلك دون أن تستشيرهن أو تعلمهن مسبقا بخياراتها، ورغم ذلك فإن كل واحدة منهن ترى أن ابنها أو ابنتها هو الأجل من بين أتراه وهو الأكثر ذكاء وهو الأحق بالنجاح ويتبول مكانة مشرفة في المجتمع.. ذلك ما كانت تقوله لها أمها كل مرة إشتكت لها فيها من سوء معاملة أحدهم: " حبيبتى الصغيرة عليك أن تضعي كل ما تسمعيه وما تريه جانبا، أثبتى لهم أنك قادرة فعل ما تريدينه وما يضمنون أنك لا تقدرين على فعله".

كانت تمقت أن تلازمها عقدة الإضطهاد التي ورثتها عن والديها وتخشى أن تورثها لأبنائها.. بقدر ما كانت تكره أن يستنقص أحد من قيمتها ومن قدرتها على التفوق على غيرها.

نظرت إلى وجوه الأطفال الصغيرة والجميلة وحسدت ضحكاتهم الصادقة وتذكرت ذلك اليوم الذي إقتربت منها صديقتها إيمان لتطلب منها بكل براءة أن تلمس ظفائرها الصغيرة المتساقطة في عبثية على خديها شديدي السمرة. مازالت إلى الان تتذكر ملمس أصابع إيمان في رأسها وضحكاتها الرنانة التي أطلقته بعد ذلك، ضحكات أصابته بالعدوى لتصيرا من أقرب الصديقات ومن أكثرهن حبا رغم إختلاف كل شيء بينهما. تالت السنون وتوارت ضحكاتها ونقاشاتها الحامية ودموعهما.

رن هاتفها فقطع حبل أفكارها، هي صديقتها إيمان تريد الإطمئنان عليها وتسألها عن سبب تغيبها عن الدراسة اليوم. أخبرتها أنها لا ترغب في رؤية أحد وأنها ربما ستأتي في الغد، ألحت عليها أن تخبرها عن مكانها لتقابلها، رفضت أن تخبرها لكن اصوات الأطفال بجانبها فضحتها. هكذا هي الذكريات تتحرش بنا في لحظات وحدتنا وتشي بنا للأشخاص الذين يسكنوها.

أعادها صوت إيمان إلى يوم أمس، تذكرت أنها مسكت يدها بقوة وأوصتها بأن تتحكم في أعصابها وأن لا تنوتر. كان ذلك بعد أن دخل أستاذ الأدب إلى مدرج يتسع لأكثر من مائتين وخمسين طالبا. ثبت مكبر الصوت على ياقة قميصه ثم تنحج معلنا عن بداية المحاضرة.

ذكر أنه سيستهل اليوم المحور الخاص بالشاعر "لانغستون هيوز"، وأنه قبل أن ينتقل للشرح يريد أن يعرج على حادثة، سمعته يقول "تلقيت منذ حوالي الشهر رسالة من أحد أو إحدى الطلبة، كتبت بلغة حادة، طرحت فيها عديد الأسئلة ولكنني للأسف لا أستطيع أن أجيب عن شخص مجهول الهوية". أحست أنه يستقرها لتعترف ولاحظت ثقة تامة في نبرة صوته أن لا أحد من الطلبة سيجرؤ على مواجهته.

في تلك اللحظة بالذات صار بإمكانها أن تسمع دقات قلبها المتسارعة، أحست فجأة أن رثيتها صارتا كإسفنجتين أحست ببرودة أطرافها ولاحظت ذلك حين وضعت إيمان يدها عليها.

فعت إصبعها وطلبت حق الرد، طلب منها الوقوف وأمر زملاءها بالصمت. ارتفع صوتها المرتعش فنطقت اسمها وقالت له أنها من بعث الرسالة وأنها انتظرت رده رغم إحساسها بأنه سيتجاهلها. قالت

أنه آلامها بكلامه عن ذوي البشرة السمراء وأنها استهجنّت عباراته وأن كلامه لا يفترض أن يصدر عن رجل تعليم وأمام أشخاص لديهم ما يكفيهم من العنصرية وعدم التسامح مع الآخر.

جلست، بالكاد استطاعتها التنفس، سمعت تعليقات وهمسات زملائها تقتحم أذنيها إقتحاماً. دق الطاولة بقوة وأمرهم بالكف عن إحداث الفوضى ثم اعتذرت وأخبرها أنه لم يقصد الإساءة لها... تبريرات اعتبرتها واهية ومقرزة في درجة سخافة خطابه العنصري.

لمحت إيمان تحت الخطى نحوها، إقتربت منها، قبلتها وجلست بجانبها، أعلمتها أنها قلقّت لأنها لم تجب البارحة عن هاتفها وأخبرتها أن كل زملائها وزميلاتها يسألون عنها ويريدون رؤيتها ليعبروا لها عن مساندتهم التامة لها وعن رفضهم لسلوك أستاذة. أحست بالفرح يغمرها وسألته عشرات المرات عن صحة كلامها، عما إذا كانت تخبرها ذلك لترفع من معنوياتها. نفت إيمان ذلك

وأكدت لها أنهم بصدد توقيع لائحة إمضاءات لرفعها للعميد لمنع تداول الخطاب العنصري في الوسط التعليمي.

الآن يجب أن تعتذر لزملائها لأنها وضعتهم في زمرة العنصريين وأن تثمن جهودهم وتستغلها لتوسع دائرة المناهضين للتمييز العنصري.

فكرت أن تستغل شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي لتحشد آراء الشباب وليناقشوا مثل هذه المواضيع. إستحسنّت إيمان الفكرة وعرضت عليها المساعدة واقترحت أن تشارك صديقتي اليهودية راشيل حتى تروي للشباب عن مدينتها الصغيرة في تلك الجزيرة الحاملة التي يتعايش فيها المسلمون واليهود في كنف التسامح.

إنطلقنا مسرعين للمنزل نشرنا نص الرسالة الإلكترونية التي بعثتها لأستاذة فتتالت التعليقات المنددة بالعنصرية ثم دعنا راشيل للمشاركة، فأظهرت مثالا إيجابيا وإحتمالا ممكنا للتسامح ونبذ العنف اللفظي وخطابات الكراهية والتفرقة.

صارت تستفيق من نومها في الليل لتلقي نظرة على التعليقات الجديدة، عن زيادة عدد المتابعين لصفحاتها وعن الآراء التي عبر عليها المهتمون بالقضاء على العنصرية في مدينتها وفي مدن أخرى من الجمهورية. مع كل تعليق جديد ومع كل متابع جديد كانت تشعر بمدى أهمية الخطوة التي أقدمت عليها.. لم تكن تتوقع أن تلاقي فكرتها هذا القدر من النجاح والمساندة من أشخاص يتفاوتون في المستوى الاجتماعي والثقافي ويختلفون في الأعراق والقناعات وجميعهم أمل في أن يتسع مجتمعهم وعالمهم لكل الأشخاص.. كل هذا كان يزيد من حماسها وعزمها على توسيع دائرة المناصرين لقضيتها.

إستفاقت كعادتها لتقوم بجولتها على شبكة الأنترنت، فوجدت مقترحا من أحد الناشطين في المجتمع المدني بأن ينظموا مسيرة سلمية ضد التمييز العنصري، وافقت فوراً وعملت معهم على تنفيذ الفكرة.

ليلة المسيرة أحست أنها جمعت أشخاصا مختلفين حد التناقض ليناشدوا هدفا ساميا واحدا، كفنان جمع قطع فسيفساء نادرة مختلفة الخامة واللون في لوحة رائعة الجمال. وضعت رأسها على الوسادة، لم ترد أن تتم وتترك الإحساس بالفرح والفخر غير أن التعب أخذ منها نصيبه. أغلقت جفنيها وأحست أنها لأول مرة تنام قريرة العينين، لتفتحها على نهار مضيء لا ينتهي.

Mosaic

Amri Awatef. Tunisia

She had never imagined being in such a situation as she faced yesterday. She could hardly open her eyes. She woke up lifting her head, while the whispering of her colleagues was still in her ears. She shook her head violently, trying to get rid of all such voices. Many thoughts rushed to her mind: what if she had not faced her professor? Why had she gone through all this in vain?

She splashed her face with water, trying to wake herself up, quickly brushed her teeth and put on her clothes to go out, returning again to put her small mirror in her bag and went on her way with tens of questions in her mind. Suddenly, her mother's voice interrupted, advising her to have breakfast first. She answered that she was in a hurry. Her mother again asked what time she would finish her studies that day to visit her sick relative. She tried to respond in a manner that gives her a way out of such social obligations, which she considered damaging for her personal obligations.

She closed the door behind her, hurrying to the bus station. She joined the crowd waiting for the yellow bus, with their many and varied in duties and destinations, to drive them to various parts of the city, to pick them up again later to resume their daily routine. She waited for a long time, and began to feel bored. Everything in that city makes you wait. Patience shall be your partner, even if you hate him.

She stopped a taxi, thinking ironically of her fate. She has always loved shorter roads and hated noise. She has always been trying to make a room for herself within all such chaos and crowds. She directed the

driver to her special garden which has always been her escape. She did not have any intention of going to college or seeing her colleagues.

She sat in the garden and opened her bag and held her mirror. She stared at the mirror for a long time, looking at her wide nose opening. She put her finger on her lips, touching their thickness. She liked her eyes blinking today. She smiled and put the mirror back in its normal place and got her notebook out of her bag.

She wrote a quote by an Arab writer that has long been attached to her mind: "One day tourists would come to sight see our ignorance rather than our antiquities." And under the quote she wrote: "We should always protect our humanity against discrimination to avoid brain deterioration and vanishing of principles within ourselves." She signed her name.

She had feelings similar to those she experienced the night she sent an electronic message to the professor of American literature. She felt it is a difficult task, similar to drawing on stones. How could she change an entire mentality and delete ideas to be replaced with others? Not just because she wanted that, but for the sake of humanity within each of us.

That day, she was very attentive to one of her dearest professors. Elderly as he was, he was very active, with a love of life, and optimistic, even more than his students at his grandchildren's age. He had great passion for tutoring and for the subjects he was teaching. She had looked upon him as an example till the day he uttered such insulting words.

In that session, he was talking about his experience of living among “blacks” in Harlem in the USA and his suffering in the area. He talked about the bad smell coming from the ground floor and their loud quarrelling voices reaching his room. He talked about the prevailing violence and ended his speech describing them as “sub-humans”.

She was greatly shocked and could not tolerate his mean words and his disrespect for her humanity, feelings, or skin color. She felt as if he was taking off all her clothes in front of her colleagues, disrespecting all her rights and privacy. She felt he intended to materially and morally harm her and her family and all humans. This is what can really be called “war against humanity”. The most hurtful was a discriminatory speech and such inhumanity from a person responsible for raising generations, to produce persons suffering unrecoverable mental and human impairment.

She left his class. She decided to stop being a coward and express her anger at his words, and prove that nothing justifies them. She began her message expressing her previous respect and admiration for his teaching style, and how one mistake could ruin the whole impression and reveal bad things lying under a false appearance.

She raised several questions and wanted a reply that justified harming others. Why did he include the American black poet Langston Hughes in that year’s poetry syllable if he thought that he is “sub-human”? Did he choose him just to show fake tolerance for persons with a different race and ideas? Did he forget that Islam prohibits color, position, or family discrimination? Or did he just customize religions according to his beliefs? Is the melanin content in one’s skin a criteria for classification among rats, reptiles and insects? Who granted him the right to judge others and reject them? Is insult considered a

right? Can he be human having such ideas in his mind?

She did not sign her name in the message, but only assured that she was waiting for his replies in case he was interested in convincing her. She tried not to be so cruel in her statements to get him to justify his cruel ideas and assertions. However, she was sure he was too cowardly to reply to her, and that his poor judgments of others do not leave any room for humanity. He is just like others in their way of talking, forbidding their children from playing with her or visiting her home, and their gazing at her curly hair. Many memories stuck in her mind like non-removable diseases which do not recover with days and years.

She saw some children playing and crowded on a rusted swing at the garden entrance and watched how their mothers were watching them and warning them from falling and getting their clothes dirty. All those mothers did not choose their children’s skin, hair or eye color. Their genes did all this without consulting or informing. However, each mother sees her son or daughter as the most beautiful among all his or her peers and desires the best position in the community. That was what her mother told her whenever she complained about abuse: “my dear little daughter, ignore all you see or hear, prove for them that you can do what you want and what they think you cannot do.” She hated that persecution inherited from her parents, and feared passing it on to her sons. She also hated someone underestimating her and her ability to excel.

She watched such small and beautiful faces and envied their genuine laughter. She remembered that day when her friend Iman approached her and innocently asked to touch her small braids falling on her dark face. Till now, she remembers the touch of her friend’s

finger on her head and her loud laughs after that, laughs that prevailed till they became the best loving friends, despite their differences. Years passed by and they shared laughter, serious discussions and tears.

Her mobile rang, interrupting her thoughts. It was her friend Iman asking about her absence that day. She told her that she does not want to see anyone and maybe she would come the next day. She insisted on arranging a place to meet her. She refused, but children's voices revealed everything. As such, memories rush to us in our lonely times, disclosing people.

Iman's voice returned her to the day before, and she remembered when she held her hand tight and advised her to manage her impulses. That was after the literature professor entered the class holding more than 250 students. He fixed the microphone onto his collar and coughed announcing the beginning of the lecture. He stated that he would begin with the poet Langston Hughes, and said that before beginning he would mention an event. He said: "About a month ago I received a message from a student, written in serious language and raising many questions. Unfortunately, I cannot reply to anonymous people." She felt he was pushing her to confess. She felt he was confident that none of his students would dare to face him.

In that specific moment, she could hear her heart beating. Her lungs were like two sponges. She felt her body so cold, especially when her friend Iman touched her. She raised her hand and requested a reply. He asked her to stand up and ordered her classmates to remain silent. She raised her trembling voice and uttered her name, saying that she was the one who sent the message and that she was waiting for his replies although she expected to be ignored. She said she was hurt by his speech about dark skin, and that she reject-

ed his words, which are not expected from a professor teaching people who suffer discrimination and intolerance.

She could hardly breathe and sat down. She heard comments from her fellow students. He knocked hard on the table and ordered them to remain silent. He apologized to her and told her that he did not mean to insult her. His justifications were as fake and disgusting as his discriminatory speech.

She saw Iman rushing to her, approached her, kissed her and sat beside her. She was worried that she did not answer her phone and told her that everyone is asking about her and wanted to see her and express their full support for her and her rejection of the professor's conduct. She rejoiced in her colleagues asking about her but asked whether she was telling her this to cheer her up. Iman denied that and told her that they were planning to collect signatures to send to the dean to call for discriminatory talk to be banned within an educational setting.

She thought of using social networks to bring youths together to discuss such issues. Iman liked the idea and offered to help and suggested asking their Jewish friend Rachel to tell them about the small city on that dream island in which Muslims and Jews lived in peace.

They rushed to the house and posted an electronic message sent to their professor, to find many comments rejecting discrimination. They invited Rachel, and she was positive about tolerance, rejecting verbal violence and discriminatory and hate speech.

She woke up to look for new comments, and more followers for the page and views expressed by those interested in eliminating discrimination in her city and in other cities within the republic. She felt the importance of her efforts with every new follower. She did not expect such success and support

from people of different social and cultural levels and races and beliefs, sharing hope for a community for everyone. All this increased her passion to expand the anti-discrimination community.

As usual, she woke up to surf the net. She found a suggestion from a civil society activist to arrange a peaceful demonstration against discrimination. She approved at once and worked to achieve the idea.

On the night of the demonstration, she felt she had brought together people sharing a single value. She was like an artist putting together rare mosaic parts, different in material and color, to form a splendid picture. She put her head on the pillow, but she was too excited to sleep, but finally fell asleep from sheer exhaustion. It was the first time she had slept peacefully to wake up to find a bright endless day.

حلم على الحدود

سحر عمّار. تونس

ماذا تبقى اليوم غير الذكريات المغيرة كصورة منسية من زمن السلام، ماذا تبقى اليوم من ساعة الحرب غير الجدران المشوهة بالرصاص، غير الدم في خبزنا اليومي، في رائحة الهواء، في الذكريات، في تمتات عجوز شهدت هول المجزرة، في آخر صورة عائلية لم يلتهمها الحريق، في منديل من زمن ما قبل الحرب نقشت عليه اسم حبيبها الأول الذي ابتلعتته الحرب في عنفوانه. ماذا تبقى غير رعشة تجرح الأرض في حيرتها، وغير هذا الشريط المزروع في رحم الأرض كاللغم يُحملها ما لا تطيق من الأوجاع.

جدار قسم شعبا إلى شطرين كتلك النيازك والكرات النارية التي حطت على الكواكب وحولتها إلى أشلاء متناثرة مبعثرة بعرض السماء تطل علينا كل مساء كئيبة حزينة. جدار ترك كل شطر كأرجوحة وحيدة يتيمة تدفعها من حين لحين نسيمات تهب من بين مسامات الجدار محملة بعيق الذكريات والأوجاع.

هي حرب الطوائف أو بالأحرى هي الحرب الأهلية، ساعات معدودة تكفي لتبعثر سلام الورود وورود السلام، تشعل الموت حريقا يأتي على الأخضر واليابس وهذا الجدار المنتصب كسرب من الغيوم بوجه الشمس شاهد على بعض ما خلفته الحرب، جدار فصل عنصري قائم كبركان بقلب الأرض يصب حمما من التفرقة والعنصرية التي تسدل ستارها الحالك عن جذور الوحدة الضاربة في أعماق تاريخ الشعب.

قيلون هم من ظل الحنين يهزم للطرف الآخر. يمرّون بين الفينة والأخرى يسرقون من بين مسامات الجدار نظرات لأرض جمعهم ذات يوم، لإخوة توحدهم رابطة الوطن وفرقتهم هذه الحدود المشوهة.

"أمل" شابة شهدت أحداث الحرب الأهلية كما شهدت تشييد هذه الحدود. تقضي كل يوم سويعات من وقتها على هذا التل الذي تنزف وروده عطرا محملا بذاكرة البلاد، تلوح بصمت لبعض المارين من الجهة المجاورة الذين يحملون مثلها بين طيات أرواحهم جرحا وحكايا حنين دون أن يجرؤ أحد منهم على عبور هذه الحدود، يلوحون لبعضهم كما تلوح الشمس للكون قبل المغيب وتطبع على جبين السماء قبلة بلون الدماء، ثم يتبعثرون كالأغنيات التي ترددها، أغنيات من الزمن القديم عن الوطن والوحدة تردد كلماتها بداهة الصدى عند الصبح الساخر من كآبة يوم عادي.

كان الأمل بالوحدة والسلام والعودة بعقارب الزمن إلى الوراء كفاف يوم هؤلاء الداعين إلى إزالة الحدود وإعادة الوحدة إلى البلاد، لا فرق بين جنوب وشمال فلما ادعى الأبناء أسباب العنصرية والتفرقة باسم الطوائف وبنوا هذه الحدود والخرابيش التي شوهدت وجه هذا الشعب.

كانت تحلم كغيرها من هؤلاء المارين كالطيور الشاردة المنسية التي فقدت الطريق إلى أعاشها، يطلون مثلها من فجوات الجدار بحسرة الموتى. هؤلاء الباحثون عن هالة النور في ضجيج الظلام. كانت تلوح لهم وتشعر بذلك الحزن النبيل الذين يجمعهم على حدود في زمن فوضى الأوطان والخرائط.

كانت تريدُ وطنًا يلعب فيه الرواة بالكلمات فتولد عن العشق أجمل الحكايات، وطنًا يشهد على مداخلة صبية لم تعرف بعدُ النكباتُ، وطنًا للشعراء والفقراء والعشاق لا يخجلُ من مصارحة المدى والأفق في حصار الحياة.

وكانت أمنياتها تبكي دمعا بحجم أفرط طفلةً من ألم، تبكي دما بعمر الجرح الأول، تبكي طفلاً يحلمُ أن يخطُ كلمة "الوطن"، تبكي شمسَ حلم تكسرتُ على أطرافِ حربٍ وناجين يركبُونَ من أشلاءها جندياً من ضوء، جندياً ينبت من قبعته ألبرتقال السعيد وزهرة لم تكسر بتلاتها دبابهٌ مرّت.

في البيت، كانت تحاول، منذ أتت نيران الحرب الأهلية على الأخضر واليابس، أن تستعيد موهبة الرسم غير أن الحرب طالتها ونالت من أنامل الصغيرة مأخذاً. كانت تسمح الغبار يوماً عن معدات الرسم، تمسك الريشة غير أنها أناملها لا ترسم كل مرة سوى خطوطاً متشابكة كنتك الأسلاك الشائكة المرفوعة بوجه الشمس، الغائرة في قلب الأرض، والممتدة على طول جدار الحدود.

كانت تبكي وتحلمُ ثم تختلس من ظلام الواقع بسمة لمن تحلقوا حول حلم الوطن أحياء ناجين مما تمارسه العنصرية من طقوس الشر اليومية.

تفتح حاسوبها الصغير، زرّ واحد كان كافياً لتكنظ الشاشة الصغيرة بكل عبارات التفرفة والعنصرية والعصبية، ومع ذلك فقد ظلت تلك الشاشة كذلك مساحة لتزيح عن قلبها اليافع الذي صار مقسماً معلقاً بين مزيج الأضداد وبين قرار الانتماء للوطن والأرض والهوية والتفاصيل.

في الذكرى الرابعة للحرب الأهلية، كان حلمها المشوب بالحزن ينمو على التلّ الحدود وكانت تراوح الهمّ بشجرة البرتقال التي ظلت تقاتل جدار الفصل والتاريخ المشوه بالحرب والطائفية بصمودها على هذه الأرض. وإذ يشاب من الطرف المقابل قد تسلق الجدار وحطّ بخفة كورق الشجر بين اكتئاب الشمس وخمول الأرض. توجه نحو الشجرة على التلّ وقطف أربع برتقالات حزينات كعيني الوطن.

اقتربت منه فاستدار نحوها قائلاً: "أترين شجرة البرتقال الواقفة على التلّ الحزين يا صديقة، لقد غرسها جدّي ورعاها ولكنّ الحرب فرققتها ولو يذكر الشجر غارسه لصار الثمر دمعا، أوصاني أن رعاها لتنام روحه بسلام فلم يخفه الموت بقدر ما أخافه أن تظل شجرته وحيدة كيتيم تخلى عنه الكلّ. قتلته الحرب يا صديقة، لم تصبه رصاصة طائشة ولكنّ الحزن سلبه كل نفس للحياة. ظلّ على طول السنوات الماضية يتسلل إلى هنا ليلاً، يشتمّ في برتقالاته رائحة الوطن، وفي حفيف أغصانه صراخه وتأوهات وظلّ يستعين بها على كآبته، تبت الحياة في جسده الذي مرّ به المرض ألماً ثم عاد أدراجه لأن في هذا الجسد كالأرض يحفظ ملح الوطن. ما أصعب أن ترى الوطن يتلاشى ثم تفتح عينيك يوماً على البلاد فلا تراها سوى فارغة من الحبّ والسلام والنور. وتصير روحك المفعمة بكل أسباب الحياة والفرح والأمل والتسامح غريبة في أرضها أمام الطائفية التي تسخر من كل ألوان الهوية وتفصيلها."

ابتسمت "أمل"، أخبرته بأنها تمرّ كلّ يوم من هذا التلّ. تتواطأ روحها الثكلى لوهلة بالجراح مع الواقع لتشتعل تشتعل وجعا، تتراخي شرايين قلبها ليستقرها الأمل والحلم والإصرار لتستيقظ كالصبح من بعد ليل طويل. ووعده أن ترعى شجرة البرتقال عند غيابه.

منذ ذلك اللقاء القصير في الزمن والموغل في عمق الروح، ربطت بين أمل وجوزيف صداقة قوية ساحرة من ملامح الانقسام، تحتمي من مظاهر الطائفية بجمال التسامح ووجدت في وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي مساحة حيث عرفها جوزيف على مجموعة شبابية تضمّ شباباً من الطرفين يحملون فكراً

مناهضا للحرب الأهلية والطائفية والانقسام ومخلفاته من حدود بانسة وأفكار مشوهة تغلغت في المجتمع.

وصارت تجدُ سلواها ومواساتها في هؤلاء الشباب الذين يشاركونها همومها وآمالها بالسلام والوحدة والتسامح، يطرقون معا باب الحلم، يفتشون عنه في ما تخلفه الحرب الأهلية من أطلال وهموم ويشيدونه في رؤاهم بين ارتعاش الأمل وزخم الواقع الكئيب.

كانت المجموعة اختزالا لوطن واحد شعب واحد متقارب أبدا، كالحيز اللامتناهي المتحلل من ثمالة الحرب يبيتُ روحا شابة في جسد الوطن المنهك المثقل بالجراح. لم تتعدى المجموعة كونها فضاء افتراضيا يتبادل فيه الشباب مشاعرهم التي يخافون الإفصاح عنها بين مجتمعهم خوفا من ردات الفعل التي قد لا تحمد عقباها. يطرحون أفكارهم ورؤاهم التي تتبدد كالسراب، كالندى عند الفجر، مع أول كلمة عنصرية مباركة للانقسام على مذبح الوطن.

كان نشاط المجموعة يقتصر على محاولة نشر ثقافة التسامح والأخوة من خلال بعض العبارات أو النصوص أو بالتذكير بتجارب الشعوب التي نجحت في توحيد صفوفها وإطفاء نار الطائفية.

تواصلت لقاءات أمل وجوزيف عند الحدود كما تتواصل الحياة بصبحها وليلها.
" إلى متى سيستمرّ هذا الغمام الذي يصهر الوطن بشعبه وحضارته وثقافته المفتوحة كباب السماء على الاختلافات والثراء والتنوع. وهل يكفي ما ينشرونه من كلمات على مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي، هل هي كافية لتغيير الواقع، ليكبر حلمهم كهذا الزيتون على الحدود... لا بدّ أن نقضي على المسافات التي اختلقتها التفرقة والانقسام والعنصرية بالتسامح والأخوة والوحدة. لا بدّ نزرع ورد السلام بضلوع من تحجرت قلوبهم فتزهر كأشجار الخريف المصفرة عند الربيع." بهذه الكلمات توجهت أمل بالحديث إلى جوزيف

"علينا لنا أن نتخطى المجتمع الذي تغلغت فيه الطائفية والعنصرية يا صديقتي... أتعلمين، سيوجهون إلينا شتى التهم والشتائم، سيحاولون بكلّ السبل ثنيانا عن فكرتنا علنا ننكسر كبيت رمليّ أمام أمواج البحر وينتهي بلا ملامح."

"سيوجهنا الكلام ولكن لن يكون أشدّ علينا من أوجاع الحرب وآسيها. سنستعين على وخز الواقع بورد المستقبل فلا طريق إلى الحياة سواه. من وجع ودمعة وصبر هكذا تولد الحياة... أليس كذلك يا جوزيف؟"

"أكيد يا صديقتي... أن للوقت لترتب المدينة ذهابها المستمرّ إلى الشمس عند عتبات الصبح، علينا أن نهدي لكلّ عابر حائر حُجّة للفرح وتذكرة عبور من سقم الحرب والغيم إلى وطن يطرق إسفلت الذكرة ويرمي الورد والأغنيات."

ابتسم الشابان وعقدا العزم على أن يسيرا مع بقية أصدقائهم على الغيم والهواء، لن يخشوا الضياع بين هذا الواقع الذي يرددهم إلى اتساع الكآبة.

هكذا استردت أمل أناملها التي انزلقت بين الأناث والهزائم وعادت حرّة على باب الوطن تسخر بألوانها وخطوطها من عبثية الطائفية وطيشها. رسمت للسلام وساعدها جوزيف وبقية الشباب في المجموعة على توزيع رسوماتها وتعليقها بكل حائط في البلد وعلى طول الجدار والحدود لتغطي بشاعة الحرب وتفتح في جدار الانقسام قلبا من خبز وأغنيات. جوزيف كان يقف يوميا على الحدود

يعزف مع رفاقه ويغني لكي يحلّ السلام فتكبر الموسيقى بين أيديهم وترقص عارية من وشاح الطائفية كطفل ولد لتوه نقيًا من دنس الخطيئة.

غيرهم من الشباب عيث بخطى الحرب، بما خلفته على الطرق والتلال والمفترقات والحدائق من بنادق ألقاها المتقاتلون بعد أن أعيها الصراع ولم تعد صالحة لتجرح صدور البشر، وبقايا قنابل ورساصات باردة. صنعوا من شبح القتال حنجرة للبلابل وحلما لعجوز تعشق الألوان والورد. حولوا أنامل الحرب إلى آلات موسيقية أو قطع ملونة كأعمدة قوس قزح أو أصيص للزهر.

كان الشباب يوثقون أنشطتهم، وينشرونها على مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي وكان حلمهم يكبر مع كل شاب ينضم إلى مبادرتهم، مع كل صوت يدعمهم ومع كل نفس صباحي.

كمن يغسل بالقبلة والأحضان رعدة الفراق، كانوا يغسلون ذاكرة الوطن وحاضره من الطائفية ويحلمون بأن يكفيهم رغيف السلام والتسامح للعيش في وطن واحد.

A Dream on the Border

Sahar Ammar. Tunisia

Nothing remains today, except dusty memories, like a photo of the time of peace lost in time. Nothing remains since the war except walls damaged by bullets. Blood became the norm, we can smell it in the air, and in the memories, and in the humming of the elderly woman overwhelmed by the massacre, in the last family photo not destroyed by fire, in a tissue from pre-war times on which her beloved name was written after he died in the war.

Nothing remained except confusion, and a strip on the ground like an unbearable burden. A wall dividing the nation into two halves, similar to fireballs landing on the planet splattering it into pieces and leaving it dull and sad; a wall that left each half lonely with memories and pain, coming to mind every now and then.

It is the sectarian war or the civil war. Just a few hours are enough to make all flowers of peace seem in vain. Just a few hours can pass before death prevails and destroys everything. The wall stands here as witness to the results of war. It is a discriminatory wall like a volcano, erecting discrimination to hide the unity that is deeply rooted within the nation. A few people pass by every now and then to hear any news about the land that once held them all, but that was now divided.

Amal is a young lady who witnessed the civil war and the borders. She spends most of her time with memories of such a land. She waves to others who pass by the other side, who like herself bear the pain and longing for the other side, but none of them dare to cross the borders. They wave to each other like the sun waves to the sky before sunset, old songs

about the homeland ironically sounding on a normal dull day.

Some hoped for unity and peace, returning to the old days and removing the borders. There is no difference, so why have the old people claimed discrimination and constructed such borders that damaged the appearance of such a nation?

She dreamt as others like lost birds that cannot return to their nest. They look desperately through the wall, trying to find a ray of light amidst the darkness. She would wave to them and felt such a deep sadness bringing them together in an era of chaos and dividing maps.

She wanted her homeland to have skilled poets evoking feelings of love, a homeland with youths who had not witnessed crisis, a homeland full of poems and poor together, with lovers not shy of their love.

Wishes full of tears filled her heart. She felt the pain of a child dreaming of writing the word “homeland”, crying about a dream broken by the civil war, and trying to collect pieces from a soldier, a soldier offering fruits and flowers not crushed by a tank.

At home, since the civil war, she tried to regain her old talent for drawing, but war has reached her fingers and left its memories. She used to clean the dust on her drawing materials every day. She tried to hold the brush, every time finding herself drawing crossed wires like those she always saw facing the sun and rooted in the earth along the border wall.

She was crying and dreaming. She was trying to find any smile within the dull reality, among those who dream of a homeland free from daily discrimination.

She turns on her personal computer, a single click enough to show all discriminatory statements. However, this screen was still the place that relieved her from the burdens of her young divided and contradictory heart, attributing an identity to the homeland.

On the fourth anniversary of the civil war, her dream mingled with sadness was growing on the hill over the border. She admired the orange tree fighting the border wall and the damaged history. She saw a young man from the other side climbing the hill, and wrote some phrases and picked four sad oranges.

She approached him. When he saw her he asked her: “do you see that orange tree standing over the sad hill? My grandfather planted it, but then the war divided it. My grandfather advised me to care for it, for his soul to rest in peace. He was killed in the war. He was not killed by a bullet, he died of sadness. Throughout the past years, he used to come here at night and smell homeland oranges, and hear the sound of leaves to relieve him from his pain, and grant life to his soulless body. How hard it is to open your eyes one day to see your homeland without any love or peace; joy and hope become strange among sectarianism, undermining all forms of identity.”

Amal smiled and told him that she passes by this hill every day. Her damaged soul combines with the bitter reality giving her great pain. Her hopes and dreams along with her persistence inspire her, as if she had woken up after a long night. She promised him she would care for the tree in his absence.

Following this short conversation with him rooted deep in her soul, a strong friendship bonded Amal with Joseph, a friendship challenging division. She used to escape and shelter under tolerance, and finally found a room within the social media where Joseph

introduced her to anti-civil war youths from both sects rejecting borders and dishonorable ideas prevailing within the community.

Those youths were her escape, sharing her burdens and hope for peace, unity, and tolerance, walking together towards their dream and looking for an end of civil war to nurture hope and release them from the dull reality.

The group was a minimal united homeland. It was an unlimited space free from the burdens of war and pouring spirituality into the sick homeland body. The group remained a virtual space where they exchanged feelings that they are always afraid of revealing in their community to avoid severe reactions. They post their ideas and opinions that soon vanish, like morning dew, with the first words encouraging division.

The group’s activity was limited to spreading tolerance and brotherhood through some texts or narrating stories of other nations who succeeded in achieving unity and rejecting discrimination.

Amal and Joseph would meet at the borders. “When will such dark clouds destroying citizens, civilization, and cultural diversity actually go away? Are their posts on the social media enough to change reality, and for their dream to grow? Distance must be minimized. Such distances created division and discrimination that have to be replaced with tolerance and brotherhood. Flowers of peace have to grow within hearts that turned into stones.” Such words were said by Amal to Joseph.

“We have to ignore a community in which division and discrimination prevailed. You know, they will insult us and call us all bad names. They will try to change our ideas and ruin our dream. We will be hurt by their words, but it won’t be any more hurtful than the pains of war and disasters. We will over-

come the bitter reality with flowers of the future. Life always emerges from pain, tears, and patience. Right, Joseph?”

“Sure, my friend. It is time for the city to receive sunlight. We have to grant every passerby joy and abandon the clouds of war.”

They both smiled and decided to proceed with the group. They would not surrender to their bitter reality. Amal once more restored her talented fingers that had once slipped away from her in wars and defeat, and returned to criticizing sectarianism. She drew for peace, and Joseph helped her with the rest of the group to destroy such division. Joseph would walk every day by the border and play music with his colleagues to spread

peace. Their music grew and they danced free of sectarianism.

Other youths played with the remains of war found on the roads and hills, including discarded guns and fragments of bombs and bullets. They created music out of these remains and converted war machines into tools of music, colored paintings or flower vases. The group would document their activities and post them on the social media. Their dream grew bigger with every new follower and with every voice supporting them.

They were like a kiss that washes away all pain, removing hurtful and sectarian memories. They dreamt that tolerance and peace would help them to live in a single homeland.

